

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

MATTHEW

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**GOSPEL
BROADCASTING
NETWORK**

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INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

A. The Author.

1. The author of the book is Matthew, one of the twelve apostles.
 - a. "When the authorship of a book has never been disputed, its friends have usually but little to say on the subject.... There is no book of antiquity, in either sacred or profane literature, whose authorship is more unquestionable" (McGarvey, pp.7f). The book does not name Matthew as its author, but ancient testimony puts the subject of authorship beyond serious question.
 - b. The book is not mentioned by any of the later inspired writers, but ancient uninspired writers have assigned the authorship to Matthew, including Papias, who wrote in the early part of the second century. Irenaeus, Eusebius, Origen, Epiphanius, and Jerome all ascribed the book to Matthew. These were in a position to know this truth and had no reason to misrepresent it.
2. Very little is known of the early life of Matthew and nothing is given in the New Testament after the Pentecost day of Acts 2 concerning his later life.
 - a. Before he was selected to be an apostle, he was employed in collecting taxes for the Roman government. He speaks of himself as "the publican," possibly an expression of humility in having been exalted from so low a state to that of an apostle. Tax collectors were called "publicans" by the Jews.
 - b. He is the same as "Levi" the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27,29; Matt. 9:9). He was called "Levi" until Jesus chose him for an apostle; he is then called "Matthew" which means "gift of God" (according to some), and "manly" (according to others). Matthew should not be confused with Matthias who was selected as replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1).
 - c. Matthew was from the large city of Capernaum which was situated on the northwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee. He made a feast for Jesus at which several publicans were present (Matt. 9:10; Luke 5:29). Apparently he was not a poor man, but he was evidently an honest publican since nothing is said of his making restitution to the
 - d. over-charged taxpayers as Zacchaeus did (Luke 19:8).
 - e. The last mention of Matthew in the New Testament is in Acts 1:13. "According to Eusebius (Hist. Eccles. 3:24), Matthew proclaimed the gospel first to the Hebrews, and then went to other nations, after having 'committed his gospel to writing in his native language, the Hebrew.' Later historians report that he had gone to Ethiopia and there preached the gospel" (Boles, p.x). This information from Eusebius is uninspired.

B. The Language in Which Matthew Was Written.

1. "All of the ancient writers, whose extant writings allude to the question, represent Matthew as having written a narrative in Hebrew; but not one of them claims to have seen it except Jerome, and he subsequently expresses doubt as to whether the book which he saw under this name was the genuine Matthew ... All the writers just named were familiar with the Greek Matthew; and none of them speak of it as a translation" (McGarvey, p.8).
2. "A large majority of the modern writers regard the Greek as the original, and it is a singular confirmation of the correctness of this opinion that Alford, who, in the first edition of his commentary, took ground in favor of a Hebrew original, in the later editions acknowledges that he was been constrained to abandon that position" (ibid.).

C. The Date of the Book.

1. The exact date of the writing is unknown, however the early writers say it was the first of the New Testament books to be written. The date of Luke is fixed as not later than Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea which was from the summer of 58 A.D. to the fall of 60 A.D. Thus, Matthew must have been written prior to A.D. 58.
 2. The text of Matthew gives two remarks which indicate it was written a number of years after the death of Christ.
 - a. The potter's field which was bought with Judas' returned money "was called the field of blood unto this day." The false report of the soldiers who guarded the Lord's tomb that "this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day" (Matt. 27:8; 28:15). This has a bearing on the date the book was written.
 - b. McGarvey says that "it was well worthy of remark that this name, and that the report of the soldiers so soon and so thoroughly exploded, should have continued to be re-repeated after a lapse of even
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eight years" (p.9).

3. Brother McGarvey put the date between 42 and 58 A.D. Others place it between 38 and 70 A.D. When the book closes its narrative, Jerusalem is still standing; obviously it must have been written prior to the destruction of the city in A.D. 70.

D. Characteristics and Purposes of Matthew.

1. Matthew quotes the Old Testament many times so it very naturally follows Malachi. It was Matthew's purpose to persuade the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.
2. Matthew is a systematic and topical account of the gospel story.
 - a. Information is treated in groups, such as the miracles in chapters eight and nine, and the parables in chapter thirteen.
 - b. The same orderly arrangement is also observed in the two great sections of the book.
 - 1) The first section (4:17—16:20) especially sets forth the person and nature of Jesus.
 - 2) The second section (16:21—28:20) narrates his great work for others as seen in his death and resurrection.
3. Matthew is a teaching account of the gospel. In each section there is one long discourse.
4. Matthew emphasizes regal aspects of the included material.
 - a. The genealogy shows the royal descent of Jesus.
 - b. The Magi (wise men, men schooled in the medicine, astrology, etc. of the day) came seeking him who was born king of the Jews.
 - c. In Luke, a certain "man" made a supper, but in Matthew it was a certain king.
 - d. In the other gospel accounts we have the term "gospel." With only one exception, Matthew always calls it the "gospel of the kingdom."
 - e. Further, "keys of the kingdom" are given to Peter; all nations shall gather before Christ as he sits on the throne, and "then shall the King say..." (Matt. 25:31-34).
5. Matthew is an account of the gospel especially directed toward the Jews.
 - a. This is seen in the use of Jewish terms and numbers without explanation [*corban* in Mark 7:11-12; cf. Matt. 15:5-6]. "He omits explanations of Jewish customs and local references which Gentile readers would naturally expect (cf. Mark 7:3-4; 13:3)" (Boles).
 - b. Matthew traces the genealogy of the Lord back to Abraham by three great Jewish historical events (1:17).
 - c. Sixty-five quotations from the Old Testament are given in Matthew.
 - d. "While Matthew maintains throughout his narrative a purely Christian spirit, he looks at every thing with Jewish eyes, and keeps his own countrymen in view as his readers. He is not unmindful of the fact that many of his Jewish kinsmen spoke only the Greek language, and consequently he sometimes translates into Greek Hebrew words which he has occasion to employ. (See 1:23; 27:33,46.) But, unlike the other historians, he omits those explanations of Jewish customs and of local references, which Gentile readers would naturally expect (Comp. Mark 7:3,4; 13:3); yet he devotes more attention than do all of the others to the fulfillments of prophecy; and he is alone in giving that line of ancestry by which Jesus was heir of the throne of David" (McGarvey, p.11).
6. Matthew's account of the gospel emphasizes Jewish antagonism and rejection of Christ.
 - a. He describes how the Pharisees plotted against Jesus and resented his violation of their regulations and customs concerning the Sabbath; their ceremonies about eating and washing (Mark 7:7; Matt. 15:9); and his association with publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:10-13). Their opposition culminated in the Lord's death (John 18:28ff).
 - b. On the other hand, Jesus also rejected the Jews who would not believe the truth. John called them a generation of vipers. Jesus designated them as hypocrites, blind guides and whited sepulchers. Matthew gives the climax of this great controversy beginning in chapter 23.
7. Matthew's account of the gospel gives no formal statement of its purpose as John's does (20:30-31), however the nature of the contents shows his intent to be identical to John's report. That aim is to set Jesus forth as the Divine Son of God in whom salvation is to be found.
 - a. He presents a list of Old Testament prophecies which are fulfilled in the person, the miracles, the characteristics, works, and message of Jesus. This constitutes an overwhelming proof of the deity of Jesus.
 - b. "Matthew presents him (Jesus) in genealogy, history, prophecy, and character as the Son of God"

(Boles, p.xiii).

8. Matthew's inspired account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is given in such a clear, easy to understand, and moving way that it is the "most attractive and the most frequently read of all the books in the New Testament" (McGarvey, p.11).

E. Outline of Matthew.

1. Matthew 1.
 - a. 1:1-17: The genealogy of Jesus.
 - b. 1:18-25: The miraculous conception.
 2. Matthew 2.
 - a. 2:1-12: Herod's scheme to destroy Jesus.
 - b. 2:13-15: The flight into Egypt.
 - c. 2:16-18: The slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem.
 - d. 2:19-23: The death of Herod and return of Jesus' family.
 3. Matthew 3.
 - a. 3:1-4: John the Baptizer preaches in the wilderness of Judea.
 - b. 3:5-6: The effect of John's preaching.
 - c. 3:7-12: John confronts the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - d. 3:13-17: The baptism of Jesus.
 4. Matthew 4.
 - a. 4:1-11: Jesus is tempted.
 - b. 4:12-17: Jesus takes up residence in Capernaum.
 - c. 4:18-20: Jesus calls the disciples.
 - d. 4:23-25: General circuit of Galilee.
 5. Matthew 5.
 - a. 5:1-12: The beatitudes.
 - b. 5:13-15: The importance of influence illustrated.
 - c. 5:17-20: Christ and the Old Testament.
 - d. 5:21-26: The sin of animosity.
 - e. 5:27-32: Adultery, divorce and remarriage.
 - f. 5:33-37: The taking of oaths.
 - g. 5:38-42: Teachings on retaliation.
 - h. 5:43-48: The law of love.
 6. Matthew 6.
 - a. 6:1-4: Right motives in almsgiving.
 - b. 6:5-8: Right motives in prayer.
 - c. 6:9-15: The model prayer.
 - d. 6:16-18: The Lord teaches on fasting.
 - e. 6:19-24: Lay up treasures in heaven by serving only God.
 - f. 6:25-34: Remove anxiety and trust in God.
 7. Matthew 7.
 - a. 7:1-5: The sin of judging.
 - b. 7:6: Warning against giving that which is holy to dogs.
 - c. 7:7-11: Ask, seek, and knock.
 - d. 7:12: The golden rule.
 - e. 7:13-14: The two ways.
 - f. 7:15-20: Beware of false prophets.
 - g. 7:21-23: The judgment scene depicted.
 - h. 7:24-29: The illustration of obedience and disobedience.
 8. Matthew 8.
 - a. 8:1-4: Healing of the leper.
 - b. 8:5-13: The healing of the centurion's beloved servant.
 - c. 8:14-15: The healing of Peter's mother-in-law.
 - d. 8:16-17: Jesus heals many and casts out demons.
 - e. 8:18-22: The high cost of following Christ.
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- f. 8:23-27: The calming of the storm.
 - g. 8:28-34: The Gadarene episode.
9. Matthew 9.
- a. 9:1-8: The forgiving and healing of the palsied man.
 - b. 9:9-13: Matthew becomes a follower and gives a feast.
 - c. 9:14-17: Why his disciples did not fast.
 - d. 9:18-26: The raising of Jairus' daughter and healing of the issue of blood.
 - e. 9:27-31: The healing of two blind men.
 - f. 9:32-35: Healing of the dumb, demon-possessed man.
 - g. 9:36-38: The compassion of Jesus on the multitude.
10. Matthew 10.
- a. 10:1-4: The list of the Twelve.
 - b. 10:5-8: The commission of the Twelve.
 - c. 10:9-15: Instructions on how they were to carry out this limited commission.
 - d. 10:16-20: Supernatural guidance promised to the apostles.
 - e. 10:21-25: Further details of the persecution and admonitions to persevere.
 - f. 10:26-28: Fear not the enemy.
 - g. 10:29-39: Value of confessing Christ -vs- tragedy of denying him.
 - h. 10:40-42: Kind treatment of disciples will be rewarded.
11. Matthew 11.
- a. 11:1-6: John sends messengers to Jesus.
 - b. 11:7-15: Jesus gives the true estimate of John.
 - c. 11:16-19: The childishness of Jesus' opponents.
 - d. 11:20-24: The unbelieving cities upbraided.
 - e. 11:25-27: The Lord's prayer of thanksgiving.
 - f. 11:28-30: The Great Invitation.
12. Matthew 12.
- a. 12:1-8: The disciples eat grain on the Sabbath.
 - b. 12:9-13: Jesus heals the withered hand on the Sabbath.
 - c. 12:14-21: The Pharisees plot to kill Jesus.
 - d. 12:22-30: Jesus is accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub.
 - e. 12:31-32: Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
 - f. 12:33-37: The power of words.
 - g. 12:38-45: The sign of Jonah.
 - h. 12:46-50: The spiritual relatives of Christ.
13. Matthew 13.
- a. 13:1-2: The setting for the parables.
 - b. 13:3-9: The parable of the sower.
 - c. 13:10-17: Jesus explains why he taught by parable.
 - d. 13:18-23: The Lord explains the parable of the sower.
 - e. 13:24-30: The parable of the tares.
 - f. 13:31-35: Two other parables.
 - g. 13:36-43: The Lord explains the parable of the tares.
 - h. 13:44-52: Three more parables.
 - i. 13:53-58: Jesus visits his former hometown of Nazareth.
14. Matthew 14.
- a. 14:1-12: The death of John the Baptizer.
 - b. 14:13-21: The feeding of the five thousand.
 - c. 14:22-33: Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee.
 - d. 14:34-36: Miraculous healing in Gennesaret.
15. Matthew 15.
- a. 15:1-9: Jesus contends with scribes and Pharisees over washing hands.
 - b. 15:10-20: Things that defile the soul.
 - c. 15:21-31: The Syro-Pheonician woman and others.
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- d. 15:32-39: The feeding of the four thousand.
16. Matthew 16.
- a. 16:1-12: Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees.
 - b. 16:13-20: The Lord promises to establish his church.
 - c. 16:21-23: Jesus foretells his coming passion.
 - d. 16:24-28: Willingness to sacrifice required of the disciple also.
17. Matthew 17.
- a. 17:1-13: The Transfiguration.
 - b. 17:14-21: Healing of the lunatic.
 - c. 17:22-23: Jesus announces again his impending death.
 - d. 17:24-27: The tribute money found in the mouth of a fish.
18. Matthew 18.
- a. 18:1-6: Attributes of little children enjoined upon followers of Christ.
 - b. 18:7-14: Warnings against causing a Christian to stumble.
 - c. 18:15-18: How to handle cases of personal offenses in the coming church.
 - d. 18:19-22: The power of united prayer and the need for a forgiving spirit.
 - e. 18:23-35: The parable of the unforgiving servant.
19. Matthew 19.
- a. Introduction and background.
 - b. 19:1-2: Jesus leaves Galilee and comes to Perea.
 - c. 19:3-12: A question regarding divorce.
 - d. 19:13-15: Suffer little children to come unto me.
 - e. 19:16-22: The rich young ruler asks Jesus a question.
 - f. 19:23-26: Rich men and salvation.
 - g. 19:27-30: What the apostles would receive.
20. Matthew 20.
- a. 20:1-16: The parable of the householder hiring laborers.
 - b. 20:17-19: The third announcement of his impending death.
 - c. 20:20-28: The misguided ambition of James and John.
 - d. 20:29-34: Two blind men are given sight.
21. Matthew 21.
- a. 21:1-11: The Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
 - b. 21:12-17: The cleansing of the temple.
 - c. 21:18-22: The cursing of the fig tree.
 - d. 21:23-27: The Lord's authority challenged.
 - e. 21:28-32: The parable of the two sons.
 - f. 21:33-46: The parable of the wicked husbandmen.
22. Matthew 22.
- a. 22:1-14: The parable of the unwilling guests.
 - b. 22:15-22: The Pharisees and Herodians question Jesus about tribute.
 - c. 22:23-33: The Sadducees' question regarding the resurrection.
 - d. 22:34-40: A lawyer asks about the greatest command of the law.
 - e. 22:41-46: Jesus poses a question for the Pharisees.
23. Matthew 23.
- a. 23:1-12: Warnings against the scribes and Pharisees.
 - b. 23:13-33: Condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees.
 - c. 23:34-39: The Lord's final pronouncement of condemnation against them.
24. Matthew 24.
- a. 24:1-3: When Jesus left the temple, his disciples asked him some questions.
 - b. 24:4-14: General signs are given of the approaching end of Jerusalem.
 - c. 24:15: The abomination of desolation.
 - d. 24:16-22: His followers were to flee when the abomination of desolation appeared.
 - e. 24:23-28: Jesus issues warning about deception during these frightful times.
 - f. 24:29-31: Pictures are given of some marvelous events.
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- g. 24:32-35: The parable of the fig tree is used to show the nearness of these things.
 - h. 24:36: That day and hour.
 - i. 24:37-41: His return will be as the coming of the flood in Noah's time.
 - j. 24:42-51: Warning to watch and pray.
25. Matthew 25.
- a. 25:1-13: The parable of the ten virgins.
 - b. 25:14-30: The parable of the talents.
 - c. 25:31-46: The great judgment scene.
26. Matthew 26.
- a. 26:1-5: Christ predicts his death; the Jews plot to put him to death.
 - b. 26:6-13: Matthew recounts the feast in Bethany.
 - c. 26:14-16: Judas makes his fateful bargain.
 - d. 26:17-25: The Passover is prepared; Jesus announces the betrayal.
 - e. 26:26-30: The institution of the Lord's Supper.
 - f. 26:31-35: Jesus predicts the disciples' being offended and Peter's denial.
 - g. 26:36-46: Christ's ordeal in Gethsemane.
 - h. 26:47-56: The arrest of Jesus.
 - i. 26:57-68: The Lord's trial before Caiaphas, the high priest.
 - j. 26:69-75: Peter denies the Lord.
27. Matthew 27.
- a. 27:1-2: Jesus is taken to Pilate for the final disposition of his case.
 - b. 27:3-10: The death of Judas.
 - c. 27:11-23: Jesus before Pilate.
 - d. 27:24-33: Jesus is condemned and led out to Golgotha.
 - e. 27:34-38: The Lord is crucified.
 - f. 27:39-44: Jesus is mocked as he suffers on the cross.
 - g. 27:45-49: The Lord's final three hours on the cross.
 - h. 27:50-61: Other events in connection with his death.
 - i. 27:62-66: The Jewish plan to guard his tomb.
 - j. Jesus uttered seven statements while he suffered on the cross.
 - k. Illegalities of the Lord's Jewish trials.
28. Matthew 28.
- a. 28:1-8: The women find the empty tomb.
 - b. Essential to the resurrection is the fact that Jesus actually was dead.
 - c. Many unbelievers have tried to explain away the empty tomb.
 - d. The facts of the resurrection story are related by the gospel writers.
 - e. The eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord.
 - f. Other compelling evidence that Christ was actually raised from the dead.
 - g. There is great significance in the resurrection of Christ.
 - h. 28:9-10: Jesus appears to the women as they return to Jerusalem.
 - i. 28:11-15: The attempted deception by the chief priests.
 - j. 28:16-20: The Great Commission
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MATTHEW 1

A. Matthew 1:1-17: The Genealogy of Jesus.

1. Verse 1: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."
 - a. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ" is not intended to be the name of the book for it contains much more than that. The phrase identifies the information that follows as the pedigree, the genealogical background of Jesus through Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. Ancestral lines were legally traced through the father, which in this case was through the Lord's step-father. The emphasis of this genealogy is to show that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham through David, thus to show that the promises made to these two Old Testament men were fulfilled in Jesus. Another list, differing from Matthew's, appears in Luke 3.
 - b. *Jesus* is equivalent to the Old Testament name *Joshua*; the names mean "savior" or "deliverer." It is the Lord's private, or common, name. The *Jesus* of Hebrews 4:8 is Joshua, the leader of Israel after the death of Moses.
 - c. *Christ* is the Lord's official name, and means "anointed." *Christ* is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament word *Messiah*. The prophets are called *hoi christoi Theou* ("the anointed of God," Ps. 105:15, LXX); the king of Israel was described on occasion as "christos tou Kuriou" ("the anointed of the Lord, 1 Sam. 2:10,35, LXX). The Old Testament priests who were anointed with holy oil, particularly the High Priest (Lev. 4:3,5,16) were referred to by the term "messiah." (See Vine, Vol. 1, p.190). But Jesus Christ is God's anointed one in this age, filling the three-fold function of Prophet, Priest, and King. Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were mere men; Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Deity; he is the Anointed One in the fullest sense.
 - d. *Generation* is used in the sense of genealogy; it designates the line of ancestry through which the fleshly body of Jesus was generated (Rom. 1:3: *was made, came*): "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3).
2. Verses 2-6: "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias."
 - a. From Abraham to David. The Jewish race began with Abraham and was developed through Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Judas (Judah) begat Phares of Tamar (see Gen. 38). In most cases, the names of women are omitted from genealogical tables, but Tamar, Ruth, Rachab, and Mary are specifically cited, and Bathesheba is referred to indirectly in vs. 6. Tamar played the harlot on one occasion; Rahab was a harlot by profession for a time in Jericho; Ruth was a Moabitess; Bathesheba committed adultery with David while married to Uriah the Hittite; and Mary was with child before she was married. She conceived miraculously while still in her virginity, but apparently her pregnancy was public knowledge, and was used against Jesus in John 8:41. God used these women even though they were tainted, in fact or by reputation. He chose Judah as the tribe through which Christ was to come (Heb. 7:14). Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth were Gentiles.
 - b. The line is: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Phares, Esrom, Aram, Aminadab, Naasson, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David. McGarvey and others think that several names are omitted from the genealogy table.
 - c. David is designated "the king" (verse 6). This is due to the important relationship he sustains with Christ and to the Jewish people, and with God: "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, **a man after mine own heart**, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22).
3. Verses 6-11: "And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias; And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon."

- a. From David to the Babylonian captivity. Between Joram and Ozias (Uzziah or Azariah in the Old Testament) three names are omitted in Matthew's list: Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:1), Joash (2 Chron. 22:11), and Amaziah (2 Chron. 24:27). Ozias (Uzziah) is indicated in the text to be the son of Joram, but was actually the son of Amaziah; thus Ozias was not the son, but the great-great-grandson of Joram.
 - b. Does this damage Matthew's credibility? McGarvey explains: "Matthew's object was logical rather than historical. Desiring to prove Jesus to be a son of David, he uses the history of David's posterity exclusively with reference to this purpose....If I could show, for example by authentic records, that my grandfather was a grandson of Christopher Columbus, I would thereby prove my own lineal descent from the great discoverer, even though I should not be able to furnish the other names in the list....In proving that Jesus descended from David, it is immaterial how many names he omits, provided those which he gives are correct" (pp.17f).
 - c. Jeconias (Jechoniah or Coniah) was the son of Josiah. Jeremiah 22:30 teaches that no descendant of Coniah would "prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." This shows that Christ, a descendant of Coniah, will not reign as king in Judah (where Jerusalem is located) over an earthly kingdom. This destroys the notions of premillennialism.
 - d. In Matthew's account, David is said to be the father of Solomon, thus the lineage is traced through him. Luke gives the lineage through Nathan, another son of David by Bathsheba (1 Chron. 3:5). This partially explains the differences between the two genealogical tables given in Matthew and Luke.
4. Verses 12-16: "And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."
- a. "In 1 Chronicles 3:19, Zerubbabel is said to be the son of Pedaiah and not of Shealtiel as Matthew has it. Ezra 3:2 and Nehemiah 12:1 agree with Matthew. The two names, Pedaiah and Shealtiel represent the same person. The nine names from Abiud to Jacob (vs. 15) are not elsewhere mentioned; they belong to the period subsequent to the close of the Old Testament record" (Boles, p.21).
 - b. Matthew does not say that Joseph was the father of Jesus, only that he was the husband of "Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."
 - c. Luke's account lists Heli as the father of Joseph, while Matthew gives his name as Jacob. "In these genealogies and histories of the Old Testament we find that the same person is often called by different names. Gideon was called 'Jerubbaal'; Solomon was called 'Jedidiah' (2 Sam. 12:25); Esther was named 'Hadasah'; Peter was known as 'Simon' and 'Cephas'" (Boles, p.21). This Jacob and Heli may be the same person.
 - d. Another explanation given is that one writer follows the genealogy of Joseph and the other follows that of Mary. This would explain the apparent differences between the two lists.
5. Verse 17: "So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations."
- a. Matthew gives three divisions in the list of Jesus' ancestors. These are not given arbitrarily but are natural. Those in the first division are patriarchs, with David being both a patriarch and king.
 - b. The second division is made up entirely of kings, successors of David; Jechoniah was the last king of Judah in direct line of descent from David although, as McGarvey observes, his brother Zedekiah reigned eleven years after he and a chief part of the royal family had been carried to Babylon (2 Kings 24:15-18). The third division were all heirs of David's throne, but none except Jesus ever became king.
6. The difference in the spelling of the names in the Old and New Testaments is accounted for in part by the differences between the Hebrew and Greek alphabets. Greek has no "h" or "j"; it usually ends masculine proper names with an "s". The Jews were given to contraction of proper names: thus Jehoshaphat is contracted into Josaphat, Jehoram into Joram. Further, all living languages undergo changes, including the way in which words and names are spelled (see McGarvey, pp.22f).
7. Comparison of the genealogies as given in Matthew and Luke:
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LINEAGE IN MATTHEW	LINEAGE IN LUKE
Jesus	Jesus
Joseph & Mary	Joseph
Jacob	Heli
Matthan	Matthat
Eleazer	Levi
Elihud	Melchi
Achim	Janna
Achim	Joseph
Sadoc	Mattias
Azor	Amos
Eliakim	Naum
Ahihud	Esli
	Nagge
	Naath
	Mattathias
	Semei
	Joseph
	Juda
	Joanna
	Rhesa
Zorobabel	Zorababel
Salathiel	Salathiel
Jechonias	Neri
Josias	Melchi
Amon	Addi
Manassas	Cosam
Ezekias	Elmodam
Achaz	Er
Joatham	Jose

Ozias	Eliezer
Joram	Jorim
Josaphat	Matthat
Asa	Levi
Abia	Simeon
Robam	Judah
	Joseph
	Jonan
	Eliakim
	Melea
	Menan
	Mattatha
Solomon	Nathan
David	David
Jesse	Jesse
Obed	Obed
Booz	Booz
Salmon	Salmon
Naason	Naason
Aminadab	Aminadab
Aram	Aram
Esrom	Esrom
Phares	Phares
Judas	Juda
Jacob	Jacob
Isaac	Isaac
Abraham	Abraham
[Beginning point]	[List Continues back to Adam]

8. Matthew's object thus far is to show through the genealogical table he presented that Jesus is the descendant of both Abraham and David (vs. 1).
 - a. God had promised with an oath that he would raise up of David's offspring the Messiah, who would sit on David's throne (Ps. 89:3-4; 132:11; 2 Sam. 7:12; Acts 2:29-30).
 - b. The Jews understood well that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David (Matt. 22:42). Matthew shows that the background of Jesus fully fits that of the Messiah. "...What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David*" (Matt. 22:42).
 - c. What he has given so far has not proved him to be in direct blood-line with David since he is not said to be the son of Joseph, but of Mary. But he was born to Mary after her marriage to Joseph, and thus was Joseph's rightful heir, and inherited the throne through him.
 - d. So far Matthew has not proved that Jesus is the Christ, but only that he is of the right lineage. It establishes one of the facts necessary to proving that he is the Christ (McGarvey).

B. Matthew 1:18-25: The Miraculous Conception.

1. Verse 18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."
 - a. This is how Jesus came to be born. Mary was espoused (betrothed) to Joseph. The time interval between betrothal and the consummation of marriage was sometimes considerable (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Deut. 20:7). This engagement was more sacred and binding than by custom than it is today.
 - b. Matthew omits the account of the angel's visit to Mary (See Luke 1:26ff). She was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Not that the Holy Spirit found her in that condition, but that through his miraculous work, he caused her to conceive. No physical contact was involved.
 - c. Her condition was discovered before Joseph and Mary came together, i.e., before the consummation of their marriage. She remained a virgin until after the birth of Jesus. Joseph "knew her not **until**..." (Matt. 1:25).
 - d. Genesis 3:15 gave the first prophecy of Christ: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Usually "seed" is used in reference to the man, but here it is used with reference to woman. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Jesus was as human as his mother Mary, and as divine as his Father God.
2. Verse 19: "Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."
 - a. When Joseph learned of her condition, and naturally suspecting the obvious, he was minded (he had decided) to put her away privately, not desiring to make her a public example. The engagement of those ancient days required a "putting away" if it was to be broken. From the moment of her betrothal a woman was treated as if she was already married. The betrothal could only be dissolved by divorce. Becoming unfaithful during the period of betrothal was regarded as adultery and was punishable by death (Deut. 22:23-24).
 - b. Joseph is spoken of as her husband, although they were not officially husband and wife. He was a just (righteous) man, which is shown by his unwillingness to bring any unnecessary embarrassment upon Mary or her family. He decided not to humiliate her by exposing what he thought was a case of unfaithfulness. He was both merciful and righteous. He was convinced that she was guilty of fornication, but instead of demanding that the letter of the law be carried out, he sought her best good. He was a very fitting "father" to our Lord.
3. Verses 20-21: "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."
 - a. After learning of Mary's condition, and while he was still considering the situation, God dispatched an angel to convince Joseph that Mary was untainted by sin (her pregnancy was miraculous). God often interfered with human events to prevent certain things from occurring which would have

- hindered or cast doubt on his overall plan. Before pharaoh could approach Sarah after he took her into his house, God thwarted the king (Gen. 12:14-20). If he had "known" Sarah, the promised son (Isaac) might have been considered the Egyptian's offspring.
- b. The angel conversed with Joseph through the medium of a dream, telling him that he was to have no fear in taking Mary as his wife. Notice that Joseph is called the son (descendant) of David. God's heavenly messenger advised Joseph that the unborn child was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. The angel stated further that the child was a son. In view of the identity of this son, there would be no complications in his birth (through disease or accident), although it was necessary for Mary and Joseph to make a journey prior to that blessed event, from Nazareth to Bethlehem. She would bring forth a son!
 - d. Further, this son was provided with a God-given name: Jesus. The meaning of the name is "Savior." The reason for the name is stated by the angel: "He shall save his people from their sins." Christ was not coming into the world to be a military conqueror or worldly ruler; he was coming as a Savior of souls!
4. Verses 22-23: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."
- a. Matthew plainly affirms that all these events took place in order that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled, those words being the ones given in Isaiah 7:14. Modernists of our day deny there is any such thing as fulfilled prophecy, but Matthew does not agree.
 - 1) Isaiah 9:1: "Nevertheless the dimness *shall not be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." Matthew 4:13-15: "And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles."
 - 2) Isaiah 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Matthew 4:16: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."
 - 3) Hosea 11:1: "When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Matthew 2:15: "And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."
 - 4) Jeremiah 31:15: "Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not." Matthew 2:12-18: "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."
 - b. The virgin (Mary) would conceive and bring forth a son known as "Emmanuel." This was not a proper
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name for Jesus, but a description of his true nature. One could see what God the Father is like by seeing what Jesus is like; truly, God was with man in the person of Jesus. "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:7-10).

5. Verses 24-25: "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."
 - a. On awaking, Joseph did as the angel said. He married Mary, and *knew her not* until after Jesus was born. A *firstborn* implies one or more children. We know that Mary did not remain a perpetual virgin.
 - b. Other passages make this truth even clearer:
 - 1) Matthew 12:46-50: "While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."
 - 2) Matthew 13:55-56: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?"
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MATTHEW 2

A. Matthew 2:1-12: Herod's Scheme to Destroy Jesus.

1. Verse 1: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem."
 - a. Bethlehem means *house of bread*, so it is fitting that the *Bread of Life* should be born there. It was located in the territory belonging to the tribe of Judah, being situated about six miles from Jerusalem, or about two hours of distance by foot. Its earliest name was Ephrath or Ephratah. It was the home of Ruth, and was called the "city of David."
 - b. Herod is called "the King" to distinguish him from the other Herods. We know him now as Herod the Great. See Josephus, Ant., Book XIV—XVII. By saying that Jesus was born during the days of Herod the king is the nearest Matthew comes to giving the birth year of Christ. Herod was a descendant of Esau. He had obtained a kingdom encompassing Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Idumea. Herod became a Jew by religion, but he was not a Jew in heart. He hated the Jews; he hired and fired priests; to please himself and the Jews, he rebuilt the temple. By birth he was an Idumean. His reign began about 40-37 B.C.
 - 1) Our calendar, which counts years from the Lord's birth, was invented in 532 by Dionysius Exiguus. He wanted to change the current system which was based on Diocletian's reign in Rome. His plan was to base the calendar on the year of Christ's birth.
 - 2) It has been determined that he made a four-year error when he fixed the birth year as 753 years from the founding of Rome. The Lord began his public ministry in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius (Luke 1:3), and was 30 years old at the time (Luke 3:23). Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great, who died in the year 749 from the founding of Rome. Tiberius succeeded Augustus on August 19, 767; he had co-reigned with Tiberius four years earlier (Boles, p.36f).
 - c. We learn from Luke 1:26-27 and 2:1-4 that Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth prior to their marriage. Micah 5:2 carried a prediction that the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem, hence a providential act of God was necessitated for the prophecy to be fulfilled. God brought them to Bethlehem by means of the enrollment ordered by the Roman Emperor (Luke 2:1-7).
 - d. Matthew reports that wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, seeking the new King of the Jews. The Greek word he used (*magoi*) "designates an order of priests and philosophers called magi, which had existed in the countries east of the Euphrates from a remote period....The men called magicians in the book of Daniel belonged to this order. (Dan. 1:20; 4:9)" (McGarvey, p.26).
 - 1) There is no way to determine how many of these men came: they brought three gifts but that is useless in learning how many were in their company. There have been some "scholars" who not only have said there were three, but have even given their names! The number and the names, *Caspar, Melchoir and Batthazar*, are the products of imagination, not of the Scriptures.
 - 2) Some have asserted that these men were kings, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that conclusion. It has been assumed that the Magi visited Christ in the stable, but other verses show that it was at least 40 days after his birth before they came. Leviticus 12 required that the newborn male child be circumcised on the 8th day after his birth, that the mother be separated from others for the first 7 days following delivery, and that 33 days later the child was to be carried to the tabernacle or temple where a burnt offering was to be made; a sin offering was also to be made for the mother. Luke 2:21-24 relates that this procedure was followed in the present case. Matthew indicates that the family fled to Egypt immediately after the Magi had visited them (2:11-14). Also, when the wise men arrived, the family was living in a house, not a stable (verse 11). Since they fled to Egypt immediately after the Magi left, it follows that the 40 days had passed, and Jesus' presentation at the temple had occurred prior to the arrival of the Magi. Verse 14 shows that Joseph left Bethlehem at night, hence would not have been stopping in Jerusalem to attend to the rites required in Leviticus 12.
 - 3) The Magi came first to Jerusalem, the logical thing to do since that city was known for its great

- temple and was the focal point of the Jewish religion. The star they followed had appeared to them in the East, and in some way, signified to them the birth of the new King. They had made their long journey for the express purpose of worshiping him. The star apparently only gave them a general direction to this point, and was not visible after their arrival. It later reappeared after their talk with Herod.
2. Verse 2: "Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."
 - a. There is much that is unknown about this star: what was it? how large was it? Was it something only these wise men saw? Attempts have been made in recent years to explain it by natural means. A newspaper report in 1977 tried to show that it was a nuclear explosion in outer space; another newspaper report in 1985 claimed it was the appearance of Halley's Comet, which was calculated to have been visible in 12 B.C.
 - b. But that it was a miraculous event will not be denied by any who believe Matthew's inspired report. From man's viewpoint, an actual star does not move, and this one went before the men and stood over the house where Jesus was. The timing of the star's appearance indicates a supernatural act. And that it pointed out the exact location, unerringly, surely demands a miracle.
 - c. But apparently they did not see the star from the time they left the East until it appeared again as stated in verses 9-10. It was not through some natural knowledge that these Magi knew the significance of the star. It was as much a miracle as the way the shepherds learned of the Lord's birth, or the warning the Magi received, charging them not to go back to Herod (verse 12), or the warning Joseph received advising him to flee to Egypt (verses 13-14).
 3. Verses 3-8: "When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."
 - a. Herod learned of the Magi's request and announcement, as did all of the city. It must have created quite a stir. The king demanded of the chief priests and scribes where Christ was to be born. These priests were the religious teachers and the scribes made copies of the Old Testament and kept public records. They were well aware of the place the Scriptures said the Messiah would be born, thus they cited Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting."
 - b. Herod was nearing the end of his reign and was naturally concerned about someone else starting a new dynasty. He called for the Magi and asked pointed questions regarding the time the star appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem to search diligently for the child, and demanded that they send him word "that I may come and worship him also." His later actions show his real purpose (verses 16-18). Notice that though Herod was Jewish by religion, he did not know this important truth about where Christ was to be born.
 4. Verses 9-10: "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."
 - a. On leaving Herod, they saw the star again; it went before them, leading them to the very house where Jesus was. It would have been impossible to find the house without making inquiries, especially if it had been night.
 - b. The star, in guiding the Magi, also offered a measure of privacy and protection to the family. Another round of excitement and trouble would have ensued if the quest of the wise men had been openly announced in Bethlehem.
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5. Verses 11-12: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."
 - a. They found the child, and fell down in worship. These men knew him to be more than a mortal. The gifts they brought were timely since the family had to leave Bethlehem quickly to protect the baby in Egypt.
 - b. Frankincense was a whitish, resinous substance, having an acrid taste and a strong, fragrant smell; it was used chiefly in sacrifices and temple services. Myrrh was a precious gum, and was used for fumigation and perfume. These were valuable, as was the gold. The amount of each is not specified. These items could have been used by Joseph to provide for his family while they were in Egypt.
 - c. The Magi received a warning via a dream (a miraculous revelation) that they should not return to Herod. Heeding the warning, they returned to their own country by a different route.

B. Matthew 2:13-15: The Flight into Egypt.

1. Verse 13: "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."
 - a. Joseph was warned by an angel in a dream about Herod's evil plan to destroy the child. He was ordered to take his family and flee into Egypt. God could have protected them from Herod miraculously in Palestine, but at least one additional purpose for sending them to Egypt is indicated in verse 15.
 - b. Joseph was instructed to remain there until the angel brought word when it was safe to return. An angel (probably the same one) reported when it was safe go back home (verse 19).
2. Verse 14: "When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt."
 - a. Joseph arose, took his family, and departed at night for Egypt. The picture of these events is clear: Joseph received the miraculous dream while asleep; he arose from his bed, took his family, and fled that very night. There was no time for the events at the temple (Luke 2) between the visit of the Magi and the flight to Egypt. Jesus was at least 40 days old when the Magi came to worship him. But McGarvey thought that it was when they returned from Egypt that Jesus was taken to the temple and then on to Nazareth.
 - b. "Neither the arrival of the magi, nor their departure, nor the flight of Joseph and Mary, was known to the people of Bethlehem. To Joseph and Mary that was a night of conflicting emotions. Equally surprised and delighted by the congratulations and presents of the Gentile strangers, they had gone to sleep only to be terrified by the announcement that Herod would seek to kill the child whom the magi had worshiped....They find, as they had found from the beginning, that the high honor of being the earthly parents of the Lord of glory, like every other God-given honor, must be attended by sorrow and self-sacrifice" (McGarvey, pp.28f).
3. Verse 15: "And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."
 - a. The quotation cited here is from Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."
 - b. God is marvelous in his workings; he made the Exodus from Egypt by Israel to be typical of the same movements on the part of his Son!

C. Matthew 2:16-18: The Slaughter of the Infants of Bethlehem.

1. Verse 16: "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men."
 - a. Herod considered the departure of the wise men into their own country without first informing him about the child as mockery. One as wicked as Herod will take affront even when there has been no offense. This is a case where one has the right to refuse an edict of civil authority: It was a wrongful

- request which Herod had made of the wise men, one which they were under no obligation to heed.
- b. Herod's action now was to take steps to eliminate this new king. If he could not locate the exact individual, he would slay all in the same age bracket, thus insuring, he thought, the death of Christ. His order was for all children two years old and younger to be slain (the word is masculine gender in the Greek).
 - c. "At this point the reason why both the visit of the magi and the flight of Joseph and Mary had been kept secret becomes apparent. If these events had been known in Bethlehem the people could have saved their own infants by sending swift messengers to bring back the real object of Herod's jealousy. The infants of Bethlehem died for the safety of him who was destined to die for the safety of all" (McGarvey, p.29).
2. Verses 2:17-18: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."
 - a. There are three types of fulfilled quotations from the prophets given:
 - 1) Matthew 2:6: "And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." The first instance is a literal prophecy which was literally fulfilled in the place of the Lord's birth.
 - 2) Matthew 2:15: "And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." The second is a prophecy fulfilled typically: God called his Son from Egypt following the death of Herod. The passage cited (Hos. 11:1) had a primary and secondary meaning.
 - 3) Matthew 2:18: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." The third is in this passage and concerns the weeping at Bethlehem; it is an example in which the event fulfills the meaning of words used by a prophet, although the words had originally no reference to this event. It is a verbal fulfillment and not a real fulfillment (McGarvey).
 - b. The words quoted from Jeremiah 31:15-17 were originally written concerning the Babylonian captivity. Rama was a town in the territory belonging to Benjamin (Josh. 28:25); Jeremiah was carried there in chains, along with other captives, but was later released by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 40:1; 39:11-12). Here he saw the captives carried into exile and heard the weeping of the poor who were left behind (Jer. 39:10).
 - 1) Rachel is pictured as lamenting because the Benjamites were her descendants, and also since her tomb is nearby (1 Sam. 10:2). The depiction is of the ancient mother of the tribe rising from her tomb, weeping, and refusing to be comforted because of the death of her children.
 - 2) Matthew, by inspiration, uses these words to describe the tearful scene in Bethlehem following the slaughter of the infants. "It was the fulfillment, not of a prediction, properly speaking, but of certain words spoken by the prophet" (McGarvey, p.30).
 - c. Herod was a very corrupt individual. "He had previously been moved by jealousy to murder two high priests, his uncle Joseph, his favorite wife Marianna, and three of his own sons, besides many other innocent persons. When about to die, knowing that his subjects would be inclined to rejoice at his death, he determined to make them mourn, and to this end, he shut up a large number of prominent men in a hippodrome and ordered them to be massacred the moment he should breathe his last" (Josephus, Ant., books xiv-xvii).
 - d. "It is in perfect keeping with this career of jealousy and blood shed that when the birth of a new king not of his family was so mysteriously announced, he should adopt the most desperate measures for putting him out of the way" (McGarvey, p.31).
- D. Matthew 2:19-23: The Death of Herod and Return of Jesus' Family.
1. Verse 19-21: "But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel."
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- a. Herod died, according to the scholars, within a year of Jesus' birth. An angel announced to Joseph in a dream that the enemy was dead, and instructed him to return with his family to Israel.
 - b. Joseph again heeded his instructions.
 2. Verses 22-23: "But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."
 - a. But when he learned that Archelaus reigned in the place of his father Herod, Joseph was fearful to enter the land. He had probably intended to settle in Judea, possibly at Bethlehem. However, in another dream, he was warned to go into Galilee. He settled in Nazareth, and again fulfilled another prophecy (that he would be called a *Nazarene*), although unrecorded in the Old Testament.
 - b. The prophets generally predicted his humble circumstances (cf. Isa. 53). Nazareth was considered "second rate" (John 1:45-46), thus to be called a "Nazarene" by men was intended as no great tribute.
 - c. Matthew possibly quoted a prophet whose message was not made part of the Old Testament record. Only a few of those old prophets left written messages.
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MATTHEW 3

A. Matthew 3:1-4: John the Baptizer Preaches in the Wilderness of Judea.

1. Verse 1: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea."
 - a. "In those days" is a strange way to begin this chapter which discusses events which occurred almost 30 years after the events of the preceding verse. However, the strangeness has a logical explanation.
 - b. Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of **these** kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom...." The context and secular history show that the kings meant were the Roman kings. The first kingdom of Daniel 2 was the Babylonian Empire; the second was the Medo-Persian; the third was the Grecian Empire; and the fourth was the Empire of Rome. God had determined to set up his eternal kingdom during the days when the Roman Empire was in power. Luke 3:1-3 gives the names of the current rulers when God's final plans for the establishment the kingdom were set in motion: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."
 - c. Beginning at this point, Matthew calls attention to God's promise in Daniel 2:44. In the next verse he reports John the Immerser's message to be, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Luke gives a parallel account, but provides the names of the various rulers of the Roman system at the time. Why did he name these rulers if there is no connection with his subject and Daniel 2:44?
 - d. John is called "the Baptist." Some say this verse is a reference to the Baptist church, but that church did not come into existence until the 1600s. There is historical evidence that the Baptist denomination originated from certain apostates from the church of Christ in the latter part of 17th century.
 - e. John is called "the Baptist" because that was what he did: he baptized people. It is used the same way as Alexander is called "the coppersmith" (2 Tim. 4:14) and Zenas is called "the lawyer" (Tit. 3:13). Thayer defines the words as, "A baptizer; one who administers the rite of baptism" (p.95). Josephus, the Jewish historian, spoke of John (*Ant.* 18,5,2, p.382).
 - f. He preached in the wilderness of Judea, near the Jordan River (cf. John 3:23). McGarvey reported that in the Jordan valley the heat and insects make life miserable, but the people still flocked to hear him (*Sermons*, p.310).
2. Verse 2: "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - a. John preached by inspiration (Lk. 3:2; Jn. 1:6-8). The theme of his preaching was repentance; the reason given was the nearness of the kingdom. Only by repenting could the sinful Jews be prepared for the kingdom. They were not inclined seriously to follow the law they had, and without true repentance they could not enter the coming kingdom.
 - b. Repentance was a theme of many Old Testament prophets:
 - 1) Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."
 - 2) Ezekiel 33:11,15: "Say unto them, *As I live*, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?...If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die."
 - 3) Joel 2:12-13: "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."
 - 4) Zechariah 1:3-4: "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me,

- saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and *from* your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD."
- c. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow and results in a changed life (2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). The process includes sorrow over sin, a renunciation of sin, and a determination never to get involved with sin again.
 - 1) Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."
 - 2) Acts 26:20: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, *a repentance* which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (ASV).
 - d. The kingdom of heaven John announced was the one the God of heaven intended to set up (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-4). This was the inducement John offered for their repentance. It is the kingdom of **heaven** in origin, in its destiny, in its King, in its laws, and in its nature. All of its characteristics are heavenly (spiritual). From the very first, therefore, the kingdom is affirmed to be a spiritual kingdom, not a material or earthly monarchy. Various terms are used interchangeably in describing it: kingdom of heaven; kingdom of God; his kingdom; kingdom of his dear Son (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; Col. 1:13; Matt. 19:23; Mark 10:25; 1:15). This kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:18-19).
 - e. When John said it was at hand, he affirmed that it had not come at the time, but was soon to be established.
 - 1) Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 2) Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 3) Matthew 21:34: "And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it."
 - 4) Mark 1:15: "And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."
 - 5) Luke 10:9: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."
 - 6) Luke 21:8: "And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them."
 - 7) Philippians 2:30: "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me." [Notice how the word "nigh" is used here, and compare it with its usage in the above passages].
3. Verse 3: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
 - a. John was spoken of by Isaiah in 40:3 (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). His work is figuratively described as road-building. John prepared the way for Christ by preparing the people. The Law of Moses was a schoolmaster to prepare people for his coming (Gal. 3:24); John's work was to be his forerunner, to "go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).
 - b. John was not Elijah, but operated in the spirit and power of Elijah; however, John did not do miracles (John 10:41).
 4. Verse 4: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey."
 - a. His food and clothing were rough. His clothing was made of camel's hair, and he wore a leather girdle. Elijah wore similar clothing (2 Kings 1:8). His food was locusts and wild honey. Locusts were
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authorized under the Law (Lev. 11:22). Wild honey was abundant in Palestine (Deut. 32:13; Judg. 14:8; 1 Sam. 14:25-26; Ps. 81:16).

- b. His manner of life was austere, which was conducive to the type of work he did. His needs were simple and few.

B. Matthew 3:5-6: The Effect of John's Preaching.

1. Verse 5: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan."
 - a. Despite the distance from the cities and the primitive setting of the place he preached, many people went out to hear him. What he had to say was appreciated and accepted by large numbers of people. The timing was perfect for the best results.
 - b. "John began his ministry A.D. 26, which was a Sabbatical year according to some authorities; the people were not occupied in the cultivation of the soil and in the gathering the grain and gleaning the vineyards; they were in a large measure 'resting' or unemployed, hence had sufficient time to listen to the new prophet" (Boles, p.73).
 - c. Another reason for the good reception was that it had been 400 years since a real prophet had been in Israel.
2. Verse 6: "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."
 - a. John's chief message was one of repentance. Here we are told that those who repented and were baptized, also confessed their sins. Their repentance and confession were prerequisite to baptism since his baptism was "for [unto] the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).
 - b. "The baptism of John has been erroneously by some regarded as a modified application of the Jewish baptism of proselytes; some deny that the proselyte baptism was in use at the time that John began his ministry; however, John's baptism was not an imitation of any other rite or form; his baptism came from heaven" (Boles, p.74).
 - c. John said that **God** had sent him to baptize with water (John 1:33). Jesus asked the religious leaders, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, From men; we fear the multitude; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We know not. He also said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (Matt. 21:25-27).

C. Matthew 3:7-12: John Confronts the Pharisees and Sadducees.

1. Verse 7: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"
 - a. The term *Pharisee* is derived from a Hebrew word meaning *separated* (McGarvey). They used extreme measures to stay separated from all people and things which they considered unclean; they were strict legalists but often "strained out a gnat but swallowed a camel." They followed the opinions of earlier Jewish uninspired writers, taking them as orally transmitted information dating back to ancient times, deeming this material as God's word. The Sadducees were the liberals of the first century. Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected the resurrection, angels, and spirits (Acts 23:8). These were the two principal religious parties of Judaism at the time. Both originated in the second century before Christ.
 - b. Why did members of these sects come to John? Perhaps merely out of curiosity. Luke 7:30 and Matthew 21:25-27 show that the Pharisees and other prominent religious leaders rejected John's baptism, thus it appears they did not come to be baptized. They apparently were trusting their fleshly relationship with Abraham to save them (3:9). John rebuked them on this account, thus it appears that they did not think it was necessary to believe John.
 - c. John called them a generation (or offspring) of vipers. They were deceitful and malicious. He asked, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" This prophet knew of the forthcoming perilous times (the destruction of Judaism and the final Judgment). Why had these leaders come to John? Not to learn the will of God more perfectly.
 2. Verse 8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."
 - a. "In this expression men are represented as trees, and the change of conduct brought about by repentance as fruit which they should bring forth" (McGarvey, p.36). Good fruit comes from good
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- trees. If they wanted to be part of the coming kingdom it was necessary for them to change their ways.
- 1) Acts 26:20: "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."
 - 2) Revelation 2:5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."
- b. "We are not to understand that John refused to baptize them, nor that he asked them to go off and prove their repentance before he could baptize them; he only gave them this instruction. In their impenitent condition they could not escape the wrath of God...instead of their unrepentant condition he required genuine repentance" (Boles, p.78). "And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:10-14).
3. Verses 9-10: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."
- a. The Jews relied on their relationship with Abraham as a ticket into the kingdom.
 - 1) John 8:39: "They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."
 - 2) Romans 9:7: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called."
 - 3) They thought the kingdom would be as earthly as David's was. Nicodemus made these mistakes, also (John 3:1ff).
 - b. God could easily create fleshly descendants of Abraham. "The point in this remark is to show that it is the mere creative power of God that makes men children of Abraham, and that, therefore, there is no spiritual virtue in the connection" (McGarvey, p.36).
 - c. God's spiritual axe was poised before the trees. The trees which were not bringing forth good fruit would be hewn down and cast into the fire. "Thus he insists on the personal responsibility of every man, without regard to ancestry" (McGarvey, p.36). Those who did not repent and make the proper change true repentance requires would be rejected by God, regardless of their connection with Abraham. A new day was dawning! Those Jews who did not become part of the coming spiritual kingdom would be rejected along with the whole unbelieving nation.
 - d. The nation itself would be cast off. Those living in A.D. 70 would suffer much grief because of their unbelief (Matt. 24:1-35; Rom. 11:11-15). The final penalty for them is eternal loss in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:11-15).
4. Verse 11: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire."
- a. John baptized the people in water, but one was coming after him who was greater than John, who would baptize certain ones with the Holy Ghost and fire. The apostles were baptized (overwhelmed) in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2; all the wicked will be baptized in the fire of hell. Three baptisms are mentioned in the verse: (1) baptism in water, (2) baptism in the Spirit, and (3) baptism in the lake of fire.
 - b. Did the baptism of John bring them to repentance? (Cf. "I baptize you with water unto repentance"). The purpose of his baptism was "the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). "The desire to receive the forgiveness of sin would prompt those who had not submitted to John's baptism to repent so that they might be baptized and in so doing receive the remission of sins" (Boles, p.82). Repentance brought them to baptism; baptism did not bring them to repentance. "Promotions in the army are in

order to the encouragement of obedience and valor, although these qualities of the good soldier must appear before promotion can take place. In the same way was John's baptism in order to repentance..." (McGarvey, p.37).

- c. *With* water is from the Greek *en* ("in"). John baptized people in Jordan: "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (Jn. 3:23).
 - d. Many think that this verse teaches that baptism of the Holy Spirit and baptism in fire are for all righteous people. To best understand who would be baptized in the Spirit, the fulfillment must be weighed. In John 14-16, Christ gave the promise of Holy Spirit baptism to the apostles only. Acts 1:26—2:47 shows that only the apostles received it. John's statement must be understood as being limited.
 - e. Baptism with fire is a reference to the final punishment of the wicked. A limited fulfillment of the statement could be to the overthrow of Judaism in A.D. 70. The next verse shows conclusively that no rational person should desire the baptism of fire. The baptism of fire has nothing to do with the "cloven tongues like as of fire" that sat upon the apostles when they received Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:3).
 - f. The One coming after John would be mightier than John (Mk. 1:7; Luke. 3:16; John 3:28-31). John only baptized in water; Christ would baptize in the Spirit and fire.
5. Verse 12: "Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."
- a. He used the ancient method of separating the wheat from the chaff to depict the separation of the righteous and wicked. A large wooden shovel was used to throw the wheat into the air after the oxen had trodden on it. The chaff would be blown aside by the wind, leaving the grain behind.
 - b. He pictures the world as a threshing floor, and the Lord as the farmer separating the good from the worthless; the one to be put in a safe place and the other to be burned.

D. Matthew 3:13-17: The Baptism of Jesus.

1. Verse 13: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."
 - a. Jesus was now about 30: "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli" (Luke 3:23). John continued to baptize people for a while (John 3:22-24). The exact location at Jordan where the Lord was immersed is unknown.
 - b. He came to John to be baptized, which was in keeping with God's will (Heb. 10:7; cf. Luke 7:30).
 - 1) Hebrews 10:7: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."
 - 2) Luke 7:29-30: "And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."
2. Verse 14: "But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"
 - a. John opposed the idea of immersing the Lord. He recognized Christ, and knew that the Holy One did not need baptism.
 - b. Some argue that the purpose of baptism is not "for the remission of sins," because Jesus had no guilt. But the Lord was baptized in spite of his sinlessness; he was immersed to fulfill righteousness (to obey God). Luke 1:36 shows that Mary and Elizabeth (and thus, John and Jesus) were cousins. John was inspired, and from natural and supernatural viewpoints, he could know Christ. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:29-33).
3. Verse 15: "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all

righteousness. Then he suffered him."

- a. The Lord insisted on being baptized because it "becometh us to fulfill all righteousness"
 - 1) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
 - 2) Matthew 21:25: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?"
 - 3) Luke 1:5-6: "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."
 - 4) John 1:33: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."
 - 5) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 6) Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
 - 7) 1 John 3:7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
 - b. *Now* indicates some force to John's position, but baptism has two sides: remission of sins and obedience to God.
4. Verses 16-17: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- a. Three Divine Personalities are pictured: Jesus at the river, the Spirit descending, and the voice of the Father speaking from heaven.
 - b. God's audible voice acknowledged his good pleasure in his Son. Cf. John 12:28: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again."
 - c. Matthew 12:18: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles."
 - d. John 1:29-33: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."
 - e. Luke 3:22: "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."
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MATTHEW 4

A. Matthew 4: 1-11: Jesus is Tempted.

1. Verses 1-2: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered."
 - a. The parallel accounts are given in Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1ff. The Lord was "led" into the wilderness in order to be tempted by Satan. This leading was deliberate and was from someone other than himself; the Holy Spirit guided him to proceed into the wilderness. Mark uses a stronger term to describe this action: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). It was the will of the Father that the Son endure the forth-coming temptations—thus it was a God-given requirement.
 - b. There is no significant interval of time between his baptism and temptations for Mark states he was "immediately" driven into the wilderness. The inspired writer is not implying that Christ had to be forced into the wilderness where he was to be tempted, but that there was a divine motivation from heaven behind this event. It was not against his own will. He fasted for 40 days and nights, an action dependent upon his own determined volition. His temptations were for the purpose of proving and testing him for the work he was to do and to make him the perfect example. The location of this trial is not specified, but tradition suggests that it was the rugged mountainous region near Jericho.
 - c. "The original Greek for 'devil' means 'calumniator, slanderer'; it is sometimes applied to men, as to Judas (John 6:70); in 1 Timothy 3:11 (slanderers); and in 2 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 2:3 (false accusers). The devil, Satan, the god of this world, is always singular, never plural; it is not the same in the original as 'demon,' which means an unclean spirit which possessed men and was cast out by Jesus and his apostles. The Greek word for devil conveys the idea of deceiving, accusing, calumniating; the term is never used in the Bible to signify an evil spirit and is never used to personify the evil in man or in the world. The devil is represented in the New Testament as an adversary of human souls, endeavoring by various snares to take us captive, suggesting evil thoughts to our minds, or erasing good impressions which have been produced there, or putting hindrances in the way of good work, or inspiring persecutors of the faithful, and as certain to be...finally cast into torment. (Matt. 13:19; Luke 22:31; John 13:2; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3,14; Eph. 6:11; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Pet. 5:8,9; Rev. 2:10; 12:9; 20:1-3, 7-10)" (Boles, p.96).
 - d. Since God operates on human hearts indirectly through means in order to produce obedience, so the devil operates on us indirectly through the means at his disposal in order to produce disobedience.
 - e. Moses (Ex. 34:28) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8) also fasted forty days and nights. During this period, our Lord ate nothing (Luke 4:2). Moses represented the Law, Elijah the prophets, and Christ was representative of the New Covenant. To endure such a long period without food requires complete commitment to a great cause.
 - f. He afterward hungered. The record given by Mark and Luke might seem to indicate that he was tempted during the forty days; Matthew says the temptations were given after the forty days of fasting. Matthew is emphasizing the specific enticements which are related in the following verses; Mark and Luke include the temptation relating to the fasting itself.
 - g. "Just after his baptism, with the glow of the descended Spirit still upon him, and the commending voice of the Father still in his ears, Jesus is rushed into the suffering of temptation. Thus abrupt and violent are the changes of life. The spiritually exalted may expect these sharp contrasts. After being in the third heaven, Paul had a messenger of Satan to buffet him" (McGarvey).
 2. Verses 3-4: "And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."
 - a. **The First Temptation.** The purpose of the devil was to get the Lord to obey him and thus disobey God. The request Satan here made of Christ appears to have no evil connotation. "A good motive for the proposed act is suggested, and the sinfulness of it is so skillfully disguised, that few persons even to this day are able to detect it. It would be difficult, therefore, if not impossible, to conceive of a
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- stronger temptation" (McGarvey, p.41).
- b. We are not told the form in which the devil appeared to Christ. In Eden, he appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent. Whatever the form, Christ knew him.
 - c. "If thou be the Son of God..." Satan knew the identity of Christ; since he is the Son of God, he would be able to substantiate his identity with the greatest of miracles. Then the devil tells him to turn stones into bread. The Lord was exceedingly hungry, so the desire to follow the devil's demand would be great.
 - d. But the devil prefaced his remarks with a doubt: If you are God's Son. He fully knew that Jesus was the Son of God. If the Lord had turned the stones into bread, he would have been perverting the central purpose of his miracles: proving his divine Sonship (John 20:30-31; 3:2). This would have been a violation of God's will. If he had followed the devil's instruction he would have been obeying Satan instead of God, hence would have committed sin.
 - e. Christ replied to this temptation by citing Deuteronomy 8:3. "Israel had been led by God into the wilderness, where there was no bread; had been subjected to intensive hunger there, and had then been fed by bread from heaven. Moses explains that this was to teach them that 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'....Jesus finds in this a precedent for himself....The duty of Israel is now his duty....They sinned by murmuring against Moses, and by proposing to seek bread in their own way—that is, by returning into Egypt (Ex. 16:1-9). He will commit a similar sin if, distrustful of God, he seeks to turn stones into bread. They were taught to rely upon the God who had brought them into trouble to deliver them from it. This, now, is his duty, and he accepts the precedent as his guide" (McGarvey, pp.41f).
 - f. There is in this temptation a veiled attack on the goodness of God: "You claim to be God's Son; but look at you now! What has God done to you? He has not fed you; he has brought you into this desolate place, caused you to suffer terrible hunger, and has left you here to die." This is what Satan convinced many of the Israelites to believe.
 - g. This temptation was through the avenue of *the lust of the flesh*. There is nothing wrong with eating bread when one is hungry, but in the peculiar case of our Lord in this instance, to produce bread miraculously to satisfy his hunger would have been sinful.
 - h. The case also establishes just how useful to us the Old Testament is. The Lord's use of Scripture to fend off temptation shows the power of the word of God.
 - 1) Psalms 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."
 - 2) Psalms 119:105 "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
 - 3) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 3:14-15: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."
 - 5) 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."
 - i. Satan, being very intelligent and wise, attacks us in our weak points, and when we are most vulnerable. But we can overcome him.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There

hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."

- 2) James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
3. Verses 5-7: "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
- a. **The Second Temptation.** Luke places this temptation third. How did Satan take Jesus to the high place on the temple? The record does not say. The devil could have been in appearance as an ordinary man, and they could have walked into Jerusalem and entered the temple in the common way. The "holy city" is Jerusalem.
 - b. "Jesus did not belong to the Levitical priesthood, and never entered the temple proper; he only entered the court and porches of the temple. There were the long porticoes which were covered and some of these were built up above the wall to a great height; the outer battlement of such a roof, rising above the outer wall, is probably what is here called 'the pinnacle of the temple.' 'The pinnacle' was some very high point of the temple building. The word translated pinnacle means literally a 'little wing.' The high point was such that a fall from it would be fatal, and especially if one 'cast' himself from it" (Boles, p.100).
 - c. The word used "does not enable us to determine what part of the temple is meant. But...the south-east corner of the wall around the temple best coincides. From this point to the valley of the Kedron below is said by Josephus to have been about 600 feet...The foundations of the wall are nearly ninety feet below the present surface of the ground" (McGarvey, p.42).
 - d. "Cast thyself down." Satan then cited Psalm 91:11, quoting it verbatim from the LXX (Boles), but perverted its meaning. No scripture ever gives us the right to put God to such a test. If the Lord had submitted to this demand, he would have been testing God wrongfully. It would have been a perverted use of miraculous power.
 - e. "Every consideration seemed to be in favor of making the leap except the fear of personal injury, and this consideration must be rejected as indicating a distrust in God" (McGarvey, p.42). A successful leap would prove conclusively to Jesus that God was his Father; it would demonstrate to the Father the extent of Jesus' trust; it could be used to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.
 - f. This was a temptation classed under *the lust of the eyes* in that it would presumptuously demand that God use this means to prove his Divine Sonship in a spectacular display. The temptation was to demand proof of Sonship by an ostentatious means. But again Christ countered by appealing to the Scriptures. He showed by the passage he cited (Duet. 6:16) that Satan had misused the verse he used in offering the temptation. There is a general providential watch over the people of God, but not to the extent that he will intervene miraculously to spare one from danger, especially in a case where one has foolishly endangered himself.
 - g. "The quotation that Jesus gave did not contradict the quotation that the devil gave; all scriptures harmonize" (Boles, p.101). The devil used a figurative statement and applied it in a literal sense. The passage the Lord used sheds additional light on, and helps explain, the passage the devil quoted.
4. Verses 8-10: "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."
- a. **The Third Temptation.** Satan took the Lord to the top of an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. There is nothing in the context to demand that this be understood as an allegorical expression. But neither do we have any indication which mountain is meant. Some scholars think he merely conjured the sight up in the Lord's mind by a vivid verbal description of these kingdoms. It was something of this nature or else some sort of miraculous demonstration. How these kingdoms were presented to the Lord's vision is immaterial; what is important is the temptation which

- accompanied the presentation. "All the kingdoms of the world" could not be seen from the top of a mountain. Luke adds the phrase, "In a moment of time" (4:5).
- b. Did the devil possess the power to bring this about miraculously? He offered all these kingdoms to Jesus if he would only fall down and worship him. If Satan did not have the ability to give these kingdoms to Jesus [in some way], there would have been no temptation. If the Lord only thought he could receive these kingdoms when in fact he could not obtain them from Satan, he is not the Son of God. A genuine temptation did occur. This temptation was of *the pride of life* variety.
 - 1) John 14:30: "I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me."
 - 2) Ephesians 2:2: "Wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (ASV).
 - a) The *prince of the power of the air* is a reference to the devil, a real being whose sole aim is to defeat the purposes of Almighty God. He is unconcerned about the fact that countless precious souls of men are consigned to *Gehenna* as a consequence of his activities (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 11:13-15).
 - b) Satan is also called the "god of this world." "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4).
 - c) Satan is described as "the prince of this world." "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).
 - d) Satan's strength is spoken of as the "power of darkness."
 - (1) Luke 22:53: "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."
 - (2) Colossians 1:13: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son."
 - (3) Ephesians 6:12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*."
 - 3) The word *air* is used in reference to the realm of Satan's influence in this world. It is equivalent to "*the world*" of 1 John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." There is nothing inherently sinful about the physical universe, but in this universe (specifically, on earth), there is a "world of iniquity." This world is the arena of sin and rebellion against God.
 - c. Luke adds, "For it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it" (Luke 4:6, ASV). For Christ to receive these kingdoms from the devil it was necessary to change his allegiance from God to Satan, a thing he was unwilling to do. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:24-25).
 - d. The Lord bluntly and forthrightly refused the offer, and commanded Satan to depart. He again appealed to Scripture as reason for his refusal: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (4:10; Deut. 6:13). Jesus addressed the devil as *Satan*, the adversary; his identity is unmasked completely. The devil failed in his subterfuges and his overt attempt to get Christ to follow him. He had no choice but to leave the Lord's presence.
 - e. In these temptations, the devil demonstrated the awesome influence he then possessed. Now any child of God can dismiss Satan from his presence: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7); he has power over us only to the extent we permit. He no longer can take over a person as he did during that ancient time.
5. Verse 11: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."
 - a. The devil left the Lord; Luke adds, "For a season" (Luke 4:13). "Hereafter I will not talk much with
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you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). Then the angels came and ministered to Christ, supplying him with his physical needs. Satan had put Adam and Eve through a similar test in Eden (Gen. 3); they miserably failed the test and sin entered the world, with all its evil consequences.

- b. In the events of this present case, the destiny of the world was hanging in the balance. If Christ had succumbed to any of these powerful allurements, there would be no hope left for the world. Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus was tempted in the first instance when Satan claimed there was no reason to trust God (an under-trust of God); in the second by a wrongful over-trust of God; in the third by an abandonment of God.

B. Matthew 4:12-17: Jesus Takes Up Residence in Capernaum.

1. Verses 12-13: "Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."
 - a. Matthew's account omits some events the other writers record: the Lord's trip to Galilee (John 1:43), the marriage in Cana (John 2); the events of John 4:1-42.
 - b. Jesus went up to Galilee when he heard John was imprisoned, but as noted above, there were other events that occurred in between his temptation and that journey. John 1-3, if inserted chronologically into Matthew's record, would properly fit between the eleventh and twelfth verses of Matthew four.
 - c. Verse 13 indicates that Jesus was in Nazareth after returning to Galilee, for he left this little town and went on to Capernaum. This latter city was situated on the borders of the territories that belonged to Zebulun and Naphtali, on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum is called the Lord's own city in Matthew 9:1, where he paid his taxes (Matt. 17:24). It was one of the chief cities of Galilee, and the home of Peter and Andrew, James and John, and perhaps even Matthew (Mt. 9:1-9; Mk. 1:21; Lk. 5:27; 7:1,8; John 6:59).
 - d. Jesus taught in the synagogue; a Roman garrison and custom station was there; it was denounced by Christ later for its rejection of him (Mt. 11:23). It has been destroyed since then, and Boles says that no trace of it had been found at the time he wrote his commentary.
2. Verses 14-16: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."
 - a. "Beyond Jordan" has a different meaning (according to McGarvey) than usual; this prophecy was given by Isaiah who was in Jerusalem at the time of his prophecy; the southern end of the Sea of Galilee is the beginning point of Jordan. From Isaiah's perspective, beyond Jordan was the area north of that point. Beyond Jordan usually has reference to the territory to the east of that notable river. (See Isa. 9:1-2 for the prophecy).
 - b. It is called Galilee of the Gentiles (nations) because in Isaiah's day the population was largely intermixed with, and corrupted by, Gentiles (McGarvey, p.47).
 - c. "Saw a great light" is a reference to the Great Teacher. Isaiah predicted the very land where a sizeable portion of the Lord's ministry would be done. No great prophet but Jesus did his work there. "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (Jn. 7:52).
3. Verse 17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - a. The theme of Jesus' preaching from the beginning was the same as John's: repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - b. Eighty-four inspired preachers proclaimed the same message (John, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy: Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9). Yet the premillennialists today say all these preachers (including Jesus!) were wrong. Jesus' regular ministry begins with the events of this passage.

C. Matthew 4:18-22: Jesus Calls the Disciples.

1. Verses 18-20: "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me,

and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him."

- a. He saw Peter and Andrew, who were brothers, casting a net into the sea. He invited them to follow him and become fishers of men.
 - b. One might conclude when considering only this passage that this was the first contact he had made with them. Even Christ would not expect two such men to give up their business, family and friends, and follow a complete stranger. John 1:36-42 records the first meeting between these two and Christ: "And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."
2. Verses 21-22: "And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."
 - a. Two other brothers, James and John, who were mending their nets, were invited to follow Jesus also. Immediately they left their ship and their father and followed him.
 - b. Other details are given in Luke 5:1-11 and 6:12-13.
- D. Matthew 4:23-25: General Circuit of Galilee; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44.
1. Verse 23: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."
 - a. "The synagogues were buildings erected for a species of public instructions which had originated since the close of Old Testament history" (McGarvey, p.48). These synagogues furnished Christ and the apostles suitable places and occasions to preach.
 - b. "In them the law and the prophets were publicly read in such portions as to include the whole of the Old Testament in the course of the year. After the reading, comments were made and exhortations delivered. A body of rulers, usually called elders, presided over each synagogue, and a discipline was enforced which sometimes resulted in expulsion, and sometimes in the use of the scourge. (See 10:17; Lk. 4:16-20; John 9:42; Ac. 13:14-16)" (ibid.).
 - c. He healed many.
 - 1) Matthew 9:35: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."
 - 2) Matthew 12:15: "But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all."
 2. Verse 24: "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them."
 - a. Naturally his fame for such miracles would spread. Soon, almost the whole populace was coming to hear him. Their motives were not always pure. Galilee was more connected to Damascus by trade than to Jerusalem, thus his reputation went far and wide, even into Syria.
 - b. "There were many kinds of diseases then and Jesus healed them; some of these diseases were attended with excruciating pain; others were 'possessed with demons' and were healed. It seems that the difference between this and other diseases was in its cause and not its symptoms. We find violent madness (Mark 5:4; Luke 8:29), epilepsy (Mark 9:18; Luke 9:39), dumbness (Matt. 9:32; Luke 11:14), blindness (Matt. 12:22), all ascribed to persons who were possessed with demons. There were diseases among them which were not caused by evil spirits" (Boles, p.118).
 3. Verse 25: "And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from*

Jerusalem, and *from* Judaea, and *from* beyond Jordan."

- a. Great multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan followed him. The number is indeterminable. "The miracles of Jesus for a season attracted such crowds and excited so many that they saw and heard but little else than the power of Jesus to cure diseases; many did not appreciate his teaching, neither did they look forward with great anxiety to the coming kingdom. The miracles of Jesus, if properly understood, would mean that he who wrought the miracle had the power of God, and if he had the power of God in working miracles, God was with him in his teachings" (Boles, p.119).
 - b. "The facts of this section furnish another argument in favor of the claims of Jesus. They show that his dwelling-place was that in which the prophet had predicted the appearance of a great light....No clearer proof could be given..." (McGarvey, p.48).
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MATTHEW 5

A. Matthew 5:1-12: The Beatitudes.

1. Verses 1-2: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying."
 - a. Likely the best-known of all the teaching Jesus did was this sermon; it is properly called the greatest of all sermons. It is simply a series of simple declarative statements regarding the meaning of citizenship in the kingdom of God, the church. Matthew 4:23 says that Jesus preached *the gospel of the kingdom* (Cf. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Lk. 10:9). Matthew 7:28-29 calls it *his doctrine*. No other sermon has influenced mankind as this sermon has.
 - b. The Sermon on the Mount pointed to the New Covenant, the new dispensation, and the new kingdom, which began in Acts 2 and will continue to the end of time (Jude 3).
 - 1) This sermon therefore contains the basic principles of the kingdom; it deals with fundamental precepts of conduct which are bound to the end of time.
 - 2) This sermon has been called *the constitution* of the kingdom; it relates to the Gospel as the ten commandments related to the Law of Moses.
 - c. A consideration of the sermon calls on us to:
 - 1) **Consider the Preacher.** One can benefit more from a sermon if he has the utmost regard for the speaker, thus the preacher must be spiritually qualified. This Preacher was the Son of God; the Prince of all preachers. He is intelligent; he has infinite knowledge, and possesses all authority (John 2:25; 7:46; Matt. 7:28-29; 28:18). He practiced what he preached (Acts 1:1; Heb. 4:15; John 8:46).
 - 2) **Consider the Pulpit.** Matthew says it was on a mountain, but does not identify it. Tradition asserts that it was on an elevation between Mount Tabor and Mount Tiberius. This site is visible from the Sea of Galilee, probably is the place called Horns of Hattin. This mountain has two humps, or horns, which rise about 60 feet above the surrounding terrain; between these two peaks is a wide grassy stretch forming a natural amphitheater. Luke describes the location as level (6:17). The Lord was seated while speaking. Mountains were prominent in many Bible events: Moriah; Horeb; Sinai; Carmel; Hermon; Olivet; Ararat.
 - 3) **Consider the Audience.** His disciples were there (5:1); the twelve had just been chosen. Besides them there were the great multitudes which came out to see Jesus. None was barred. Sinai was fenced off when the Old Law was given (Ex. 19:20-23).
 - 4) **Consider the Message.** The principles included were vastly superior to anything originating from mere men. It is comprehensive for it sums up total New Testament teaching. It contains the highest ideals. Ideals are the foundations of character. Our eternal destiny is determined by the character we develop on earth. The character we take into eternity will be the same as we developed here. "It is probable that Jesus repeated often the teachings that he here gave: Matthew records his teaching in this sermon with 107 verses, while Luke gives only thirty verses. The first part of this sermon is called 'the beatitudes,' from 'beatus,' the Latin word for 'blessed'; there are eight in number; some say nine (Luke adds four woes, 6:24-26)" (Boles, p.120).
 - d. In the beatitudes, Jesus states several principles the doing of which produces a state of happiness for the individual. Lasting happiness is not to be found in amassing great fortunes or possessions; it is not to be found in beauty, strong drink, or in any sinful pleasure or worldly pursuit. Happiness that endures is to be found in following the principles set forth in the beatitudes. "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:14).
 - e. "Throughout the ministry of Jesus we find a remarkable absence of action and attitude in the delivery of his public addresses...Jesus usually delivered his addresses...in a sitting posture" (McGarvey, p.49). "And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him" (Luke 4:20). In this latter situation, the Lord stood up to read and sat down to make further comments.
 2. Verse 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
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- a. The poor in spirit "are those whose minds are suited to the humble station of life; 'poor' means destitute of something; poor in spirit means those who are destitute of the proud, haughty, arrogant spirit of the world" (Boles, p.120). "By the poor in spirit are meant those who are sensible of spiritual destitution, and who long for a better spiritual state" (McGarvey, p.49).
 - b. The poor in spirit are those who are the opposite of the proud and self-righteous; they are the humble ones who understand their lowly state as compared to the Lord.
 - 1) It describes those who are contrite and reverent; it is the beginning point for those who seek to enter God's spiritual kingdom and go on to heaven.
 - 2) Those who have a sense of their own unworthiness are poor in spirit. The prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), the Publican (Lk. 18:9-13), and the Pentecostians (Acts 2:37), saw themselves as they really were. The first step toward true happiness is this humble attitude. "For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is poor* and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).
 - c. Pride and haughtiness, or an attitude of self-sufficiency lead to sure ruin.
 - 1) It causes man to trust in himself, not in God: "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).
 - 2) It leads to presumptuous sins: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (2 Chron. 26:16).
 - 3) It gives glory to man, not to God:
 - a) Daniel 4:30-31: "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."
 - b) Hosea 13:1: "When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died."
 - 4) It prevents entry into the Lord's kingdom: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).
 - 5) It hinders confession of wrong.
 - 6) It causes contentions: "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom" (Prov. 13:10).
 - 7) It causes apostasy:
 - a) Proverbs 16:18: "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
 - b) 1 Timothy 3:6: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."
 - d. But humility can be perverted.
 - 1) This we do if we destroy our own self-esteem and confidence, which we must have to be of use to Christ. We must know our own worth: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).
 - 2) It is proper and necessary to love our own soul and life: "...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:39).
 - 3) We would be useless to the Lord if we hold ourselves in utter contempt: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"
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- (Rom.s 12:3). We ought not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.
- 4) Physically abusing the body is a perversion of humility: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God....Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Col. 2:18-19,23). Some have slept on thorns or stones, ate only bread and water, never bathed, never changed their clothes. Peter of Alcantara slept only 90 minutes each 24 hours. These eccentrics thought that their conception of how to show humility would certainly be recognized by the Lord as such, but their efforts to show humility became a demonstration of pride!
 - e. True humility can be cultivated.
 - 1) To do so, we must be aware of our true condition; to see ourselves as God sees us (cf. Rev. 3:17). We must also see ourselves as he sees us when we are right: (Rom. 8:14, 16-18; Rev. 2:8-10). We must learn to depend on God.
 - 2) We must recognize and accept our relationship to God. He is the Creator; we are the created. He is the Father; we are but children. He has all authority; we have little.
 - 3) We must continually compare our progress with the perfect standard: the infallible Word and Christ, the perfect example.
 - a) James 1:25: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."
 - b) 1 Peter 2:21: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."
 - f. Humility (poverty of spirit) has blessings to be enjoyed: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10).
 - 1) The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Only those who are humble will seek it (Matt. 6:33; 7:7-8) and enter it; the proud will neither seek nor enter it (Col. 1:13-14; cf. Matt. 11:11).
 - 2) Fellowship with the best people on earth (Eph. 2:19).
 - 3) The greatest blessings to be had on earth (Eph. 1:3).
 - 4) Entrance into the eternal kingdom (heaven) is open to us (2 Pet. 1:11).
3. Verse 4: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."
 - a. This is paradoxical and contrary to our ideas. Not all that mourn will be blessed, because the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Cor. 7:10; cf. Matt. 27:3-5).
 - 1) The pessimist and chronic complainer (truly a mourner) is excluded.
 - 2) Those who suffer loss of wealth, position, or power may mourn over the loss, but these are not the ones the Lord had in mind.
 - 3) Those who suffer the just consequences of their sins are not included: they are receiving the just recompense of reward (cf. thieves; drunkards; criminals).
 - 4) Those who suffer from persecution are not primarily included here; these are considered in Matthew 5:10-12. Mourning over persecution gives little or no comfort.
 - b. But those who mourn in reference to sin will be comforted. "The mourning referred to springs from sympathy with God, whose will is so grievously disregarded and thwarted by men" (Boles, p.121). Consider again the plight of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).
 - c. The mourning considered here is over our own sins; it produces repentance which can result in salvation. Godly sorrow (mourning) produces repentance, which results in salvation, which in turn gives happiness! "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). To labor and be heavily laden (mourning) gives rest (comfort and happiness).
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For
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- godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, *a repentance* which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:9-10, ASV).
- 2) Acts 8:39: "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."
 - 3) Acts 16:30-34: "And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."
- d. Guilt of sin is man's greatest problem (Rom. 3:12,23; 6:23). There is much reason to mourn! (Rom. 7:24; Jas. 4:8-10; cf. Ps. 51:1-12; Luke 22:54-62; Acts 9:1-9, 17-20; 8:18-24; Luke 15:13-20; Acts 2:37).
- e. The rewards of mourning over sin.
- 1) There is blessedness in feeling pain. If you injure your foot, and feel pain, that means you are alive and that you are not paralyzed. There is pain in connection with surgery, but you know that it is a small price to pay to receive a full measure of health again. There is pain with bearing a child, but the pleasure of having a healthy baby is worthwhile (John 16:21). If one feels no pain when he commits sin, that indicates his conscience may be hard (1 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:19); also, when one shows remorse for sin, the outcome is pleasant (Jas. 4:9-10).
 - 2) Mourning over sin, repenting, and being forgiven gives great reward to the soul. We are then joyful and have comfort because we are now justified and accepted (Rom. 8:28-30). We have heaven's open gate awaiting us (Rev. 21:4; 2 Pet. 1:11).
 - 3) God will hear our prayers and providentially bless us.
 - a) Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
 - b) Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - c) Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
4. Verse 5: "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."
- a. Men equate meekness with weakness, lack of confidence, cowardliness, unmanliness, etc., but this is not the Biblical meaning.
 - 1) The ancient use of the word pictured a wild horse whose will had been tamed and brought under control.
 - 2) The basic element of meekness, derived from its root meaning, is equilibrium. "Full and complete possession of all the faculties of one's being, and inner mastery." "The meaning of 'prautes' is not readily expressed in English, for the terms meekness, mildness, commonly used, suggest weakness and pusillanimity to a greater or less extent, whereas 'prautes' does nothing of the kind...It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself; but the Lord was 'meek' because he had the infinite resources of God at His command" (Vine, Vol. 3, p.56).
 - 3) Meekness describes one who has been used to going his own way, but who is now submissive to God; he goes God's way, fully assured of being right in so-doing.
 - 4) Meekness is associated with lowliness (Eph. 4:32); with a quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4); and with gentleness (Tit. 3:2).
 - 5) Meekness does not involve giving up one's personal, legal rights. Rather than suggest weakness, it pictures great strength of faith and character. It bears the idea of gentleness of strength, is patient in the reception of injuries, believing God will vindicate in due time: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith
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the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom. 12:19-20).

- b. Meekness is exemplified by great Bible characters.
 - 1) In Abraham, who gave Lot first choice without murmur or complaint (Gen. 13).
 - 2) In Moses, who is called the greatest of his generation in this quality (Num. 12:3). He was not weak, cowardly, or unmanly; he is the picture of strength and manliness. His will was his own until he answered God's call (Ex. 3). He followed God, being assured of the rightness of the way he was led.
 - 3) Jesus is the greatest example (Matt. 11:29). He was strong and courageous; he disputed with powerful leaders; he drove the merchants from the temple; he faced Pilate and others unflinchingly; he was not afraid of death.
- c. Meekness must be characteristic of all Christians.
 - 1) A strong character (meekness) is required in order to remain faithful when all others engage in sinful practices, and cast scorn upon you.
 - 2) It takes strong character (meekness) to endure persecution and temptation.
 - 3) Meekness is also required to refuse to laugh at filthy jokes.
 - 4) This same strength of character is necessary to preach and defend the truth.
- d. The blessing of meekness is: they shall inherit the earth.
 - 1) The Watchtower Witnesses have built a fanciful theory around this statement, and abuse it by teaching a literal eternal abode upon earth for the *faithful*. This passage does not support such a view (Luke 12:15; 2 Pet. 3:10; 1 Cor. 15:50; Matt. 24:35). The earth will be utterly destroyed at the Lord's second coming.
 - 2) There is a difference between possessing the earth and inheriting the earth. Selfish, warlike people may possess it; but it is the meek that shall inherit it. "The meek will enjoy the temporal blessings more than others and finally will triumph over the earth in the kingdom of God" (Boles, p.122). Spiritually-minded saints see the earth and its bounty in the right perspective: to be enjoyed, and used for the good of man and God; not as the end itself, but as a means to the real end—that of enhancing and furthering the cause of God (Mark 12:29-31; 16:15-16; Eph. 4:12).
 - 3) We can inherit the earth in this life also since it is easy to satisfy a faithful saint (Phil. 4:11-12; 2 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 4:14-19; 1 Cor. 3:21-23). Saints can be happy without wealth and great possessions.
 - 4) The meaning has future applications (1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 21:1; Rom. 8:17-18; 2 Tim. 2:12; 2 Pet. 3:9ff; cf. Luke 14:11). This may be the exact meaning the Lord intended by the expression. Our real reward will be enjoyed in the "new heavens and a new earth (heaven itself), wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).
 - a) Luke 14:11: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
 - b) Romans 8:17-18: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - c) 1 Corinthians 6:2-3: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?"
 - d) 2 Timothy 2:12: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us."
 - e) 2 Peter 3:9-14: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be

dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

- f) Revelation 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."
5. Verse 6: "Blessed *are* they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
- a. Hunger and thirst are the two most common desires: we are daily under their appeal. If we lose these two basic appetites, we will soon shrivel and die. The need we feel for food and water is so intense that it must be satisfied. The desire to obtain righteousness must likewise be so intense that we will not be deprived of it.
- 1) A wise man sought to emphasize to a young querist how much he must want his heart's desire by holding the young man under water. After a fierce struggle he was able to overcome the wise man's hold and get out of the water. The wise man asked him what he wanted most of all while underwater. The reply was, "Air." The illustration, though extreme, worked.
 - 2) Nothing could illustrate better the strong desire for righteousness we must have than hunger and thirst. These are recurring desires (1 Pet. 2:1-2).
 - 3) Hunger and thirst suggests man's recognition of his need for righteousness. The beatitude suggests God's willingness to provide satisfaction for the desire. God could not give man the requirement for food and drink without providing the means for satisfying that need; he would not allow man the desire for righteousness without providing the proper means for gratifying that desire.
- b. Righteousness is that state of acceptability which we acquire when we obey the righteous commands of God. It is the state of justification that comes with forgiveness of sins.
- 1) Psalms 119:172: "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness."
 - 2) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 3) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - 4) 1 John 3:7: "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."
- c. The gospel is God's plan which, when an individual sincerely believes and obeys its conditions, is the means by which we are made righteous.
- 1) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - 2) This righteousness is not that state of righteousness that pertains to the Father's holy person: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:1-3). The Jews were not ignorant of the fact that God has righteousness; they were ignorant of the gospel which is his means for making men righteous. His plan for making men to be righteous is revealed in the gospel. "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe" (Rom. 3:21-22, ASV).

- d. Absolute forgiveness was not offered under the Law (Heb. 10:1-4; cf. 9:15-17). Consequently, the righteousness obtained under that system was imperfect (Rom. 7:24; 8:1ff). But the gospel offers complete forgiveness of sins, thus righteousness of a more perfect degree is provided by the New Testament. "Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).
- 1) "Under a heathen religion, and even under Judaism, such a desire [hunger and thirst] could not be fully satisfied; but under the rich provisions of the kingdom of Christ it may be; and the promise is that it shall be. (Comp. Rom. 8:3,4; Heb. 7:19,25.) The promise is realized in part by the actual attainment of a higher degree of righteous living, and in part by the perfect forgiveness of our sins" (McGarvey, p.49).
 - 2) Righteousness means keeping God's commands: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). The righteousness of this beatitude is not (a) a general morality among nations, or (b) a social decency for ourselves.
- e. The righteousness to be desired includes:
- 1) A desire to be free from the guilt of sin, for sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1-2). The seeker for righteousness desires to regain the privilege of "walking with God in the cool of the evening" (Gen. 3:8).
 - 2) A desire to keep God's commandments (Ps. 119:172; John 7:17; Luke 6:46).
 - 3) A yearning to be free from the power of sin: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12).
 - 4) A desire to be holy (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - 5) A desire to be ultimately conducted into heaven (2 Pet. 1:11).
- f. The hunger and thirst for righteousness must be had by:
- 1) An alien sinner if he is to be saved (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17; John 5:40).
 - 2) Each Christian if he is to please God and reach heaven (2 Pet. 1:1-13; Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 10:1-3; Heb. 12:1-3; 5:12-14; 10:22-31).
- g. The desire for righteousness is the only desire we have that can be fully realized.
- 1) The drunkard never satisfies his yearning for strong drink; the addict is never finally satisfied by his drugs; the fornicator's lust is never finally sated; physical hunger and thirst are never finally settled. But our desire for righteousness can be filled; no power on earth that can prevent it.
 - 2) The alien sinner can obey the gospel if he desires to do so.
 - 3) The erring sinner can repent and be restored if he so wishes. "'Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.' O brethren, that is the way to get back to the first love. That is the divine recipe. If you have fallen, remember the fair heights to which you had attained, repent, and then go on doing those first works. How did you act when that first love had complete sway in your soul? Go back to reading the Bible the way you did then. Go back to praying the way you did then. Go back to the regularity of attending church that characterized you then. Go back to doing just the way you did when your heart was filled with the love of God, and then you will have that love again. That is the way to recover it—the only way" (McGarvey, *Sermons*, p.294).
 - 4) Psalm 42:1-3: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?"
- h. How can one tell whether he is hungering and thirsting after righteousness? How can one cultivate this desire?
- 1) Study and learn from the Biblical examples of those who hungered and thirsted so (Acts 10:1ff; 9:1ff; 2:37ff; 8:26-39; 16:30ff; 8:22ff; Heb. 11).
 - 2) Examine yourself to see if yours is false righteousness (2 Cor. 13:5; Isa. 64:6). "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for
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- the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:7-8).
- 3) Avoid even those things that may be harmless of themselves if they "take the edge off your appetite for righteousness." Eating between meals can destroy your appetite for food; partaking of needless things can ruin your spiritual appetite.
 - 4) Discipline yourself so that you will not be too busy to cultivate and find satisfaction for righteousness. It is amazing how we find time to do what we want.
 - 5) Put yourself in places to obtain righteousness: worship services; Bible study; private prayers; fellowship with saints. There is power and life in God's word (Rom. 1:16; John 6:63; Heb. 4:12; Luke 8:11); prayer is our avenue to the throne room of God.
- i. They shall be filled (John 7:17; 8:31-32; Acts 17:11-12; Rev. 7:16-17; cf. Matt. 7:7-8). The world and some Christians miss the significance of this beatitude. They read it in this way: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after happiness...."
- 1) Happiness is the result, the product of seeking something else—righteousness. If one will seek to be righteous after the God-given plan, happiness will be the result (1 Tim. 4:8-10; 6:6; Matt. 6:19-21,33; Mark 10:30; Phil. 4:6-13,19).
 - 2) Many seek happiness in wealth, property, pleasure, and traveling. These may temporarily relieve the boredom, loneliness, and emptiness, but they do nothing for the real cause—separation from God. To treat only the symptoms of a disease will not remove the disease. Treating the pain of cancer with aspirin will not cure the cancer; treating the symptoms of sin (which caused our separation from God) will not produce lasting happiness here, and will give none at all in eternity. The heart from which sin germinated and grew, must be changed; and the guilt incurred must be cleansed; only the gospel can accomplish these results.
 - 3) The way to real, lasting happiness is through earnestly desiring righteousness. If you are poor in spirit, are deeply moved because of your sins against God, and will put yourself under God's control, and if you will hunger and thirst after righteousness, you will be happy (Rom. 3:23; Jas. 1:21; Acts 8:39).
6. Verse 7: "Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."
- a. The Beatitudes are carefully phrased and strategically placed. The first four deal with attitudes necessary to become a Christian. This beatitude deals with one of the essential Christian attitudes.
 - 1) To be faithful, we must show mercy. In order to obtain mercy for ourselves, God requires that we show mercy to others (Matt. 5:7; 18:21-35; 6:14-15). Even faithful Christians need mercy (1 John 17-10; Rom. 6:23).
 - 2) The first three beatitudes cause us to be aware of our real spiritual needs; the fourth provides the satisfaction of those needs; the other four show the results of that satisfaction: we become merciful, we are pure in heart, we are peacemakers, and will withstand persecution.
 - b. God is a merciful God.
 - 1) Exodus 34:6: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 1:3: "Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."
 - 3) Ephesians 2:4: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."
 - 4) Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."
 - 5) Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
 - c. Mercy includes a sense of pity plus a desire to furnish relief. To be real, it must be active. Compassion is included in mercy (Prov. 14:22; Heb. 2:17).
 - 1) "All types of unmerciful conduct are condemned by this verse. Cruel amusements, punishments, speeches, newspaper articles, letters—in short, ALL kinds of unmerciful and inhumane behavior are proscribed by the Son of God in this beatitude. Such things are forever excluded from the

- kingdom of heaven" (Coffman, p.54).
- 2) Showing mercy is a natural outgrowth of an inner hunger and thirst for righteousness. Having an inherent desire to please God will lead us to have a compassionate heart. We will *want* to give and do for others. We will search out opportunities to do so. If there is nothing else we can offer, a kind word and a sympathizing tear can mean a lot to one in trouble. The heart that has mercy in it, is easily touched and pained at the misery of others, and it seeks to do something (Rom. 12:15; Heb. 13:3).
 - 3) Mercy is needed in every relationship. Much misery is caused or continued by intolerance (a lack of mercy). How many marriages and homes have been ruined by a lack of mercy? How many weak saints have been driven away because mercy was not exercised?
 - 4) Mercy is to flow from our lives in three different streams: (1) in deeds of service (Luke 10:25-37); (2) in kindness of judgment (Jas. 1:19; John 7:24; 1 Cor. 13:7; Luke 6:37); and (3) in forgiveness (Eph. 4:32).
- d. How can we know if we are merciful? Consider this illustration: Someone has sinned against you; his guilt can be proved clearly. He is in your power. What will you do? Will you get even? Will you manifest pity, sorrow, and kindness? Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23; Proverbs 3:3; Luke 6:36. What did great Bible men do?
- 1) Joseph (Gen. 45:4-5; 50:15-21).
 - 2) David (1 Sam. 26:8-10; 2 Sam. 19:5).
 - 3) Stephen (Acts 7:59).
 - 4) Jesus (Luke 9:54-55; John 8:3-11; John 3:16; Luke 1:78; 23:34; 1 Pet. 2:21-25).
- e. They shall obtain mercy. The reward of mercy, is mercy. This is true to the age-old principle (Gal. 6:7-8; cf. Judges 1:7). Life is filled with actions and reactions. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard" (Prov. 21:13).
- 1) A merciful man obtains mercy from two sources: from his fellowman (Prov. 18:24; 11:25) and from God (Matt. 6:12; Ps. 18:25; 41:1; Matt. 6:14-15). Happiness is given to a merciful person because he knows that he will be treated with mercy, as a general rule.
 - 2) II Timothy 1:18; James 2:13; Matthew 25:31-46. "As you look deeply into your heart, are you really merciful? Do you feel deep pity, love, kindness, desire to help, at any sign of suffering or sorrow, even on the part of those not very lovable? Even your enemies?" (Eldred Stevens, p.41).
7. Verse 8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
- a. The heart that is to be pure is the part of us that:
 - 1) Thinks, believes, understands (Prov. 23:7; Rom. 10:10; Matt. 13:15).
 - 2) Feels, has emotions (2 Sam. 6:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; Mark 12:30).
 - 3) Purposes, will power (2 Cor. 9:7).
 - 4) Has conscience (Rom. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:21; John 6:9; Acts 24:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; Heb. 9:9; 10:22).
 - b. Vine on pure:
 - a) *katharos* (*kaqaro*, NT:2513), "pure," as being cleansed, e. g., Matt 5:8; 1 Tim 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3; 2:22; Titus 1:15; Heb 10:22; James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:22; Rev 15:6; 21:18; 22:1 (in some mss.).
 - b) Note: In 1 Peter 1:22 the KJV, "with a pure heart," follows those mss. which have this adjective (RV, "from the heart").
 - c. All these parts of our heart must be pure in order to see God. But how can our hearts be purified? That they are contaminated is obvious from the fact that all accountable persons have sinned (Rom. 3:23). It is equally true that without having our hearts purified we cannot see God (Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2; Heb. 12:14; Rev. 21:27).
 - 1) We are not purified by withdrawing from all contact with the world, for this would not remove the guilt of past sins, and it would not prevent sins from being done in the future. There are many temptations that crop up within us, when other people are not involved.
 - 2) Only God can purify a heart (Ps. 51:10). A heart is impure because it is guilty of sin; sin is the
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- transgression of God's will (1 John 3:4). The offense is against God, so God must be the one doing the forgiving. Since pardon takes place in the mind of God, it is necessary that he tell us that we have been pardoned. This he does in the Bible, for there he gives the conditions for receiving pardon; when we meet the conditions, we are assured that pardon has been given (Heb. 8:12; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 8:14-16). In a sense, Christians purify their own hearts by so-living as to prevent our souls from being contaminated again: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded" (Jas. 4:8; cf. Phil. 2:12).
- 3) Our hearts are purified by the faith (Acts 15:6-11; 6:7; Jude 3; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:14-47). Those who gladly received the word (the gospel) were baptized; those who were baptized were added to the church; only those who were added to the church were saved; only those who were baptized were saved. The believers were commanded to repent and be baptized in order to receive remission of sins, i.e., have their hearts purified by having their guilt removed. Later, Peter wrote to these and other saints who had purified their souls by obeying the truth: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:22-23).
 - d. But our hearts are also to be kept pure after receiving the cleansing of gospel obedience. That a Christian can become stained again with sin is emphatically taught in the New Testament (1 Cor. 10:12-13; Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:1-5; Heb. 12:14-15). We can keep our hearts pure by never committing another sin after we become Christians, but that is beyond our capability (1 John 1:7-10).
 - 1) Since even Christians contaminate their hearts by occasional acts of sin, God made provision for the removal of these new stains:
 - a) 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b) James 5:16: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
 - c) Acts 8:22: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
 - 2) He also provides the means to avoid sin (1 John 2:1-2; Ps. 119:11; Heb. 10:23-26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-19; 2 Tim. 3:15-4:5; Matt. 26:41; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).
 - e. The heart is the seat of all our spiritual troubles, therefore if we can control the heart, we can ease these problems. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness: all these things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). It is commonly thought that men can change the world by improving our environment.
 - 1) But man's original troubles began in Eden, a paradise where no ecological or environmental problems existed. Man's troubles came from within, not without. This is true with individuals and nations.
 - 2) Secular education does not make a good, congenial, cooperative individual; neither does money, or a fine job, or a high social background. There must first be a change in the heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). The only means for purifying the heart is the gospel (Acts 15:9—the faith).
 - a) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - b) Ephesians 4:4-6: "*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all."
 - c) Titus 2:11-14: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all
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- iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
- d) 1 Peter 1:22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*"
- f. For the heart to be pure, it must be free from hypocrisy and defilement. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness..." (Matt. 6:22-23). With this as the immediate background, the Lord then said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (6:24). The evil eye is the hypocritical eye that seeks to serve two contradictory wills; the single eye is the eye that serves its Master wholly, without any divided loyalty, thus without hypocrisy. In Psalm 86:11, David prayed for God to "unite my heart to fear thy name." "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind..." (Rom. 7:22-23).
- 1) Nothing defiled will be allowed into heaven or the church (Rev. 21:27; 22:14; Eph. 5:26-27). Our hearts must be pure since Christ's is pure. This requires us to follow the first and second great commandments (Matt. 22:39-40); it means living as pure a life as is humanly possible (1 John 1:5-10; Heb. 12:14-15; 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 2:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:22; Tit. 1:15; Jas. 1:27).
- 2) We must follow pure teachings (1 Tim. 4:16; Gal. 1:6ff; 2:11; Tit. 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:11-21).
- g. The word *pure* is used of milk and gold, when it is without any foreign substance. Milk was sometimes mixed with chalky water to increase the amount and profit; but it was impure. Gold was sometimes alloyed by a jeweler who mixed in another metal, thus adulterating the pure gold. Pure (*katharos*) not only signifies that which is pure, as being cleansed, but also that which is without the admixture of any other element. God wants us to serve him with an unadulterated heart (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31). Sin is not conducive to our happiness or peace of mind, and will certainly deprive the sinner of the blessings of God.
- h. To be pure in heart, one must:
- 1) Think on the right things (Phil. 4:8).
- 2) Love the right things (Mark 12:30-31).
- 3) Purpose the right things (Dan. 1:8; Phil. 3:13-14; Acts 11:23).
- i. The blessing of a pure heart: they shall see God!
- 1) We see him now by the eye of faith as did Moses: "For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). No one has seen God with the human eye: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live" (Ex. 33:20). "No man hath seen God at any time..." (John 1:18). "...Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape" (John 5:37). Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16. In Exodus 33:17-23, Moses desired to see God. God placed him in a cleft in a rock and showed him a vision (a manifestation) of his glory. Even in the vision, Moses saw only the "back parts." He only saw a small portion of the manifestation; he did not see God.
- 2) But the believer can see God in nature, in the events of history, in his providence as we serve him, in his people, and in his Book. The pure in heart shall see him in eternity (1 John 3:2; Col. 3:4).
- j. All accountable people commit sin, but the gospel offers cleansing (John 8:32; 15:3; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:18-25; Rev. 1:5; 1 John 1:7; Jas. 4:8).
8. Verse 9: "Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."
- a. This statement, and the rest of the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount, must have been a shock to the Jews. They looked for a national, materialistic, and military kingdom. They expected the Messiah to form an army and march against the power of Rome, and by military might, make Israel the dominant, conquering, master race (Stevens, p.49). John, the apostles, and others had such ideas (Luke 7:19; John 6:1-15; Acts 1:6). They were not anticipating the Messiah to come preaching a message of peace.
- b. Man longs for genuine, lasting peace, but can never realize it in a literal sense because of the wickedness of men. There is usually a troublemaker at every level of society. Selfishness drives many to insist on their own way, with little regard to the rights, property, or happiness of others. The Bible

makes it clear that the wicked will have no real peace: "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; cf. 59:8).

- 1) Even God's people have troubles in this world (1 Tim. 3:12; John 16:33). But we can have peace with God, with each other, and within our own selves. This peace is beyond human comprehension (Phil. 4:6-7), nevertheless it is real, and without it, how could any saint remain faithful?
 - 2) During the 20th century, there have been two world wars, many limited wars, and constant rebellions, strifes, strikes, political battles, and acts of terrorism. There is much envy, jealousy, and malice. Families are torn by strife, rebellion, and divorce. Unending division and strife are rampant in religion. Congregations of the Lord's people are often rent asunder by personality conflicts, anger, and false teachings. Within individual Christians there is often raging warfare due to divided loyalties.
- c. By definition, *peace* means "freedom from strife; harmony, serenity, calmness, quietness; the absence of discord and the presence of concord. *Peaceful* means "not quarrelsome, free from disturbance, calm." But one cannot fully appreciate this beatitude without an understanding of God's attitude toward peace.
- 1) "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33). He is called the God of peace (Rom. 15:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20).
 - 2) God hates the sowing of discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16-19).
 - 3) God's Son is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 2:14; John 14:27; 16:33).
 - 4) God teaches the importance of cultivating and maintaining peace within the church (Rom. 12:15; Eph. 4:3; 1 Pet. 3:10-11; Tit. 3:10).
- d. What is the peace of which Jesus speaks in this Beatitude?
- 1) It is that peace of Romans 10:15: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace." It is the peace which Jesus came to present to the world (Eph. 2:14-17).
 - 2) It is that peace which Peter preached in Acts 10:36: "...Preaching peace by Jesus Christ..." (cf. vv. 34-48).
 - 3) It is that peace that comes through justification: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).
 - 4) It is that peace that obtains by being reconciled to God through Christ's blood (Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).
 - 5) There are three dimensions of peace: with God, self, and one another.
- e. What does it mean to be a peacemaker?
- 1) Notice that the word itself implies that peace is *made*, that it does not come without effort. A peacemaker is one who makes, who produces, peace.
 - 2) One can be a passive peacemaker if he does not make trouble, if he is not an agitator, if he exercises patience, restraint and forbearance, and if he is not self-willed (Phil. 2:3-5).
 - 3) One can be an active peacemaker by doing all he can to produce and maintain peace; by speaking the right things (Eph. 4:29; Jas. 1:19; Prov. 15:1); by previewing words and deeds in the light of their influence on the church, on the lost, on the welfare of his own soul, any on his own family; and by following the precepts of Romans 12:20-21 and Romans 14:19.
 - a) Romans 12:20-21: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
 - b) Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
 - 4) One who preaches or teaches the gospel of peace is a peacemaker.
 - 5) One who settles disputes between men, between God and man, or helps resolve the inner conflicts which rage within an individual, is a peacemaker.
 - 6) One who confesses the wrong he has done against another, and asks for his forgiveness, is a peacemaker. One who has been wronged, shows the offender his sin, and asks him to repent, is a peacemaker (Matt. 18:15-17).
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- f. A Christian has an entirely different view of himself and others. He sees himself as he really is (1 Tim. 1:13-15; Eph. 2:1-10; Luke 17:10; Rom. 12:3). He is longsuffering with his sinful fellowman, realizing that that poor soul is under the influence of the devil and is in need of sympathy and help. Therefore, he sows peace, not discord; he is swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath; he does not peddle gossip; he refrains from saying things that he might want to say; he encourages peace by being calm, unselfish, loving, lovable, sympathetic, and kind; he treats others as he wants to be treated.
- g. The blessing of peacemakers is that they shall be called the children of God. To be a child of God one must first obey the gospel (John 1:11-12; Rom. 8:14, 16; John 8:32 17:17; 3:1-5; 1 Pet. 1:22-23; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; 8:37; 2:38). Peacemakers are called the children of God because their God is the God of peace, their Savior is the Prince of Peace, their constitution is the Gospel of peace, and their work is the work of producing peace.
- 1) A state of blessedness (happiness) prevails over peacemakers because they are children of God and are themselves peacemakers. There is no happiness if one is quick to take offense, eager to find fault, criticize, or stir up trouble. But happiness is found by one who does the opposite. Which had you rather be around, the carping critic or the peacemaker? Which do you think God would rather have at his side?
 - 2) Often, it is impossible to be at peace with our fellow man because they will not have it so (Rom. 12:18; cf. John 16:33). But there is no reason why we should not have peace with God, within our own selves, and with others of like precious faith.
9. Verses 10-12: "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
- a. Each beatitude has introduced a separate characteristic of a disciple: humility, meekness, penitence, desire for righteousness, mercifulness, purity, and peacemaking. The eighth is the willingness to incur persecution rather than compromise the truth. Verse ten states the beatitude, and verses eleven and twelve give an elaboration of it. This beatitude becomes necessary when the first seven are practiced. This passage describes the reception disciples are often accorded by the world, and their reaction to the evil treatment given them by the world.
- 1) The persecution is not that which arises from other causes, such as being hated because of our sinful conduct, our race or nationality, the language we speak, the accent of our speech, or our political views. But the persecution indicated is that which occurs as a direct result of our faithfulness to Christ. This persecution is not for our own folly, or for being self-righteous, or for being over-zealous, or from getting involved in sin. It is persecution for righteousness' sake.
 - 2) It is interesting that this beatitude concerning persecution follows the one dealing with peacemaking. Also, the blessing indicated ("theirs is the kingdom of heaven") is identical with the first. There is nothing so great in this life as to be in the kingdom of God! Colossians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 5:23-27.
 - 3) This beatitude deals with the most severe tests of a Christian's faith. It is the choice of renouncing Christ and being spared ill-treatment, or affirming faith in him and being persecuted; it is to shun him or be put to death; it is to cast off the gospel or else be ridiculed and rejected by men.
- b. Persecution for faithful saints is real (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Thess. 3:3-4; John 16:33; Mark 10:30; Jas. 1:2-3, 12; cf. John 3:19-20). A loyal Christian is different from the worldly-minded person. The world sees the distinction between itself and the faithful. A sinner realizes saints are holier than he, and resents it. But instead of making the needed changes, he rather makes charges (1 Pet. 4:4; Acts 13:45-46; John 15:18-20). A Christian's holy life rebukes sinners. Sometimes this influences some to obey the gospel; often it hardens sinners against us and the truth.
- 1) Persecution came to Abel (Gen. 4:8); to Moses (Ex. 5:21; Num. 12:1); to David (1 Sam. 18:8-11); to Jeremiah (Jer. 15:15; 20:7-9); to Daniel (Dan. 6:4, 16, 20); to John (Mark 6:17-20); to the apostles (John 16:1-4; Acts 4,5,12); to Paul (2 Cor. 11:23-28); to the saints in general (Acts 8:1ff); and to Christ (Isa. 42:3; 53). It comes to us today in various degrees.
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- 2) By whom are the righteous persecuted? By foes within and without the kingdom (Mark 14:1; Luke 4:24; Matt. 22; 23; 2 Cor. 11:26-28). Religious people were the great persecutors of Christ and Paul.
- c. This beatitude suggests some general truths about Christ and his people. The world did not, and still does not, like Christ. It hated him then and does so even now. Why do they take his name in vain? Why is his gospel hated and opposed? "We must take care not to present Christ today with the idea that the world will admire Him—it won't" (Stevens, p.58).
- 1) John 15:18-20: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."
- 2) John 3:18-21: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
- d. The world's evaluation of a Christian is different today from what it was a few years ago in this country. Christians were generally respected in America, but attitudes have changed! Many *religious* folks think of a Christian as a nice fellow, who is harmless, likeable, and popular; one who never causes any offense. But this is not the picture the Lord described: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).
- e. Persecutions take various forms and degrees.
- 1) Sometimes it is by physical violence (Matt. 14:10; Acts 2:23,36; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; 2 Tim. 4:6; Acts 12:1ff; Heb. 11:32-40).
- 2) More often by poisoned tongue or pen (1 Pet. 4:4; Acts 28:22).
- 3) Sometimes a faithful Christian is disowned and rejected by his family, perhaps by a husband or wife or child (Matt. 10:16-42; Luke 14:25-33).
- 4) Often by social ostracism. This is especially true, and intensely hurtful, of teenage Christians. When a teenage Christian girl refuses to violate the moral principles of the gospel, she come under the curse of her peers, and is cut off from social activities.
- 5) Sometimes a young man decides to preach, reveals his plans to his parents and friends, expecting to receive their approbation; but when they greatly discourage him in this noble endeavor, and urge him into a more lucrative profession, how trying to his faith this is! Often preachers are held in scorn even by members of the church, thus the corps of faithful preachers of the gospel has become thin indeed! To discourage a young man from becoming a preacher, or to despise and discourage a faithful preacher, is persecution with far-reaching effects. Just how many precious souls will not hear the gospel by the deletion from the faithful workers of only one fearless and faithful proclaimer!
- f. What should be the attitude and reaction on the part of a Christian when persecution comes? Should he whine, complain, or indulge in self-pity? It was difficult for Jesus to suffer and die. It was trying for him to live on earth, suffer from lack of proper food and housing, to endure the envy and hatred and opposition of his enemies, to bear the agony of Gethsemane, to accept the horrible beatings of the scourgers, to face the cruel mockings of the soldiers and the religious leaders, to abide the rejection of those he had sought to help, to endure being separated from the Father while bearing the sins of the world on the cross, and to suffer the horrible physical pain and moral shame of dying as he did! None of this was easy for our Savior!
- 1) We must refuse the impulse to retaliate (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Pet. 2:21ff).
- 2) We must not allow ourselves to become so discouraged that we give up the fight (Luke 4:16-17; Matt. 13:20-21; 1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Matt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10).
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- 3) We are to pray for our tormentors (Matt. 5:43-48; Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60).
- 4) We are to rejoice and be exceedingly glad for our persecutions (Acts 16:25; 4:40-42; Matt. 5:10-12). We know that while our enemies may take away our physical belongings, comfort and life, they cannot deprive us of our heavenly mansion! Matthew 10:28; John 14:1-3. And we can know that the trying of our faith through persecution can increase our steadfastness (Jas. 1:2-4). The reward of such faith is great, in heaven (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 5:1-10). This puts us also in exceedingly good company: the ancient people of God.
- g. "It should also be observed of the man who is superlatively blessed has always been the reverse of what is here taught. The doctrine was new and strange, not only to the heathen world, but even to the most cultivated students of the Mosaic law; yet those who have received the fullness of grace that is in Christ, have learned to realize the unquestionable truth of all these maxims" (McGarvey, p.51).
- h. "The eight beatitudes are but the introduction to the Sermon On The Mount, as a whole. They are a synopsis of the gospel of the kingdom, an epitome of the doctrine of Christ and as such they find expansion in the precepts that follow..." (Wallace, p.23).

B. Matthew 5:13-16: The Importance of Influence Illustrated.

1. Verse 13: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."
 - a. Parallel accounts:
 - 1) Mark 9:50: "Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."
 - 2) Luke 14:34: "Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"
 - b. Man can live without many things, but not without light, water, bread, and salt. The Lord referred to himself as the light of the world, the bread of life, and the giver of everlasting water; he here described his faithful followers as the salt of the earth.
 - 1) Salt has hundreds of uses. It is used in the home, on the farm, in construction, in making glass, in soap, and in food processing. Wars have been fought over salt. Roman soldiers were paid in salt. The Latin word *salarium* (salt) gives our English word *salary*. "Not worth his salt" was an expression used by the Greeks to describe a slave who had been bought with a measure of salt.
 - 2) There is an unbelievable amount of salt in the world: about three-eighths of a pound of salt is dissolved in a gallon of sea water. It has been estimated that if the seas were evaporated, there would remain about 4.4 million cubic miles of rock salt, enough to cover the land areas of earth to a depth of 500 feet.
 - c. Jesus used salt, with its significant characteristics, to aptly describe his faithful followers.
 - 1) **Salt preserves.** It is used on meat to prevent spoilage; it is used in pickling for the same purpose; it is used in the cells of the body to facilitate healing. God's faithful people have a preserving effect on society (Prov. 14:34). If more *salt* had been found in Sodom, it would not have been destroyed (Gen. 18). The 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed their knee to Baal kept their nation from destruction (1 Kings 19:18). When Israel left God, God gave them up. Our own country owes its preservation to the saints who live here. Its continuation depends, not merely on military might, but on the righteousness of its citizens.
 - 2) **Salt gives flavor.** Many recipes call for salt; its absence is quickly detected. What salt is to food, Christians are to the world. Without the godly flavoring of the saints, this world would be a most unsavory place. Our presence makes the world to be more flavorful to God. Cf. Enoch; Elijah; Hebrews 11:38.
 - 3) **Salt has a purifying effect.** Ordinary bacteria cannot live in salt. Salt is used as a mouthwash, a gargling solution, and to brush teeth. Christians often have a *disinfecting effect* on society. Some people will clean up their speech when a Christian is present. Through our influence in teaching the gospel, many clean up their lives by obeying the gospel. Where there has been no impact of the gospel, ignorance, poverty, oppression, natural disasters, and immorality predominate.
 - 4) **Salt is a positive force.** If it is in coffee or ice cream, its presence cannot be concealed. Its absence from other food is also noted.

- 5) **Salt has a permeating effect.** When a ham is packed in salt, the salt permeates and preserves; but the salt must make contact with the ham. Christian influence can permeate society with its preserving and flavoring characteristics, if saints make contact with society. Christians are not like a sponge which soaks up what is around it; a sponge takes up but does not "put out" unless it is squeezed. We are not to scatter salt as we journey through life, rather we are the salt—as we live among men, the influence of the gospel in our lives will have its proper effect on those around us.
 - 6) **Salt is enduring.** The flavor of salt is not lost by age or severe tests. Mines which are thousands of years old still produce good salt. If salt is dissolved in water and heated to a high temperature, it still retains its qualities. The followers of Christ have this enduring quality. Trials will not destroy us (Heb. 10:31-35); time does not sap our strength (Heb. 10:36-39; 2 Pet. 3:18). We lose our strength only if we are contaminated by worldliness (sin; error; indifference).
 - 7) **Salt is precious.** Life would not be pleasant without it. The oceans would soon stagnate; food would spoil; disease would spread. Salt is essential to life, thus is precious. The blessings and influence of one Christian is powerful, thus it is precious to the world. One individual obeys the gospel and influences others to obey.
- d. If our country suddenly lost all or even most of Christianity's saving influences, think of the horrible consequences that would quickly develop. All of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) would increase to the fullest degree. There would be no reason extant for God to preserve the nation (Ps. 9:17; Isa. 60:12; 2 Chron. 7:14; Deut. 9:3-5; 2 Kings 17:13-18; Jer. 18:7-10; 51:49,53; 51:54-56,58).
 - e. Where the influence of Christianity is not found, "the living conditions for the masses are wretched; a few rich masters rule with a ruthless and iron hand. Liberties are crushed; little value is placed on human life; living conditions are squalid; and opportunities for betterment are few" (Marlin, J.T., *The Sermon on the Mount*, Spiritual Sword Lectures, p.62).
 - 1) This condition began with religious apostasy which in turn began with the individual Christians turning back to the world. Political leaders are corrupted, and society as a whole degenerates spiritually and morally. Finally, there is nothing left of the nation worth saving. This state might develop when the citizens are offered opportunities to obey the gospel, but refuse it.
 - 2) "In every age of the world when the forces of righteousness have become sufficiently suppressed, tragedy for that people has been the inevitable result. The dissolution of all people has followed an undeviating course" (ibid.).
 - 3) There is no way that any nation can long continue without the preserving, uplifting influence of godliness. Christianity is the only hope for a happy future for our nation or any other nation.
 - f. Therefore, if Christians (the salt) lose their savor, with what shall society be flavored and preserved? There would be no hope. And the verse illustrates the utterly worthless state of an apostate Christian! He is represented as adulterated salt which has no flavoring or preserving quality. Corrupted salt cannot be thrown on the fields for it still has power to destroy good crops; it can only be thrown on the footpaths and roads where it is trodden underfoot. Such a Christian is good for nothing! This teaches the supreme importance of remaining completely unadulterated by the world. It is significant that salt does not lose its special qualities unless it becomes adulterated from without. Left pure, salt retains its qualities. But saints, like salt, can become contaminated and thus lose their special properties which make them valuable and useful to the Lord.
 - g. We must remain pure in doctrine, for if our belief and practices are corrupted with human doctrines, our worship will be unacceptable (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7, 13; 2 John 9-11; Gal. 2:4-5; 2 Cor. 2:15-17; Jude 3; 1 Pet. 4:11; John 4:24). Those who teach error on the plan of salvation, on the identity of the church, on the nature of the kingdom, on the Bible doctrine of final things, on godly living, (on any one or all of these or other such things) are following the commandments of men; therefore they cannot offer worship that is acceptable to God! And we would be wrong to extend our fellowship to them or to try to worship with them (1 John 1:6-7; 2 John 9-11). We must remain pure in life, sincerely following the truth (Phil. 1:27; Tit. 2:3; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:1-2; Matt. 5:8; Col. 3; Eph. 5:1-17; 1 Pet. 2:5,9).
 - h. In order for salt to be effective, it must come in direct contact with that which it is intended to affect.
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A fresh ham will not be preserved if it and the salt do not make direct, continual contact.

- 1) A saint cannot do his best in flavoring and preserving society unless contact exists between him and members of society. In this passage, therefore, Christ condemns monasticism and isolationism. A saint is not of the world (John 17:16; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 6:14), but he lives in the world (John 17:15; 1 Pet. 2:9).
 - 2) We are able to do our proper work of influencing the world to obey the gospel, live godly lives, worship and serve God, only if we contact those in the world.
2. Verse 14: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."
- a. This statement is one that should make us lift up our heads with happiness! It shows us how glorious it is to be a Christian. Faithful Christians (members of the church of Christ) are the centerpiece of God's creation! We are the only ones the world has for examples of godly conduct.
 - b. But with this glorious privilege comes the heaviest of obligations: we must live exemplary lives so that people of the world can look at any one of us and know that this is what God expects all to be:
 - 1) 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
 - 2) Philippians 2:14-15: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:12: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."
 - c. None of us can be the same perfect example as Christ was, but we should not use our human weakness as an excuse to relieve us of our obligations to live holy lives. We should not treat lightly any hurtful or idle word we might speak, or any harmful or evil deed we may do, or any wrongful disposition we might show.
 - 1) Each Christian will stumble into sin occasionally (John 1:8, 10); but if he will truly repent (Acts 8: 22; 2 Cor 7:10; 1 Tim. 1:13-15), confess his sins before God openly and contritely (1 John 1:9; Jas. 5:16), and ask for pardon (Jas. 5:16; Acts 8:22), forgiveness will be forthcoming from the Almighty.
 - 2) But if we take sin lightly, how can we genuinely repent? Repentance can only come from godly sorrow (2 Cor.7:10; cf. Lk.15:11ff). We must sincerely walk in the light (1 Jn 1:6-7), honestly trying never to offend in thought, motive, word, deed, or omission of duty. When we occasionally transgress, sorrow will immediately be felt, genuine penitence follows, and we will strive never to fall into that offense anymore.
 - d. "Our solar system is so arranged that all our planets revolve around the sun as its center. From what astounding and incomprehensible mass of burning matter they receive and reflect their luminosity. The earth and the other planets not only receive light directly from the sun, but they also reflect the same. The earth receives light directly from the sun and reflectively from the moon, and the moon in turn receives light from the sun and reflectively from the earth!" (Marlin, *ibid.*, p.67). The Christian system is divinely arranged after this likeness. Christ is the light of the world; we are to reflect that glorious light to the people in darkness.
 - 1) "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).
 - 2) "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings"(Mal. 4:2).
 - 3) "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).
 - 4) "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).
 - 5) "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9).
 - 6) "For ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day, we are not of the night, nor of the darkness" (1 Thess. 5:5).

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- e. The verse under consideration implies that the world is in a state of darkness. This is the first plank in the Christian's platform. If the world was not in trouble, our great mission would be meaningless (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eccl. 7:10; 1 John 5:19; Luke 19:10; Heb. 2:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 2:1-12).
- 1) The first step in bringing a lost soul into Christ where light and salvation are found, is to get him to see that he is lost. This is difficult enough in heathen societies where nothing is known about the gospel. But it is more difficult in cases where people have accepted a counterfeit gospel and think they are saved. Before the truth can be profitably planted in such hearts, their error must be shown. Often they allow their prejudices to keep them from the truth.
 - 2) The world is in darkness but boasts of its great enlightenment. People in the industrialized nations are better educated in secular knowledge than ever before. During the 18th century an age of so called "enlightenment" began with the emergence of skepticism which began pressing grievous attacks against the Bible. A very great many scholars, preachers, priests, rabbis, men of medicine and science, and other well-educated men and women, have accepted human philosophies and theories which stand in opposition to the Bible. If the Bible appears to contradict some precept of modern philosophy or theory, the Bible is deemed to be wrong. Those who are highly educated in worldly wisdom are nevertheless in darkness and need the gospel! (Rom. 3:23; Eph 2:12; Rom 1:16-17; Heb.4:12).
 - 3) Worldly knowledge pertains to that which is material, mechanical, biological, and therefore temporary. It is a one-sided education, and even much of that is wrong because it stands on man's prejudiced theories instead of truth. Many people have been willingly convinced that they are just another form of animal life, thus have begun to live out their convictions! Why is there so much crime, strife, and moral decadence? It is because many do not know, believe, or follow the absolute standard of the Bible. Possessing knowledge of genuine earthly truth is good, but that only enlightens in matters of an earthly nature. God's spiritual truth governs the affairs of the soul, of human relationships, of moral behavior, and of preparing for death and eternity. A secular education is at best incomplete. The best education is that which incorporates sufficient secular information to enable one to get along well in this world, and enough information about the Bible to bring him into Christ, cause him to loyally serve the Savior, and thus be prepared for his real goal—eternal life in heaven!
- f. Faithful Christians are the only ones who can really give light to the world (and this is the reflected light of Christ!). The world of the first century was in utter darkness as is shown by the crime, strife and sin which were so prevalent. The great Greek philosophers (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle) had given their wisdom and influence to the world but the world was still steeped in spiritual darkness.
- 1) In the face of the failure of the earth's great men (philosophers, political and military leaders, religionists, *et al*), the Lord announced in this passage that those lowly Jewish disciples (fishermen, tax collectors, etc.) would be the world's hope for light! The great thinkers have been baffled by this.
 - 2) The ordinary Christian who knows little or nothing about philosophy and other human wisdom, knows and understands more about life than the greatest worldly experts. This is possible because he knows the Book, which gives us all that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet.1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12; Acts 20:32; John 10:10; Matt. 5:1-12; 5:13-7:29).
 - 3) "The world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21, ASV). About 35 years after the Lord's church was established, Tacitus (the Roman historian), wrote with astonishment: "This pestilent superstition, thou checked for the time being, broke out afresh, not only in Juda, where the mischief started, but also at Rome, where all manner of horrible and loathsome things pour in and become fashionable" (see Marlin, p.69). This unbelieving scholar could not understand how the flame of Christianity could go on burning. God's truth is not based on worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1:26-29).
- g. Light dispels darkness; the two can not occupy the same space at the same time; where light goes, darkness vanishes. God is light; Christ is light; Christians are light; the gospel is light; truth is light
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- (1 John 1:5; John 8:12; Ph. 2:15; Eph. 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:4-5; John 8:32; 17:17). Light is good: (see Wallace, p. 25):
- 1) Because it makes visibility possible; the light of the gospel makes it possible for us to see (2 Cor. 4:6).
 - 2) Because it is pure; light does not get dirty; it is the one element on earth that cannot be contaminated. The gospel is pure; no one can contaminate it or is allowed to change it. It will be pure when we face it in Judgment (cf. Jn. 12:48; Ps. 19:8; 12:6; Jas. 3:17).
 - 3) Because of its healing propensities: rays of the sun, ultra-violet (Mal. 4:2).
 - 4) Because it protects from evil: crime and evil usually occur in darkness; we put up security lights to give protection (Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:7).
 - 5) Because it makes life possible: without the sun's light, plants cannot grow and live. Without the light of the gospel, there would be no spiritual life possible for us.
- h. The darkness that is to be dispelled by the light of Christians includes that of vice, ignorance, unbelief, religious error. The Jews were aloof from the world; their idea of their duty to God was to keep separate from the Gentiles; a common idea they had towards the Gentiles was that they were created to burn in torment. They were to keep separated from the evil of the unbelieving world of the Old Testament; but they were intended to be an encouragement to godly living. Under Christ, we have the obligation to shine forth, passively and actively, so that as many as possible will obey the Lord. Many sin because of ignorance (Acts 3:17; Eph. 4:17-19; Hos. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 17:23).
- i. Many are in darkness because of religious error (Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 Jn. 4:1; Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Th. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15).
- 1) One major religious error lies in the misguided efforts of men to depopulate hell: Catholics do so in their invention of purgatory; Watchtower Witnesses, Adventists, Universalists, and others do so by denying the existence of hell; Calvinists do so by denying that a Christian can so-sin as to be lost there.
 - 2) Another major religious error is the claim of additional revelation: Joseph Smith claimed to have received such; Ellen White claimed to have been caught up to the third heaven and God placed a halo around the 4th Commandment and sent her back to the earth to tell everyone to keep the Sabbath; Mary B.G.P. Eddy claimed to have received additional revelation which caused her to establish the false "Christian Scientist" movement; Oral Roberts and many other modern hucksters make the claim of additional revelations; myriads of deceived folks think that God has given them special revelations in dreams, visions, events, and feelings; the Pentecostal movement rests heavily on this false notion of modern revelations; the "Crossroads", "discipling" movement claims special revelations in the "quiet time" (pray and God answers back; read the Bible and the Holy Spirit will give you a personal, special message). We can know that God gives no revelations today: 1 Corinthians 13:8-11; Ephesians 4:11-14; Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Revelation 22:18f; Galatians 1:6-12. Without exception, those who claim to have received a special revelation will teach error on one or more vital subjects: by their fruits ye shall know them (Mt. 7:15-20; 1 Jn. 4:1; cf. Isa. 8:20; Deut. 18:15-22; 2 Th. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-17).
 - 3) Many are in sin because they follow their fleshly impulses (Gal. 5:19-21).
 - 4) Many are in spiritual darkness because of unbelief; they have rejected the truth without proper investigation or interest (John 3:19). Evolution is accepted and proclaimed as fact; no other evidence or information will be considered by many; those who believe the Bible are denounced as ill-informed, backward, religious cranks who will not believe "science."
- j. Evolution is unproved and unprovable, indeed, the evidence disproves evolution and the postulates upon which it rests. "But on closer examination these critics are most unscientific when it comes to handling evidence. In our courts throughout this land every day the testimony of witnesses who say they saw things, heard words and sounds, handled objects, smelled odors, and tasted substance is admitted in court. But, when Bible witnesses say they heard, saw and handled Jesus Christ, this is not admissible! The Apostle John testified, 'That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hand handled concerning the

word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifest unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you' (1 Jn. 1:1-3)" (*ibid.*, p.73).

- 1) With the single exception of John, these other apostles, according to the New Testament or secular history, suffered and died because of their firm belief in that which they preached. "Now the fact that they died in attestation of their testimony does not prove them right, but it does prove them sincere. And if that for which they sincerely died is attested by good eyes, good ears and unimpaired sense of touch, their senses prove them right and accurate in their testimony, and their voluntary dying in support of it proves them sincere. Now if you cannot believe these Bible witnesses, then there is no way to prove beyond question or cavil, a single historical event. Our knowledge must be limited to what we have seen with our own eyes, heard with our own ears and felt with our own hands! And if we refuse to accept the testimony of others, we cannot expect them to accept ours! Then, there is no such thing as a true history in the world! We don't know there was ever an Alexander the Great, Cleopatra, Caesar, Napoleon or a George Washington! But, if we cannot believe Bible historians, there is not only not a true history in the world, but there has never been a sincere martyr! All through the ages those who have willingly laid down their lives for a cause have been hypocrites and liars! Which is the more difficult to accept, those absurdities or the theory of evolution?" (Marlin, p.73).
- 2) It is far more reasonable to believe the testimony of unimpeachable and sincere witnesses than to accept a theory that is unproved and unprovable. And the Bible has the added benefit of its scientific, medical, historical statements made long before these truths were discovered by men, and the many cases of fulfilled prophecies! Unbelief is absurd.
3. Verse 15: "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."
 - a. "Possibly Jesus had in mind the comparison between a city on a hill and a group or church of his disciples; their influence cannot be ignored in the world. There is no greater light for God than the church that is filling its mission in a community" (Boles, p.128).
 - b. In this verse the Lord shows from the common experience that a candle is not lighted in order to be placed under a bushel. "The word 'bushel' is from the Latin term 'modius,' which was about equal to a peck; it was used for measuring grain and was a common article. The lamps then were of earthenware or of metal in the shape of a saucer, turned up on one side to hold the wick; olive oil was used to burn in them" (Boles, p.128).
 - c. To give its greatest light, the lamp was placed on a stand. For a Christian (or congregation of Christians) to fulfill his role properly, it is necessary that his good works (obedience, character, benevolence, faith) be seen. This cannot be done if he lives as a hermit, or is not a proper example of a follower of Christ.
 - d. As lights, we are to do certain things: Expose the darkness and the things that belong to darkness (cf. 1 Th..5:4-7). This we do by the way we live and by the truth we teach (cf. Acts 2:37). We show the cause of darkness (Jn. 3:19; Rom. 3:23), and show the way out of darkness (2 Cor. 5:17; 4:3,4). Christians can hide their good influence (light) under various *bushels*:
 - 1) Bushel of ignorance (Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Tim. 1:13; Hos. 4:6; Jas. 4:17).
 - 2) Bushel of indifference (Rev. 3:15-17; cf. 1 Cor. 5:6; Jas. 4:17). How concerned were the Laodiceans about the lost? How much light were the aliens in their city getting from the church members?
 - 3) Bushel of indulgence (Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). How much influence would a preacher have if he was also a bootlegger? Or a drug dealer? Or a drunkard?
 - 4) Bushel of religious error (2 John 9-11; 1 Pet. 4:11; John 8:32; Gal. 1:8-9; 2:4-5).
 - e. Light is active, enables us to see, cheers and comforts, is pure, is essential to plant life and thus to all life, does its work quietly, is like love in that it is a compound thing, and light awakens. (Marlin).
4. Verse 16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

- a. Let: not forced; obedience must be done willingly, lovingly (Rom. 6:16-17).
- b. Your light: each is responsible for own actions and influence. Your light is the power of your life to influence others. Each is to brighten, not bring gloom and discouragement.
- c. So shine before men: So shine as verses 14-15 direct. "So" is adverb of manner. We are to shine for the benefit of others, not for self-glory.
- d. Shine: continual radiant glowing, not a sudden flash. A bright blase gives a strong light for a short time but leaves those who see it in greater darkness after it fades suddenly away. A Christian who is a "flash in the pan" does more harm than good.
- e. That they may see: see, not merely hear speculation about, or hear claims about. Professing good works is not enough; words come easy. But let your influence speak for itself through the good works each one can do.
- f. See your good works: good works can be seen and appreciated by men. Evil works also are seen and often speak louder to some than good works. Good works are those things which God requires or permits, acts of kindness and love, helpful acts and pure words. They are good words because they are morally and scripturally right, beautiful, orderly, harmonious, and productive. Christians are to have an impact on others by the influence of their godly lives and by their teaching the gospel.
- g. Glorify your Father which is in heaven: not for the purpose of glory and honor for the individual Christian, but that others might be encouraged to also bring glory to the Father (Mt. 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 2:12). This is the supreme purpose of man:
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 6:20: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
 - 3) Romans 15:5-6: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - 4) Ephesians 5:21: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."
 - 5) Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

C. Matthew 5:17-20: Christ and the Old Testament.

1. Verse 17: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."
 - a. "The book of Matthew was written to Jews who had the Old Testament. It was written to help them see the nature of the kingdom and to correct their misconception of it...There is a unity that runs through the Old Testament and ties it all together...Christ and redemption is the theme of the Old Testament. Every book of the Old Testament deals with this subject in some way. Christ is the key to the Old Testament and the center of the New Testament" (Franklin Camp, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Spiritual Sword Lectures, p.76). See Revelation 5:5-10). Christ's teachings were not destructive of the Old Testament but fulfilled it.
 - b. "Christ fulfilled the purpose of God announced in Genesis 3:15. The seed of woman in Genesis 3:15 is a prophesy of God's purpose to redeem man through Christ. The entrance of sin, the fall of man, and the statement of God's purpose to bruise Satan through Christ is proof that God had man's redemption in mind from the beginning and not premillennialism. The seed of woman became Abraham's seed in Genesis 12:3, 15:12-19, 21:12, and 22:15-18. The prophecy of the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14 and its fulfillment in Matthew 1:18-25 tie together God's purpose to redeem man in Genesis 3:15 by the seed of Abraham which was fulfilled in the incarnation of Christ. All of the claims of the premillennialists concerning the Jews and the land of Canaan ignore the fact that the purposed seed of Genesis 3:15 precedes and is the background of every other promise that God made and must have precedence over all others" (Franklin Camp, *ibid.*, p.78).
 - c. Definition of terms:
 - 1) The Law: specifically it is the Pentateuch given through Moses. It consisted of moral principles

- and commands, judicial instructions and information (legislation for the Jews as a nation), and ceremonial instructions (such as, burnt offerings, sacrifices, etc.).
- 2) The Prophets: includes all the information in the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The prophets were "forth-tellers" (they taught, explained and propounded the Law) and "fore-tellers" (they predicted things to come).
 - 3) Fulfill: "To carry out as a promise; to do a duty; to satisfy; to bring to an end, complete" (Webster). Two men enter a contract; when each has met the terms of the contract and thus accomplished its purpose, the contract has been fulfilled. It has not been destroyed, but through being fulfilled, it is no longer an active, binding document. The man fulfilling the contract is not considered an enemy of it; he does not intend to destroy it.
 - 4) The law and the prophets embrace all of the Old Testament. Christ did not come to destroy the Old Testament but to fulfill it; destroy is used in antithesis with fulfill. There were prophecies in both the law and the prophets: Christ fulfilled them all. There were types and shadows in the Old Testament of which he became the antitype. He fulfilled the law theoretically by unfolding its deep spiritual significance. "Jesus and his kingdom, with all that pertains to them, constitute the object and fulfillment of all the prophets" (Boles, p. 131).
2. Verse 18: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."
 - a. The Lord showed his deep regards for the Old Testament. "The Jewish nation had long held the Law of Moses in the utmost respect and honor. Any change in the status of their law was sure to be received unfavorably by them. Therefore, Christ quite early in his ministry took pains to spell out for them his true and proper relationship to the Law of Moses. Nevertheless, the difference in 'fulfilling' and 'destroying' the Law of Moses was about the same as the difference between 'paying off' a promissory note and 'repudiating' it. In either case, it is effectively removed. Christ took the law out of the way, not by violating it, but by fulfilling it! Christ fulfilled the law (1) by his own unswerving obedience to it, (2) by his exact manifestation as its promised Messiah, and (3) by enlarging and expanding its teachings, lifting them to a higher and purer level, and by bringing all the Old Testament teachings to perfection in the perfection in the perfect law of Liberty" (Coffman, p. 60).
 - b. The Lord expressed great confidence in the Old Testament in this verse with a strong warning and promise that it should or would never be set at naught. "The law of sacrifice was fulfilled in Jesus' death. The law of circumcision was replaced by that 'circumcision not made with hands' (Col. 2:11). The Passover gave place to the Lord's Supper and the Sabbath day to the Lord's Day" (Coffman, p. 61).
 - c. "Jot" (or Jod) is the name of the smallest Hebrew letter; "tittle" is the little bend or point which serves to distinguish certain Hebrew letters of similar appearance. Neither of these will pass from the law until all things therein be fulfilled.
 - 1) "Everything else may change, but the word of God expressed by either 'the law' or 'the prophets' must stand until it has accomplished that which God intended. All shall stand 'till all things be accomplished.' Some make a distinction between 'fulfilled' and 'accomplished'; they are not the same words in the original. Jesus meant to say that the law should remain in full force until it shall have accomplished that which God intended it to accomplish" (Boles, p. 131).
 - 2) Christ did abolish the law when he died on the cross (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:1-7). Not one iota of the law was annulled "until all of it reached fulfillment, till the whole purpose of the law had been accomplished. And this was done at the cross" (Wallace, p.30). "...The necessary inference is that when the law was fulfilled every jot and every tittle did pass—the whole law ended" (ibid.).
 - d. Luke 24:44: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree" (Acts 13:29).
 - e. Romans 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The
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word **end** in this passage means purpose, and the preposition **for** in the English text is *eis* in the original, and the term righteousness means justification or forgiveness: Thus, Christ accomplished the purpose of the law in order to justification, and thus fulfilled the law.

- f. "That not a jot or tittle was to pass from the law until all was fulfilled, means that the law should remain in full force until the fulfillment..." (McGarvey, p. 53).
3. Verse 19: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. "The man who would break what he considered the small commandments of God, under one dispensation, would be proportionately disobedient under a better dispensation; for habits of disobedience once formed are not easily laid aside. For this reason obedience or disobedience while under the law was an index to what a man would be under Christ. The text shows that the relative greatness of persons in the kingdom of heaven is measured by their conscientiousness in reference to the least commandments. To the great commandments, as men classify them, even very small Christians may be obedient; but it requires the most tender conscience to be always scrupulous about the least commandments" (McGarvey, p. 53).
 - b. "The Greek word here for 'break' is generally translated 'loose' and carries with it the idea of freeing from restraints, as in Mark 1:7; Luke 13:15; 19:30,31; John 11:44; the idea seems to be that anyone who should loosen the authority or obligation of even the 'least commandment' should be condemned; not the one who would abrogate or destroy the commandment, but the one who should violate it by loosening its obligations on anyone....No one has authority to violate in the minutest detail any of the commands of God" (Boles, pp, 131f).
 - c. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas 2:10). The principles being considered apply to the Old Testament law (while it was in effect) and to the New Testament law. One who will willingly break a requirement of God's law he considers "small" has shown his attitude towards any other part of the law; if he thinks he has reason, he willingly shows disregard toward the other parts. We are expected to obey even if the thing commanded does not jibe with our human reasoning.
 - d. "But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."
 - 1) "Jesus here puts doing before teaching; this is the proper order; these are the two great things one can do; he can keep all of God's commandments and teach others to keep them, or he can disobey them himself and encourage others to disobey them....The one who breaks the commandment of God will be held in contempt by all the loyal subjects of the kingdom of God, but one who obeys the commandments of God shall be held in honor by the ones who are loyal subjects of his kingdom" (Boles, p.. 132).
 - 2) If one chooses eight commands of God to keep and one to break, he is not doing the will of God at all. If one humbly and sincerely tries to follow all of what God has said in his word, and teaches others to do so, this man is esteemed as great in the Lord's eyes. (Cf. Micah 6:8; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 6:16-18; 1 John 1:6-10).
 - 3) The Jewish religious leaders of the time thought they could pick and choose among God's commands for what to follow; the Lord accused them of straining out the gnat but swallowing a camel; they ignored parts and over-emphasized other parts of the law.
4. Verse: 20: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. Christ stresses his own authority here. The scribes were those who made copies, studied and taught the law; Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews. These were considered, by themselves and others, as being the models of righteousness.
 - b. Jesus said that those in the kingdom would have to do better than they. These were hypocritical, prejudiced, self-righteous, disobedient, and legalistic. See Matthew 23.

D. Matthew 5:21-26: The Sin Of Animosity.

1. Verse 21: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."
 - a. Other translations:
 - 1) ASV: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."
 - 2) NKJ: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment."
 - b. Reference is to the sixth command of the Decalogue and to the rabbinical gloss to it. This latter part of the verse is an addition (See Num. 35:20-21). "Thus they made the commandment simply and merely a prohibition against committing actual murder, period! They weakened it. They weakened it by making it appear that disobedience brought only punishment at the hands of civil magistrates" (Stevens, p. 89).
 - c. "This commandment was simple and clear; it condemned murder, but the teachers had so interpreted it as to let some on certain occasions escape the penalty of the law. They said that those who should kill should 'be in danger of the judgment.' That is, they should be 'liable' to be brought before the tribunal. This is not what the law said, that they should be 'in danger of the judgment,' but that the penalty for murder was death (Ex 21:12.)" (Boles, p.134f).
 - d. The final judgment of the world is not the judgment referred to in this verse, but to the tribunal established by the law of Moses in each city to handle criminal cases. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment" (Deut. 16:18).
 - e. "Jesus proceeds here to comment on some prevailing opinions among the Jews; to show that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was defective; and that men needed a better righteousness, or they could not be saved" (Barnes, p.51).
2. Verse 22: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."
 - a. Other translations:
 - 1) ASV: "But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire."
 - 2) NKJ: But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.
 - b. The Lord draws a contrast between what they had been taught and what he was now telling them. Among other things, this exalts the authority of Christ above the teachings of the rabbinical traditions and above the law of Moses itself.
 - c. **Angry with his brother.** "Brother" was a common term used between the Jews. Christ goes behind the act of murder to the cause of many such crimes— anger. Not only is it wrong to commit murder, the Lord makes the emotion of anger, which lies behind many murders, to be wrong also.
 - 1) Thus, if one follows the precepts of the gospel system, many murders would be prevented. Anger itself is not sinful; various manifestations of it are wrong. Christ was angry (Mk. 3:5). "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26).
 - 2) "Murder is the overt act of a murderous spirit, which accompanies anger: Jesus goes back to the very roots of murder and shows that...the principles of his kingdom [forbid] even the thoughts of murder" (Boles, p. 135). As stated in the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not kill," the prohibition offered does not forbid hatred or anger. Jesus intensified the Old Testament law in this particular.
 - 3) Our Lord will point out in Matthew 19:18 that it was murder that was forbidden by the Ten Commandments. "He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness," (Matt. 19:18).
 - d. **Without a cause.** This phrase is omitted in the ASV. Some of the old MSS have it and it is omitted

by others. The presence or absence of the phrase in this verse neither adds to nor deletes from the teachings of the Scriptures on the subject. Anger, in and of itself, is not wrong; what made it wrong is what it leads us to do. If we keep it in our heart, we do wrong. If we allow it to cause us to say or do sinful things, it is wrong. If it stirs us up in opposition to sin or error, it is good. Anger is a basic human emotion, thus if it is wrong in its essence, God must bear some responsibility when it manifests itself. But Jesus was angry on occasions, yet he never committed sin. Therefore, getting angry does not necessarily mean we have sinned. Also, God is described in various passages as evincing anger. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked every day*" (Psalm 7:11).

- e. **Whoever is angry with his brother...is in danger of the judgment.** "To be angry with a brother 'without cause,' without grounds, would put the offender in the danger of an adverse judgment, represented by a lower sentence of the local tribunal" (Wallace, p. 36). The judgment here has reference to the local judgment arrangement described earlier. Under the law, as enforced by the Jews of the first century, one who became guilty of murder was in danger of facing this judicial authority. But Jesus said, in broadening the scope of the sixth commandment, that those who were angry with their brother were in danger of facing judicial authority: they were guilty of wrong-doing even though they had not actually taken a life. Christ interprets the command against killing as, "Thou shalt do no murder" (Matt. 19:18).
- f. **Whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council.** "The 'council' mentioned is the supreme court provided for by the law of Moses (Deut. 17:8-13), and represented in the days of Jesus by the Sanhedrin. The difference between it and 'the judgment' was, not that it could inflict the death penalty—but that the council was the more august tribunal, and the more dreaded" (McGarvey, p.54).
- 1) "...To apply the term of extreme abuse and utmost contempt in calling another, 'Raca,' would subject the offender to trial before an appointed jury, designated the council" (Wallace, p. 36).
 - 2) "'Raca'...(is) expressive of great contempt. It comes from a verb signifying to be 'empty, vain,' and hence, as a word of contempt, denotes 'senseless, stupid, shallow-brains'" (Barnes, p.52).
 - 3) "Raca" is from the root 'to spit out,' possibly designating heretics at whom it was customary to spit. The term means 'vain fellow' or good for nothing (Judges 11:3) and can hardly be distinguished from the Greek '*mores*' or 'fool.' But how could the word be more guilty than the disposition? Answer: In its effect on others" (Terry Hightower, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Spiritual Sword Lectures, p.105).
 - 4) We are to treat everyone with a good degree of respect and love (Mt. 7:12; Rom. 13:10; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:12-17).
- g. **Whoever shall say, Thou fool.** "The term expressed more than want of wisdom. It was expressive of the highest guilt. It had been commonly used to denote those who were idolaters (De. 22:21), and also one who is guilty of great crimes, (Jos. 7:15; Ps.14:1)" (Barnes, pp.52f). "...To attach to another the appellation 'fool,' which at that time was a term of extreme vulgarity and moral reproach, would subject the offender to the sternest penalty..." (Wallace, p.36). The reference seems very clearly to be to the final state of punishment for the wicked, that is, to consign someone to *Gehenna*—a penalty we have no power to impose.
- h. **Shall be in danger of hell fire.** "The word 'Gehenna,' commonly translated 'hell,' is made up of two Hebrew words, and signifies the valley of Hinnom....This valley the idolatrous Israelites devoted formerly to the horrid worship of Molock, 2 Ki.16:3; 2 Ch. 28:3" (Barnes, p.53) . Josiah (2 Ki. 28:10) polluted the valley. "The extreme loathsomeness of the place; the filth and putrefaction; the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and night, made it one of the most appalling and terrific objects with which a Jew was acquainted. It was...the image which our Saviour often employed to denote the future punishment of the wicked" (ibid.). There was no word in the Jewish language which would as adequately identify the place of final punishment. Jesus chose this gruesome and graphic word.
3. Verses 23-24: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother,

and then come and offer thy gift."

- a. The description is given using the Old Testament method of worship. The point of this passage grows out of the preceding. He taught the proper course to follow if one has committed an offense against a brother. The offender is to go and be reconciled with the offended. This great precept teaches that we must be right with our fellowman before we can be right with God. It is useless to offer worship to God when we have wronged our brother and are estranged from him.
 - b. We must not be angry with our brother without a just cause; we must not speak disparaging and hateful words to him; we must go to him and be reconciled if alienation has occurred. Positively, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves; we are to do for him what we would like done to ourselves; we are to speak his good, not his hurt (Mark 12:29-31; 1 Cor. 10:24; Rom. 14:19; Eph. 4:1-3; Ph. 2:1-11).
 - c. It appears that some have the idea that if they harm someone else, they can make up for it by doing something good. But the Lord says we must try to straighten it out first before our worship can be properly offered.
4. Verses 25-26: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."
- a. Other translations:
 - 1) ASV: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing."
 - 2) NKJ: Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.
 - b. This describes a situation where a problem has legal ramifications; the offending party is being taken to court. As you go on the way, be reconciled; it is better to do this than to be penalized by the court, for the court will apply the full penalty. This passage is in the same context as the foregoing verses. "The spiritual application emphasized the imperative need of rectifying all wrong before they come to the judgment day when God 'will render to every man according to his deeds,' and where 'every transgression and disobedience' shall receive 'a just recompense of reward'" (Wallace, pp.36f).
 - c. When anger is allowed to enter our hearts and remain there, malice is built up against the object of our ill-will. If we allow it to continue, angry words, fighting, and even murder, can result. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 Jn. 3:15).
 - d. "In a certain city of the Southwest, two men owned adjoining houses in an attractive subdivision, and the driveways were adjacent with a small strip of turf, about a foot wide, between the driveway. They quarreled over this trifling strip. One planted onions in it; the other pulled them up and set out tomatoes! After many words, each stepped to the back door of his residence, took a shotgun, stepped out on the back steps, and shot the other dead while their respective families were at church!" (Coffman, p. 65).
 - e. "Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Cor. 6:7).

E. Matthew 5:27-32: Adultery, Divorce, and Remarriage.

1. Verses 27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."
 - a. Again, as in the case just cited concerning murder, the Lord goes behind the overt act to the initial stage of the sin. With murder it was unwarranted anger against the brother; here it is the lustful look which is the usual first-step in sexual sins. "The Lord did not teach, as some falsely do now, that the thought is as bad as the deed. The Lord taught that both thought and deed must be pure. The Pharisee

justified himself if he did not commit the overt act. Jesus says our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribe and Pharisee in that it must consist of purity on the inside as well as on the outside. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God'" (G.K. Wallace, *Gospel Advocate*, April, 1956

- b. The Law of Moses prescribed the punishment of death for both offending parties in an adulterous affair (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-27). The prohibition against the sin is given in Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18. According to Leviticus 19:20-22, if the offending woman was a slave, her punishment was a whipping; the man in this case was to bring a trespass offering. The thing forbidden by the law was the overt act itself; the law did not specifically forbid a lustful look as worded in the Old Testament passages cited. But Jesus gives in his law a stricter application: not only is the act of adultery wrong, but the look which precipitates the act is likewise wrong, and forbidden.
 - c. That which is condemned is not the look of affection and admiration, but the look of lust. If one never looks on another with lust in his or her heart, he will not likely be guilty of adultery. "...The one who gazeth on a woman, whether married or single, with impure desire, has committed the sin of adultery; this looking is 'to lust after her'; it is a gazing with a view to feed a lustful desire; it refers to an intentional and conscious desire to gratify the lust. The lascivious look and the intending or enkindled passion constitute the roots of the sin of adultery; hence the teachings of Jesus plainly forbid such 'looking' as enkindles lascivious passion; there the sin begins and takes its root, and it must be resisted at that point and ruled out of the life" (Boles, p140).
 - d. The phrase "lust after" expresses the will and purpose, decision and intention, to act, lacking only the opportunity, if the actions do not materialize (see Wallace, p. 37). God's Word is so designed that to be pleasing to him we must serve him with our spirit (sincerely, from the heart, with the inner man), according to the pattern set forth in the Gospel of Christ.
 - 1) Romans 1:9: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."
 - 2) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - e. Jewish religious interpreters did not read the Law thoughtfully and carefully for the tenth commandment prohibited the coveting of a neighbor's wife. This evidently forbade having an unlawful desire for her.
2. Verses 29-30: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell."
 - a. This passage contains the powerful incentive Jesus gave to keep us from giving in to the lustful look or the act of adultery. "The imagined pleasure of indulgence is confronted with the final and eternal consequences in hell, while the self-denial which refuses to indulge is stimulated by the promise of eternal life. As it is better to be deprived of all the pleasure and advantage of the right eye or the right hand during life and then enter into eternal life, rather than enjoy these and then be cast into hell, so in reference to the pleasures of lust. Better never to taste these pleasures at all than having enjoyed them to the full, to be finally cast into hell" (McGarvey, p.56).
 - b. Boles states that the guilty party was taken by the chief witness to a spot overlooking the Valley of Hinnom and cast on to a rock in the valley; the second witness threw a large stone at him; if this failed to kill him, the spectators stoned him to death. But the point Jesus is making is that the offenders will be punished in Gehenna. It is far better to forgo sinful pleasures (of any kind) in this life so that eternal life in heaven might be gained. "The indulgences of a sinful passion may afford temporary gratification, but as it entails the loss of the soul, it is emphatically expedient to forgo such indulgence" (Boles, p.141).
 - 1) Romans 8:13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the

deeds of the body, ye shall live."

- 2) Galatians 5:24: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."
- 3) Colossians 3:5-8: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

- c. "The Greek word rendered offend is derived from another which means to ensnare; and this term well expresses the meaning in this and other places such as Matthew 18:6-9, Mark 9:4-47, Luke 17:2, and 1 Corinthians 8:13. But that which, like a trap catching a man's foot, causes surprise and pain, always gives offense; hence the secondary meaning of the term, which is to offend. (Mt 11:6; 15:12; 17:27)" (McGarvey, p.56).
 - d. Hell is the place of eternal punishment. As there is much we do not know about heaven, so there is much we do not know about hell. Enough information is given to cause us to want to avoid hell at all cost; and to gain heaven at any expense.
 - e. The context is dealing with the subject of adultery, which continues on through verse 32. See also Matthew 19:8-9. He is saying that adultery will cause the loss of one's soul in hell. What a harmful and shameful and hurtful sin it is!
3. Verses 31-32: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."
- a. The law of divorce is given in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Moses' Law was not as strict as the law of Christ is. Notice the contrast drawn in this passage. If a husband found some uncleanness in his wife all he was required to do was give her a writing of divorcement and send her out of his house. Boles says there was a controversy among the Jews concerning the grounds for divorce: one group said "for every cause" (cf. Mt. 19:3); the other said "only for adultery" (p. 142). Thus, the Lord gave his binding pronouncement on the subject here and in Matthew 19:3-12, Mark 10:2-12, and Luke 16:18, and through Paul in Romans 7:1ff. What he taught on the subject has been controverted severely, but remains very clear.
 - b. He allows only one valid ground for divorce (and remarriage) and that is adultery. The unscriptural divorce and remarriage results in adultery. The wife put away and the one she marries both become adulterers. Christ "attached guilt to lustful thoughts, and in this place makes marriages to divorced persons sinful, except in case of the innocent party of a divorce for adultery (Matt. 19:9)" (Coffman, p.67).
 - c. "Under the law of Moses a husband could divorce his wife, but the wife could not divorce the husband; hence Jesus in dealing with this principle uses the masculine gender; but the ethical principle is applicable to both sexes" (Boles, p.143).
 - d. "A woman, when divorced by her husband, naturally seeks a second marriage, if for no other reason than to vindicate herself from the imputation cast on her by the divorce....But her second marriage is adultery, and her first husband, by divorcing her, indirectly causes her to commit this crime....The second marriage of the divorced woman is pronounced adultery both on her part and on that of her new husband; that is, her marriage while her first husband still lives. (See Rom. 7:2)....It is almost universally conceded by commentators and moralists that the innocent party to such a divorce can marry again" (McGarvey, p.57).
 - e. "It is much to be regretted that in many Protestant countries the civil authorities have practically set aside this law of Christ by allowing divorce and remarriage for a variety of causes. No man who respects the authority of Christ can take advantage of such legislation" (McGarvey, p.57).
 - f. Now we have "no-fault" divorce, and living together without marriage.

F. Matthew 5:33-37: The Taking Of Oaths.

1. Definition:

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- a. From Woods', *Questions And Answers*, p. 305:
 - 1) To swear: to invoke the name of Deity, or other sacred persons or things; to utter an oath.
 - 2) An oath: "a solemn appeal to God, or to a sacred or revered person or sanction (as the Bible, the temple, the altar) by way of attesting the truth of one's word, the inviolability of a promise, etc.; also the affirmation or promise supported by the oath, or its form of expression" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).
 - b. There are two elements involved in an oath: (1) an affirmation or promise, and (2) an appeal to God who knows all things, and punishes those who lie. The basis on which an oath is regarded as binding on the conscience is seen in Hebrews 6:16, as an appeal to God to ratify or confirm the affirmation or promise.
 - c. To forswear: "to perjure oneself; it means false swearing and a profane use of the name of God; the Hebrew word which answers to 'in vain' may be rendered to include 'forswear thyself'" (Boles, p. 144).
2. Oaths were common in the Old Testament era. Woods, p.305:
 - a. They involved agreements to perform certain acts: Genesis 14:22; 24:2,8,9.
 - b. Allegiances to a superior (Eccl. 8:2; 1 Kings 18:10).
 - c. Promises of a ruler (1 Sam. 14:24).
 - d. Vows made in the form of oaths (Deut. 23:21-22).
 - e. Public and legal vows and oaths (Lev. 6:3; Deut. 19:6-9).
 - f. The law referred to in this text is recorded in Leviticus 19:12, Numbers 30:2, and Deuteronomy 23:21 (see Boles, p.144). Cf. Ecclesiastes 5:2-5; Zechariah 8:17.
 - g. See also Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Hebrews 6:16ff.
 3. Oaths among the Jews took various forms:
 - a. "God do so and more also..." (1 Sam. 14:44).
 - b. "As the Lord liveth..." (1 Sam. 14:39).
 - c. "The Lord be between thee and me for ever" (1 Sam. 20:23).
 - d. "The God of Abraham...judge betwixt us" (Gen. 31:53).
 4. The Jews regarded the third commandment (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) as forbidding "any profane or flagrant use of the names of God, but they often resorted to technicalities and illogical reasoning to justify oaths where there was no specific mention of the name of Deity. Some rabbis held, for example, that one was bound to tell the truth only when the names of God were mentioned, on the ground that God became a party to the agreement when thus involved, but that if his name were not included in the oath any promise made one did not have to keep! Thus, by mental reservation, by trickery and by the use of evasive methods, many in the first century in the Jewish religion callously broke their promises and violated their oaths. Others avoided the use of God's name in their oaths by swearing by the handiwork of God, the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. [This], of course, did not excuse their lapses because all of these objects are the works of God; and, to swear by them is to invoke God. For this reason, the inspired writer said, 'swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth...' Thus, all oaths, of this nature, are forbidden. God has always regarded with the greatest displeasure any use of his name which is flippant, frivolous and profane" (Woods, p.306).
 5. Concerning "profane," Woods offers the following observations: "It is of serious consequences that many members of the church today have allowed to creep into their conversations words and phrases which are definitely and unmistakably profane. Others who would not dare use the holy names, God, Christ, Jesus, or Jerusalem, Heaven, Hell, Hades, as interjections (an ejaculatory word or form of speech, usually thrown in without grammatical connection, Webster) or to emphasize truth of what they are saying, will, nevertheless, use euphemisms (substitute word or phrases less objectionable) whose derivation goes back to one of the foregoing forms....A look into the etymology of these terms will show that they are directly traceable to sacred names and things, and that their use is profane" (ibid., p.306).
 - a. Leviticus 21:6: "They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, *and* the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy."
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- b. Leviticus 22:15: "And they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer unto the LORD."
6. According to the foregoing writer, we are not to conclude "that it is wrong to use the names of God in our conversations when such usage is reverent, respectful and sober. [See Rom. 6:2, Acts 18:21, and 2 Tim. 1:18 where proper uses are found—bw]. It is the profane use of such names which is prohibited. Nor, are judicial, legal oaths, statements before notaries public, and the like common to the business world, forbidden. But, did not James include, among the prohibitions, 'any other oath?' ...It is significant that an oath, in the name of God, is not mentioned; it would seem that if it were the purpose of the sacred writer to forbid all oaths, including judicial ones, this would have been the first mentioned. But as a matter of fact, this type of oath, in contrast with others, was specifically commanded under the law (Deut. 6:13, 10:20). 'Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God; and him shalt thou serve, and shalt swear by his name.' That it was not the purpose of our Lord or of James to forbid all oaths seems to follow from these considerations: (1) Jesus, before Caiaphas, testified under oath (Matt. 26:63,64). (2) Paul often asserted things in the form of an oath: "For God is my witness. whom I serve..." (Rom. 1:9; see, also, II Cor. 1:23; Phil. 1:8; Gal. 1:20.) (3) God, when he could swear by no greater, 'Swear by himself.' (Heb. 6:13.) The ancient prophets often invoked the name of God in their solemn affirmations (Isa. 65:16).
- a. "James said, 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay...' This appears the key to the understanding of this matter. In all circumstances, we are to say 'yes,' when yes is the correct answer, and 'no,' when no is the true one. We are to tell the truth without the necessity of binding ourselves with an oath. The Jews of that day were addicted to the vice of constant and continuous profanity; of calling God to witness the most common and frivolous matters, a practice which prostituted the name of God to the level of the most insignificant things. Men ought to tell the truth for the truth's sake, and not simply because they are under oath so to do.
- b. "Additional evidence of the correctness of this conclusion is to be seen in the word which the Holy Spirit used to designate any other oath. Had James intended to assert that any oath, all oaths, every oath, must be refrained from, he would have used for the word 'other' the Greek *heteros*, which means another of a different kind, instead of *allos* (which he did use), another of the same kind. (Jas. 5:12.) It seems clear, therefore, that the sacred writer intended to include only such oaths as were of the type under consideration and to which the people of that day were specially addicted" (Woods, p.307).
- c. However, to avoid all oaths is eminently safe. To *affirm* instead of *swear* is permitted by our law, and accomplishes the same purpose, and at the same time protects our tender conscience.
7. Verse 33: "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths."
- a. Christ seeks here to correct another of their interpretations of the Law. Thou shalt not forswear thyself. By the law as given in Leviticus 19:12 and Deuteronomy 23:21-23, they were not to perjure themselves; to forswear is to perjure (swear falsely, affirm a lie). They were told to perform the oaths they took. "An oath is a solemn affirmation or declaration, made with an appeal to God for the truth of what is affirmed, and imprecating his vengeance, and renouncing his favor if what is affirmed is false. A false oath is called perjury, or, as in this place, foreswearing" (Barnes, p.57).
- b. "Under the interpretation of the Pharisees, the divine prohibition was against '*swearing*' a lie. This, in practice, meant that as long as one had not been properly 'sworn in,' or as long as one refused to deliver a formal oath, the offender could tell as many lies as he would without incurring guilt under the law!...(Christ) stripped off these superficial and shallow devices for circumventing God's Law and made the truth to shine before all men" (Coffman, p.67).
- c. "It appears...from this passage, as well as from the ancient writings of the Jewish rabbins, that while the Jews professedly adhered to the law, they had introduced a number of oaths in common conversation, and oaths which they by no means considered to be binding. For example, they would swear by the temple, by the head, by heaven, by the earth. So long as they kept from swearing by the name of Jehovah, and so long as they observed the oaths, publicly taken, they seemed to consider all others as allowable, and allowedly broken. This is the abuse which Christ wished to correct. It was the practice of swearing in common conversation, and especially swearing by created things" (Barnes,

- p.57).
- d. The Lord referred the whole question to higher ground, making it a sin, under all circumstances, to speak an untruth, thus by-passing altogether the question of violating an oath (Coffman). "The Pharisees made frivolous and pernicious distinctions between certain oaths. Jesus prohibits making distinction between oaths and states clearly that one is under obligation to perform all of his oaths" (Boles, p.144).
8. Verses 34-36: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black."
 - a. "...Jewish teachers held that no oath had any binding force unless it brought in the name of God; swearing by the heavens, or by the earth, or by the stars went for nothing, because the name of God was not expressed. They thought by this practice to honor the name of God, but by it they really dishonored God" (Boles, pp.144f).
 - b. "The only oath authorized by the law of Moses was one taken by the name of God (Deut. 6 :13.) The oaths which Jesus here proceeds to prohibit—'by heaven,' 'by the earth,' 'by Jerusalem,' 'by the head'—were all unauthorized by the law. Moreover, it was taught by the scribes that these oaths, and all others which did not include the name of God, had not the binding force of an oath. The universal prohibition, 'Swear not at all,' is distributed by the specification of these four forms of oaths, and is therefore most strictly interpreted as including only such oaths" (McGarvey, p.57).
 - c. Citing Hebrews 6:13, 7:21, Matthew 26:63, 2 Corinthians 1:23, Romans 1:9, Galatians 1:20, Philippians 1:8, 1 Corinthians 15:31, and Revelation 10:5-6, McGarvey observes: "We conclude, then, that judicial oaths, and oaths taken in the name of God on occasions of solemn religious importance, are not included in the prohibition; but as these are the only exceptions found in the Scriptures, we conclude that all other oaths are forbidden. All of these remarks apply with the same force to the parallel passage in James 5:12. For the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees on the subject see Matthew 23:16-22..."(p.57).
 - 1) Matthew 26:63: "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."
 - 2) Romans 1:9: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:31: "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 1:23: "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth."
 - 5) Galatians 1:20: "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not."
 - 6) Philippians 1:8: "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."
 - 7) Hebrews 6:13: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself."
 - 8) Revelation 10:5-6: "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer."
 - d. Swear not by heaven (it is God's throne); nor by earth (God's footstool); nor by Jerusalem (God's Holy City, under the Old Law); nor by the head, which is, "A common oath The same as to swear by the life; or to say, I will forfeit my life if what I say is not true" (Barnes, p.58). "Man has not the power to make one hair become white or black; God alone can do that...We have no right to swear by ourselves or by any member of our body..." (Boles, p.145).
 - e. Comments by other Bible Scholars on verse thirty-six:
 - 1) Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. In the other oaths specified, God's name was profaned quite as really as if His name had been uttered, because it, was instantly suggested by the mention of His "throne." His "footstool," His "city." But

in swearing by our own head and the like, the objection lies in their being "beyond our control, and therefore profanely assumed to have a stability which they have not. (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

- 2) Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. In the other oaths specified, God's name was profaned quite as really as if His name had been uttered, because it, was instantly suggested by the mention of His "throne." His "footstool," His "city." But in swearing by our own head and the like, the objection lies in their being 'beyond our control,' and therefore profanely assumed to have a stability which they have not. (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).
 - 3) "Neither shalt thou swear by the head; though it be near thee, and an essential part of thee, yet it is more God's than thine; for he made it, and formed all the springs and powers of it; whereas thou thyself canst not, from any natural intrinsic influence, change the colour of one hair, so as to make it white or black; so that thou canst not swear by thy head, but thou swearest by him who is the Life of thy head, and the Lifter up of it." Ps 3:3. (from Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.).
9. Verse 37: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."
- a. One should never use oaths in common conversation. A Christian does not have to reinforce his word with any oath or other device. We may safely refrain from entering into any sort of swearing.
 - b. We should be content with a simple affirmation (yea) or simple negation (no). To go beyond this is to do evil. A saint "must live so that whatever he states will be accepted as the truth; his character and life give affirmation to what he says...no oath is needed..." (Boles, p.146).

G. Matthew 5:38-42: Teachings on Retaliation.

1. Verse 38: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."
 - a. The Old Testament instructions on this are recorded in Deuteronomy 19:17-21, Exodus 21:23-25, and Leviticus 24:20. It was not intended to be carried out on a personal, individual level, but rather to be applied by the duly appointed judges. They were to take eye for eye, or tooth for tooth, or burning for burning, but only by the judicial authorities.
 - 1) Exodus 21:23-25: "And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."
 - 2) Leviticus 24:20: "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him *again*."
 - 3) Deuteronomy 19:17-21: "Then both the men, between whom the controversy *is*, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, *if* the witness *be* a false witness, *and* hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; *but* life *shall go* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."
 - b. "As a judicial rule it is not unjust. Christ finds no fault with the rule as applied to magistrates, and does not take upon himself to repeal it. But instead of confining it to magistrates, the Jews had extended it to private conduct, and made it the rule by which to take revenge" (Barnes, pp. 58f).
 - c. "...In every case of maiming under the Mosaic law the guilty party was regularly tried in the courts, and the penalty was inflicted by the officers of the law....The injured party was not required to prosecute, but was at liberty, if he saw proper, to show mercy by declining to do so (Comp. Lev. 19:18.)" (McGarvey, p.58).
2. Verse 39: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."
 - a. Jesus is teaching against retaliation, and denounces the Jewish misinterpretation of the Old Testament scriptures cited above. "God had never taught the spirit and practice of retaliation as the Jews were

- teaching and practicing it. It was never the law of God for any one who had lost an eye to knock out the eye of his enemy; or if in personal combat one had lost a tooth, that he could knock out a tooth of his assailant; no such procedure was permitted without (judicial) process...it did not permit personal vengeance....Jesus opposed their practice; he was not opposed to the law; he came to fulfill the law, but not to disregard it" (Boles, pp.146f).
- b. Resist not evil; resist not him that is evil (ASV). We are to resist the devil (Jas. 4:7); we are to reprove (resist) the works of darkness (Eph. 5:11); we are to fight the fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12); we must denounce sin and error (Rom. 16:17-18). But we are not to resist evil with evil; we are not to oppose violence with violence (Rom. 12:14-21; 1 Pet. 2:11-17). If one should smite your right cheek, turn to him the other also. Slapping is a common insult (1 Kings. 22:24; Lam. 3:30; Matt. 26:67; John 18:22; 19:3). To slap was to both injure and insult (2 Cor. 11:20). "The principle and spirit that Jesus here gives are against retaliation, and emphasize his statement, 'Resist not him that is evil'" (Boles, p.148).
- 1) Is this to be taken literally? If so, should verses 29-30 be taken literally? The Lord's own conduct gives us an insight into the proper course. When he was slapped by an officer at his trial, he gave a strong rebuttal: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" (Jn. 18:23). He did not strike the officer, but rebuked him.
 - 2) When Paul was struck at the high priest's command, he replied with strong words. "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" (Acts 23:1-5). But Paul did not retaliate with physical force to exact vengeance.
 - 3) 1 Peter 2:21-25: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."
- c. "The general principle which he laid down was, that we are not to resist evil; that is, as it is in the Greek, not to set ourselves against an evil person who is injuring us....Christ did not intend to teach that we are to see our families murdered, or be murdered ourselves, rather than to make resistance....It cannot surely be the intention to teach that a father should sit by coolly and see his family butchered by savages, and not be allowed to defend them....Our Saviour immediately explains what he means by it. Had he intended to refer it to a case where life is in danger, he would most surely have mentioned it. Such a case was far more worthy of statement than those which he did mention....He confines himself to smaller matters, to things of comparatively trivial interest, and says that in these we had better take wrong than to enter into strife and lawsuits" (Barnes, p.59).
- d. We are taught against retaliating when we are insulted or injured in cases such as the Lord describes. However, it appears, if we are set upon by thieves, rapists, murderers, bandits, etc., we are not commanded to endure it without a struggle, if such is possible. This seems to be the more consistent view, for if we take this literally, then verse 42 must also be taken literally; and that would put us at the mercy of every bum and deadbeat who approaches us. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thess. 3:10-11). Coffman relates a story about a missionary who bore the insults of a tribe of cannibals. After a long time, he was able to convert them to his New Testament views. He later asked the chief why they didn't eat him as they were wont to do. The chief said, "You see, none of us wanted to eat you, because the reason we eat people is to acquire their skills and bravery; but nobody wanted to be like you, taking all those insults, and patiently bearing every blow against you" (p.69).
3. Verse 40: "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also."
- a. This is the second of three illustrations of the overall principle: Resist not evil. He is still speaking against retaliation for the purpose of wreaking vengeance on an adversary. Apparently, he is not addressing the subject of defending our families or our lives. "The second evil mentioned is where a

man is 'litigious' and determined to take all the advantage the law can give him, following us with vexatious and expensive lawsuits. Our Saviour directs us, rather than to imitate him—rather than to contend with a revengeful spirit in courts of justice—to take a trifling injury, and yield to him. This is merely a question about property, and not about conscience and life" (Barnes, p.59).

- b. Coat: the interior garment or tunic which was usually made of linen. Over this was worn the outer garment called a "cloak " or "mantle." This clothing was held in place by a "girdle" which could be adjusted to facilitate movement; thus, "gird up your loins." To this girdle could be attached a sword, etc., and pouches which served as pockets.
 - c. The cloak was an important garment and more costly than the coat. The Law forbade keeping a poor man's cloak as a pledge (Ex. 22:26-27). "To give up the cloak without resistance implied a higher degree of concession" (Boles, p.148).
4. Verse 41: "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."
- a. This is the third illustration of the principle stated in verse 39. "There was a custom which originated with the Persian government that a man traveling on a mission for the government, if need be, could compel others to assist him in carrying out the demands of the government; the Greeks took up the same custom and put it into law; finally the Romans enlarged upon it and incorporated this principle into a law. Unfair advantage was taken of this law; sometimes the Jews were compelled to assist Romans when the official authority had not demanded it. It was a beautiful custom a first...but to pervert this custom was mean; the Jews resented it, but Jesus teaches that it is better to suffer this inconvenience and injury than to retaliate" (Boles, p.148f).
 - b. "Rather, says he, than resist a public authority requiring your attendance and aid for a certain distance, go peaceably twice the distance" (Barnes, p.60). The "mile" was a Roman mile, a distance of 1680 yards (Vine, p.68).
5. Verse 42: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."
- a. It is obvious that this teaching is not to be taken literally. "This has its limitations and is still on the teaching against retaliation; the meaning of this can be understood from the conduct of Jesus. He said later, 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, that I will do.' (Jn. 14:14.) Jesus did not always give what was asked of him; sometimes God does not give what we ask of him. (2 Cor. 12:8,9.) Sometimes we do not receive because we ask amiss. (Jas. 4:3). Our beneficence must be regulated by a due regard to those who may ask of us" (Boles, p.149).
 - b. Those who ask to borrow what we have the ability to loan and of which they have a legitimate need, should not be turned away. "But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto" (Deut. 15:8-10). The teachings of Jesus in this part of the sermon simply expressed the law given through Moses.
 - c. The spirit of retaliation is still under consideration. If one who has injured us is in need, we are not to turn him away empty. "It is good to be in the habit of giving. At the same time, the rule must be interpreted so as to be consistent with our duty to our families (1 Tim. 5:8) and with other objects of justice and charity. It is seldom, perhaps never, good to give to a man that is able to work, 2 Th. 3:10. To give to such is to encourage laziness, and to support the idle at the expense of the industrious....To lend to every worthless man would be to throw away our property, encourage laziness and crime, and ruin our families. It should be done consistently with every other obligation, and of this every man is to be the judge" (Barnes, p.60).
 - d. "...It is better to invest in people by helping and befriending them, than it is to invest in hoarding treasures for one's self" (Coffman, p.70).

H. Matthew 5:43-48. The Law of Love.

1. Verse 43: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

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- a. The Old Testament did teach love for neighbor: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself..." (Lev. 19:18). But God did not tell the Israelites to hate their enemies. This was an addition or interpretation of the Jews. They were not allowed to make peace with the Canaanites (Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 23:6). They were to exterminate these idol worshippers, just as Saul was commanded to utterly destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15).
 - b. The Old Testament taught an abhorrence of the character and practices of the heathen (Deut. 7:1f, 16,23-26; 12:27,32; Josh. 23:12-13; Ps. 139:21-22).
 - 1) Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 16, 23-26: "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them....And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that *will be* a snare unto thee....But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it *is* an abomination to the LORD thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing."
 - 2) Joshua 23:12-13: "Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you."
 - 3) Psalms 139:21-22: "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies."
 - c. "...The bloody wars which by God's own command they frequently waged against their enemies inevitably taught them to hate them" (McGarvey, p.59).
 - 1) It would have been difficult for an Israelite to have an attitude of love toward a heathen enemy with whom he was in a life or death battle. Although the Law did not tell them to hate their enemies, by requiring them to kill their enemy in combat, it would in a practical way promote that attitude.
 - 2) McGarvey says, "It is a true representation of the law, therefore, in its practical working, that it taught hatred of one's enemies.
 - 3) This is one of the evils of the Jewish dispensation, which, like the privilege of divorce at will, was to endure but for a time" (p. 59).
 - 4) "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Heb. 8:6-8).
 - d. The Law did not teach hatred for an enemy. The Jews sought justification for their hatred from the fact they were told to destroy certain heathen nations or cities, but they were acting as executioners for God. What they did was in obedience to God's command, not as an act of personal vengeance. God did not tell them to hate their enemies.
 - e. The Bible sometimes used "hate" in the sense of "loving less."
 - 1) Compare these verses:
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- a) Luke 14:26: "If any man cometh unto me, and **hateth not** his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."
 - b) Matthew 10:37: "He that **loveth father or mother more** than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
 - 2) He that loves father or mother more than he loves Christ is not worthy of the Lord. This verse is parallel and thus explains Luke 14:26. To hate, as used here, means to love less.
 - a) "And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah....And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated..." (Gen. 29:30-31). Jacob did not hate Leah, he simply loved her less than he loved Rachel.
 - b) One who loves his parent more than he loves Christ is said to hate Christ. He hates him only in the sense that he loves him less than he loves the parent.
 - 3) It is impossible to have the approval of the Lord while holding some one or some thing else in higher esteem.
 - a) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - b) Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - c) Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - d) Luke 9:23: "And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - e) 1 Corinthians 16:22: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."
 - 2. Verse 44: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."
 - a. Notice that the Lord did not command that we like our enemies. Liking someone is natural or automatic, and depends on physical appearance, temperament, age and many other things. It is often easier to like someone than to love him. Affinity develops naturally but love must be cultivated. One cannot be commanded to like another, but he can be commanded to love another. Affinity is an emotion; love is a principle of action. For love (*agape*) to be present it must be active, expressed. "This is the love of God that we keep his commandments" (1 Jn. 5:3). Love for God is a willingness and desire to serve him which will not and cannot be satisfied; and the only way it can be overtly expressed is by obedience to God's will. Faith works by love (Gal. 5:6). Both love and faith are expressed by action (doing what he wills for us to do).
 - b. Similarly, love for another (even an enemy) is an active principle: it seeks to do good, not evil, to its object. It is expressed by appropriate words, attitudes, and deeds. It is therefore much more than mere sentiment or emotion. An emotion is a natural feeling which cannot be commanded. Your superior would be giving you an impossible command if he said, "You will do this dirty job and like it!" You could do the job, but he could not logically expect you to like it.
 - c. "Love" here is translated from the root verb *agapao*. It "denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem....to be kindly disposed to one, wish one well...but *philein* (*phileo*) denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion....Hence, men are said *agapan* God, not *philein* and God is said *agapasai ton kosmon* (Jn. 3:16), and *philein* the disciples of Christ (Jn.16:27); Christ bids us *agapan* (not *philein*) *tous echthrous* (Mt. 5:44), because love as an emotion cannot be commanded, but only love as a choice" (Thayer, p.653).
 - d. *Phileo* and *agapao* are the two principal words translated "love" in the New Testament.
 - 1) Love in the sense of *phileo* is a strong feeling of personal attachment, natural inclination toward. Love in the sense of *agapao* means basically: the will to do good to, or toward (Roy Deaver, *The*
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- Sermon on the Mount*, p.149). Romans 13:10 gives a negative definition of this kind of love. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10).
- 2) "Does the Lord command me to love my enemies in the same sense that I love my mother and daddy, my brother and sister....This is not what the Lord commands. We must 'will to do good toward' all men, even toward our enemies. *Agapao* love considers all that is right and good and just and honorable. It is bedrock-solid foundation" (Deaver, p.149).
 - e. Christ gave examples of the kind of love this passage enjoins in the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), and in his own prayer on the cross (Luke 23:34). David exemplified it in sparing Saul (1 Sam. 24, 26).
 - f. In the verse, Christ specified the following as ways by which love is had for our enemies:
 - 1) Bless them that curse you: reply to bitter words with kind words: repay evil with good (never evil for evil—Romans 12:17). "Not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:9). The word "bless" here means to speak well of or to; the opposite of to curse or slander. "When we speak of our blessing God, it means to praise him or give thanks to him" (Barnes, P.61). *Bless* means *give thanks* in Matthew 26:26 (Luke 22:19).
 - 2) Do good to them that hate you: initiate benevolent deeds and words toward those who heap scorn on you or injure you; remove a stone from his path instead of placing one before him. It is natural to respond in like kind, but the Master demands more of us; we are special and different; we are intended to be a blessing, not a curse.
 - 3) Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you: earnestly petition the God in heaven in their behalf. Do not ask him to rain down fire upon them, but to help and bless them. It is difficult if not altogether impossible to hate one for whom you are praying. We know the final destiny for one who thus abuses us; therefore we ought to be kindly disposed toward him, and pity him; thus will we sincerely pray for his good. See Moses' prayer for Miriam (Num. 12:13), Stephen's prayer for his enemies (Acts 7), and the Lord's prayer on the cross (Lk. 23:34).
 - g. This requirement of loving others is summed up in Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 3. Verses 45-47: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?"
 - a. One reason behind the actions described in the previous verse is "that" we may truly be the children of God. Children imitate their father; the father in this case gives his blessings on his enemies (in this life); he sends his rain and sunshine on both the righteous and the unrighteous; he is the Saviour of all men (1 Tim. 4:10—in that he provides the essentials of life for all mankind). "The implication is that the Christian shall treat his enemies with fairness and equity, doing unto them as he would desire men should do unto himself" (Coffman, p.71).
 - b. The second reason for loving all others is that we may be unlike the publicans and sinners. By having love for our fellow man we become like our heavenly Father and unlike our sinful neighbors. The publicans were the Jewish tax collectors for Imperial Rome which had conquered Palestine. It was bad enough that the taxes went to Pagan Rome, but when it was collected by a fellow Jew, and extortion was used, it became terribly detestable. The publicans were commonly considered by the Jews to be the lowest of the low. They rebuked Jesus for having contact with them (Mt. 9:9-13).
 - c. "What reward have those whose love goes no further than to love those who love them? This would be only a reciprocal love and would be from its very nature selfish; but to extend love to those who do not love us makes us Godlike" (Boles, p.152). "God loves all regardless of their attitude toward him; however there is a special sense in which he loves those who adjust their lives to his will" (ibid., p.152). We are to do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).
 - d. God loved sinners enough that he sent his precious Son to die for them; so we should love sinners and others that we do good toward them. To live any other way is to be like the lowest sinner. "Christ here
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- enunciated a new and thrilling principle to take the place of the old proverb that 'One rotten apple will spoil a barrel of good apples!' That is, 'One good apple can heal a barrel of rotten apples!' Only Christ could have revealed such an exciting new and effective doctrine as this" (Coffman, p.71).
- e. What do ye more than others? "Implicit in these words is the proclamation that Christians are different; they love more than others, will do more than others, and are in fact better in every way than others. Their righteousness is a matter of going beyond, giving the cloak also, going the second mile, turning the other cheek, loving enemies, praying for those who persecute them, and, in short, being 'sons of your Father who is in heaven'" (ibid. p.71).
4. Verse 48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
- a. "Perfect" appears often in the New Testament, including the following passages:
- 1) Matthew 19:21: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be **perfect**, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me."
 - 2) Hebrews 5:14: "But strong meat belongeth to them that are **of full age**, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
 - 3) Hebrews 6:1: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto **perfection**; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God."
 - 4) Hebrews 9:11: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more **perfect** tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building."
 - 5) Ephesians 4:13: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."
 - 6) Colossians 1:28: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man **perfect** in Christ Jesus."
 - 7) Colossians 4:12: "Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand **perfect** and complete in all the will of God."
 - 8) Philippians 3:15: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."
 - 9) James 1:4,25; 3:2: "But let patience have *her* **perfect** work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing....But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed....For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body."
- b. The point in the context is for Christians to be perfect in their love: that is, love all saints and all sinners; be whole, complete, and perfect in love by loving everyone even as does the Father. We can never have the degree of love possessed by God for saints and sinners, but we can be perfect in love by including all within the limits of our love. The greatest manifestation our love can offer falls far below what God's matchless love provided through his Son and by his providence.
- c. "The meaning that Jesus gives...is that his disciples are to let their love be universal, unconfined by partialities, and with respect to its objects as large as God's; not that their love...can be supposed in other respects to be in proportion to the divine love" (Boles, p.153).
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MATTHEW 6

A. Matthew 6:1-4: Right Motives in Almsgiving and Prayer Enjoined.

1. "The Pharisees were exhibitionists, and in this chapter Jesus rebuked the panegyrics of putting prayer and piety on parade" (Wallace, p.62). The Lord is not contradicting what he said in 5:16; he is not teaching that we be absolutely secret about all we do or else our light would be effectively extinguished. It is the motive behind our various acts of righteousness that is being regulated. In chapter five, he exposed the corruptions and incorrect interpretation of the law followed by many of the Jews and presented the truth on those various principles; he now turns attention to the methods and motives by which some of the Jews offered their righteousness. He has pointed out that if we wish to have God's approval, our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. In 6:1-18, Jesus discusses the hypocrisy and self-righteousness characteristic of the scribes and Pharisees in three prominent religious activities; almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. This first section deals with almsgiving.
 2. Verse 1: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."
 - a. The Lord warned against giving alms to be seen of men; this is the underlying motive of these hypocrites. One who aids the needy for the purpose of the praise of men will have no reward from God. The marginal rendering of "alms" is "righteousness," a term inclusive of almsgiving and other activities.
 - b. He does not forbid every instance of public almsgiving or else we would never be able to "pass the hat" to aid some needy person; and we would never be able to collaborate with another person in assisting some needy individual. What he is forbidding is the improper motive of giving alms—to be seen of men.
 - c. This conclusion is shown to be true by the fact that Christ published the widow's gift of two mites (Mk. 12:41-44); the liberality of Barnabas was also recorded in the New Testament (Acts 4:36-37).
 3. Verse 2: "Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - a. Notice that the Lord did not say "if" you give alms, but "when" you do so. The underlying assumption is that you will aid the needy. When you do, take heed that you do not "blow a trumpet" to call attention to your gift. A trumpet was sounded in order to call people together for some special purpose (Num. 10:3; 2 Kings 9:13; Ps. 8:3). Sounding the trumpet here may be taken literally or figuratively; in some way the hypocrites were calling public attention to their giving alms. Romans 12:8b says, "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity"—with pure content, purpose and aim; not to be seen and praised of men. Simplicity mean sincerity, unaffectedness (Vine, p.333).
 - b. The hypocrites gave their gifts in public places: synagogues and street corners; their purpose plainly stated by the Lord was "that they may have the glory of men."
 - c. Our gifts are to be done without public display. "Jesus condemns all ostentation in worship and service and the blowing of trumpets may be either literally or figuratively" (Boles, p.155). Our common expression, "Blowing his own horn," is probably derived from the Lord's statement here. Many of our expressions are based on Biblical terminology.
 4. Verses 3-4: "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."
 - a. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. This is a very striking and colorful expression. It pictures a man, as he passes a needy person on a street, slipping his right hand into his pocket and secretly handing a coin to the one in want; he does this so covertly that the left hand is not even aware of what has transpired.
 - b. "When one does have the right motive there will be no display, no parade, no self-laudation; but there will be the quietness of spirit and simplicity of purpose to honor and glorify God....When people do things to be seen of men, they are feeding their own vanity and defeating themselves, as they will receive no reward from God" (Boles, p.156).
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- c. Alms given to the poor, from the right motive, are lent to the Lord: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (Prov. 19:17). This is part of "laying up treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-21). It returns far more than it costs (Mt. 6:33; Ps. 37:25; Mal. 3:10). Often, one is greatly blessed in this life as a consequence of generous giving (cf. Mk. 10:20; 1 Tim. 4:8).
- d. Freehanded philanthropy has degraded many who are stripped of dignity, who stand in lines, baring their souls to government officials, and sink into a state of permanent, professional poverty, having no self-esteem, self reliance, or responsibility. This is one sad side to our public dole system.

B. Matthew 6:5-8: Right Motives In Prayer.

1. Verse 5: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - a. The Lord emphasized the right motive of prayer by showing first what not to do. Hypocrites like to offer their prayers in public places for the same reason they gave alms in a public situation: they wanted the praise of men above all things. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).
 - b. "The praying of hypocrites which Jesus here condemns was not the prayer of public worship but of private devotion; it was not prayer in which the people were expected to unite, but was the personal, individual prayer of the Pharisees. The hypocrites are described as those who 'love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.' The Pharisees used a public place in the synagogue and even at the street corners as places of private devotion; they sought out conspicuous places...that they may be seen of men" (Boles, p.156).
 - c. This they "love" (from *phileo*) to do. On the street corners they could be seen by people coming from four different directions, thus get great exposure! The entire attitude was wrong. It manifested a false piety. "It was hypocritical, because it was a pretended act of homage to God, which it was really an effort to obtain honour from men. The same fault is committed now by preachers who assume attitudes of private prayer in the pulpit, and by members who do the same in the pew" (McGarvey, p.62).
 - d. They have their reward already: they receive praise of unthinking and ignorant men. In the case of the almsgiver who gave to be praised by men, the only reward he would receive was that which came from men; he would not receive anything from God! The same is true with the hypocritical man who prays to be heard of men. He will not be blessed by the Father for the man is showing irreverence toward God, and is impious through others may not know it. The people were not perceptive enough to see the hypocrisy of these Pharisees; in their ignorance they mistook duplicity for great spiritual strength. There are many in our "enlightened" age who make the same foolish blunder, for there are many who practice the same kind hypocrisy.
2. Verse 6: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."
 - a. Since a closet was not found in every house, we should understand the Lord as referring to any place of privacy. "Of all our earthly hours, those which we spend in prayer to God should be the most completely freed from disguise and pretense. When we are alone with him, no eye but his to see us, not being near to be deceived by false appearances, we have the least possible incentive to hypocrisy" (McGarvey, p.63).
 - b. "The roofs of their houses were flat places, well adapted for walking, conversation, and meditation....Over the porch, or entrance of the house, there was frequently a small room of the size of the porch, raised a story above the rest of the house, expressly appropriated for the place of retirement. Here, in secrecy and solitude, the pious Jew might offer his prayers, unseen by any but the Searcher of hearts. To this place they wished to hold communion with God. This is the place commonly mentioned in the New Testament as the upper room, or the place for secret prayer" (Barnes, p.64).
 - c. Does the Lord mean that prayers can only be offered in private? Certainly not since he prayed in public

- situations.
- 1) Luke 22:19: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."
 - 2) John 11:41-42: "Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."
 - 3) See also 1 Corinthians 14:14-19; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 5:16; Acts 20:36).
- d. Does this passage mean that we ought not to offer thanks for a meal in a restaurant? Not necessarily. But public prayer should be avoided in places or situations which invite public scorn and contempt for Christianity. The deciding questions as to whether we ought to utter a public, audible prayer are: Does this situation or place equate praying on a street corner? and, is it apt to bring reproach or glory to the Lord and his church? Sometimes a silent prayer or no prayer at all, is in order. It is difficult to offer a reverent prayer when there is much noise and commotion.
 - e. To forbid any public audible prayer is to go against New Testament example, and would be placing an unwarranted restriction on the Lord's remarks here. If we can pray only in private we can pray only in a closet with its door shut!
 - f. The Lord is telling us to let our private prayers be offered in private; thus they will be offered to God only, and will not be hypocritical (to be seen and heard of men). God can see in secret and even observes the motive; he will reward according to the motive, the sincerity, and the scripturalness of the prayer.
3. Verse 7: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."
 - a. Vain repetitions, as done by the heathen, are proscribed. Long prayers are often out of order. Christ's prayers were usually concise. *Much speaking* will not insure God will hear.
 - 1) 1 Kings 18:26: "And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made."
 - 2) Acts 19:34: "But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians."
 - b. "The precept...is especially violated by the multiplied repetitions of the Roman Catholic rosary. When we pray we speak to God: we can not order our speech too carefully" (McGarvey, p.63). "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:1-2).
 - c. "This not only condemns rote, repetitious prayers, but also limits the amount of speaking in prayer. How often and how outrageously this divine injunction is violated, and sometimes by the very best of people. A classic example was the harangue of 'Cardinal' Cushing on the occasion of the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. Mislabeled 'a prayer,' it ran on and on for 17 minutes and 30 seconds. Even that was exceeded by Aimie Semple McPherson whose 31 minutes and 10 seconds of 'prayer' before the Democratic convention that nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt the first time must have set some kind of record at Chicago in 1932. The scandalous length of such prayers was rebuked on that occasion by the humorist Will Rogers who immediately followed her and quipped, 'Well, I didn't know anybody could think up that much to impress the Lord in favor of a Democrat.' This remark touched off a full-fledged demonstration" (Coffman, p.78).
 - d. Jesus repeated the same prayer to God three times in Gethsemane (Mt. 26:44). This did not constitute *vain repetitions*. In Luke 18, we are taught to be persistent in our praying. If it is worth praying for once, it is worth praying for two or three times.
 - e. According to Boles (pp. 157f), the word translated *vain repetitions* means "to stammer, stutter, than to babble or prate, to repeat the same formula many times as did the worshipers of Baal and Diana of

Ephesus (1 Kings 18:25; Acts 19:34). Literally Jesus tells his disciples not to '*battologize*' which seems to be an onomatopoeic term, and may have given the name to Battus, the Cyrenian prince, who stammered; to Battus, the silly poet, who made prolific hymns full of tautology. Such vain repetitions impeached the wisdom and goodness of God and was therefore forbidden. The 'vain repetitions' and 'much speaking' were used by Gentiles in praying to God; these are condemned. Christians should use great simplicity and not high-sounding phraseology; we are speaking to God in our prayers and should be careful of our speech." Barnes (pp.65f) gives a detailed description of Roman and Moslem prayer practices:

- 1) "The following is a 'specimen of the vain repetitions' of the Romans: 'Pious Antonine, the gods preserve thee. Gentle Antonine, the gods preserve thee. Gentle Antonine, the gods preserve thee.')
 - 2) "It may serve to illustrate this passage, and to show how true is the description here of prevailing modes of prayer, to refer to the forms and modes of devotion still practiced in Palestine by the Muslims. Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*) gives the following description of what actually occurs: 'See those men on that elevated terrace. One has spread his cloak, other their Persian rugs toward the south. They are Muslims, preparing to SAY prayers—rather PERFORM them, in this most public place, and in the midst of all this noise and confusion. 'Let us stop and watch the ceremony as it goes on. That man next us raises his open hands until the thumbs touch the ears, exclaiming aloud, 'Allah-hu-akbar'—*God is great*. After uttering mentally a few short petitions, the hands are brought down and folded together near the girdle, while he recites the first chapter of the Koran, and two or three other brief passages from the same book. And now he bends forward, rests his hands upon his knees, and repeats three times a formula of praise to 'God most great.' Then, standing erect, he cries 'Allah-hu-akbar,' as at the beginning. Then see him drop upon his knees, and bend forward until his nose and forehead touch the ground directly between his expanded hands. This he repeats three times, muttering all the while the same short formulas of prayer and praise. The next move will bring him to his knees, and then, settling back upon his heels, he will mumble over various small petitions, with sundry grunts and exclamations, according to taste and habit. He has now gone through one regular Rek'ah; and, standing up as at the first, and on exactly the same spot, he will perform a second, and even a third, if specially devout, with precisely the same genuflections. They are obliged to repeat some expressions thirty times, others many hundred times. Would that these remarks did not apply to nominal Christians in this land as well as to Muslims!" [from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
4. Verse 8: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."
 - a. We are plainly commanded against offering prayers according to the heathen way. Though their prayers may have been sincerely offered, they were repulsive to God. Thus, sincerity is not the only prerequisite to acceptable prayer. "The heathen have not the true motive in prayer, the hypocrite hides his motive in prayer, and the Pharisee is synonymous with the hypocrite; the disciples of Jesus must avoid such chattering, prating, and running off mere words in prayer" (Boles, p.158).
 - b. We should never approach prayer from the standpoint of thinking we can inform God about anything. He knows what our needs are before we express them in words. Prayer is not intended as a means of informing the Father about anything. What does he not know already? He does not need to be told where in his word a certain statement is found. Although we cannot report any news to God, yet he tells us to pour out our hearts unto him. This is for our good. Not only may we receive blessings and help which might not otherwise be given (cf. Jas. 4:2), but prayer develops trust in him, and brings about untold blessings for other people for whom we pray.
 - c. "If it be objected that the fact of God's knowledge renders prayer itself unnecessary, we answer that it certainly would if the only object of prayer were to give God information: but as this is not even one of its objects, the objection is irrelevant" (McGarvey, p.63).
 5. "Jesus warns his servants to avoid seeking honor of men in the acts of kindness and favor they do to their fellow men. If we do these works to secure the favor of men, we put their approval in competition with the favor and approval of God, and that which is done to please men is taken from what is due God. God

refuses to accept divided service. Christians are not to give alms, pray, fast, or do any other service before men to get honor or glory of men, but they are to perform these services to God. If a man does these things to get glory of men, none will reckon it a glory to him, to God, or to others" (Boles, pp.158f).

C. Matthew 6:9-15: The Model Prayer.

1. Verse 9: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."
 - a. In Luke's account of this, the inspired author quotes a request of the disciples to "teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Matthew simply begins with Jesus' announcement that their prayers should be ordered after the pattern he next presents. Boles says that the Greek text places the emphasis on *ye* (p.159).
 - 1) Christ had previously shown some common errors in prayer; he now shows the proper way in which his disciples were to pray.
 - 2) The Lord did not intend for these words to become a rote prayer. First, this is evident in view of the differences between the accounts as given by Matthew and Luke. Second, there is no evidence that either he or any of his disciples ever repeated these words as a formal, rote prayer. In fact, the prayer cannot be uttered in the same words and with the same meaning today: we cannot today pray for the kingdom to come since it has already been established and is nearing 2000 years in age.
 - b. *Our Father which art in heaven.* The Old Testament often emphasized the sovereignty and power of God; this the New Testament does also, but places emphasis also on his Fatherhood. We are still his servants (Rom. 6:6-18), but he is also a Father to us (John 3:3,5; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Rom. 8:14-16; Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13).
 - 1) "Since God is man's true and only spiritual Father, it is sinful and improper to refer this title, spiritually, to any man (Matt. 26:39)" (Coffman, p.79).
 - 2) Heaven is a real place although not a physical location. We ought not to think of it being literally in some far distant part of the physical universe. The Bible consistently refers to it as being *up*. Heaven is the central aspect of Christianity: it is our ultimate abode; it is to be gained at all costs; nothing on earth is as important as heaven. Christ came from heaven, he often spoke of it, he opened the way into heaven, he returned to heaven, he will return to take his own into heaven, and heaven is the eternal home of the redeemed.
 - c. *Hallowed by thy name.* This bespeaks of deep reverence for the Father (Eccl. 5:1-2). Vine says hallowed means "to make a person or thing the opposite of *koines*, common" (p.190).
 - 1) Psalms 33:6-9: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast."
 - 2) Psalms 90:1-2: "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:28-29: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire."
 - 4) 1 John 1:5: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."
 - 5) Psalms 89:7: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him."
2. Verse 10: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven."
 - a. Christ next taught his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come. Eighty-four preachers had by inspiration proclaimed the immediacy of the kingdom's establishment (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9). It came on the Pentecost day of Acts 2. Therefore, we would be foolish and in error to pray for something that has already been accomplished.
 - 1) One would be foolish indeed if he should pray for some specific need which he had already been given. Suppose a student should ardently ask God to help him pass the final test which was

- essential if he were to obtain a diploma, but he had already passed the test and had received the diploma!
- 2) "The Britannica World language edition of Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary gives no less than nineteen meanings for the word 'come,' and the fifth of these is: 'to attain an end or a completion. Thy kingdom come'" (p.81). However, it is obvious that the Lord was contemplating the then future establishment of the kingdom. This is the setting in which the model prayer rested. Daniel 2:44; Isaiah 2:2-4; Matthew 3:2; 4:17. If you had been among the disciples and heard the Lord speak these words, and with the background of Matthew 3:2 and 4:17 in mind, what would be your understanding of "thy kingdom come?"
 - b. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* There is no rebellion countenanced in heaven; the angelic beings are perfectly in harmony with the will of God; and when we get there our obedience will be full and perfect. Our prayer is to be that God's will be fully observed on earth as in heaven.
 - 1) There will never be a time when humanity in the flesh will ever be perfectly obedient to God on earth (1 John 1:7-10; Matt. 26:41).
 - 2) The Lord is stressing the supreme importance of obeying God. We learn what the will of God is only by studying and learning the Bible. There is no other way in which God expresses his will for man. Divisions, strifes, heresies, disobedience, and sin occur when men claim to have special messages from God separate and apart from the Bible. If they did indeed have such messages, God would have to confirm it miraculously. But invariably these men assert their claim with no miraculous sign or with some "lying wonder." And their "message from God" contradicts God's word!
 - 3) The so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses" assert that this verse teaches that there will be a future time when God's will is to be perfectly done on earth. The verse does not say that. It simply tells disciples to pray that such might be so. The very nature of Christianity calls for its adherents to desire earnestly that the will of God be done everywhere, at all times, and by men and angels. Our earthly work is to the end that as many men as possible will be subservient to the Almighty. As we teach the lost, we are sincerely trying to bring about in our limited, humble way the fulfillment of this prayer. It is altogether fitting and proper that prayers to this end accompany our efforts and that efforts accompany our prayers. The Bible was given by the God of heaven in order to bring men into compliance with his will.
 - c. Since the earth and all things therein, along with the whole material universe, will be utterly destroyed at the second coming of Christ, there will never be a time when all men in this life will live in complete obedience to God. Christ indicated the possibility that the faith would not be in evidence on the earth at his return. "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).
 - d. It is God's desire that all men obey him to the saving of their souls; but not all will do so, not even the majority (Matt. 7:13-14; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4-5; Gal. 6:7-8; John 5:28-29; Acts 17:30ff).
 3. Verse 11: "Give us this day our daily bread."
 - a. This is a reference to the various necessities for physical survival. Bread is the staff of life, and is representative of the things we need to live. The sentiment of this statement is lost on those many modern folks. With a large bank account, and with more money coming in regularly, and with a great stockpile of food and clothing, and with luxuries and conveniences unknown even to Midas and Solomon, no wonder many are totally unconcerned with obeying the gospel.
 - b. Living in the lap of luxury and convenience, with interest centered on material things and values, the gospel most often falls on deaf, unappreciative ears. How sad! Even many who know somewhat about the Bible, and with wonderful opportunities to learn more, often show little or no interest.
 - c. Involved in this passage is an element of trust in God. It has been the usual case in times past, and in much of our present world, that men had only a day's supply of food at a time. There was the need to depend on God to provide them day-by-day such things as they must have.
 - d. Many do not offer this petition meaningfully because they have such a great store of material goods already. It is difficult for such to learn to trust God. When one is in need of the very essentials of life,
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when he has no one to whom he may turn, then he may learn to trust God. This petition brings one back to the level of real, daily need. "Back of the loaf is the snowy flour; And back of the flour the mill; And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower; and the sun and the Father's will" (Coffman, p.83).

4. Verse 12: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
 - a. Luke's parallel account uses the word *sins* in place of *debts* in Matthew's account. "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Luke 11:4).
 - b. "The Greek word translated 'forgive' is the same translated 'left' in Matthew 4:20,22, and 'left' in Matthew 13:36, and 'leaving' in Mark 4:36, and 'leave' in 1 Corinthians 7:11,12. It carries the idea of absolute putting away of sins" (Boles, p.161).
 - c. It here implies that Christians do not live sinlessly perfect lives (1 John 1:8). The Lord did not imply that we are literally debtors to God, but he uses the term figuratively. There is a likeness between one who owes a debt and one who has sinned against God. There is something against both. The Lord is saying nothing here about literal debts; a Christian is not obligated to disregard any money owed him by another on the basis of this statement. It does not address that situation at all.
5. Verse 13: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
 - a. This indicates the danger in temptation and stresses man's weakness. "Think of all the holy names lost amid the storms of temptation, the hosts of the slain in the encounter with the Prince of Evil. Only a fool could face the subtle and invisible powers of evil with any feeling of superiority or overconfidence" (Coffman, p.83). 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Matthew 13:28,19; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13. The American Standard rendering of Matthew 6:13 ["And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"] sheds some light on the matter.
 - 1) 1 Thessalonians 3:5: "For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."
 - 2) Matthew 13:19: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side."
 - 3) 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
 - 5) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
 - b. "This petition expresses our natural desire not to be thus led, and at the same time, by adding, '*deliver us from evil,*' it indicates that we expect to be brought more or less into conflict with evil, notwithstanding our expressed desire to avoid it. The counterpart to the petition is found in Paul's assurance that 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, that you maybe able to bear it' (1 Cor. 10:13)" [J.W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on Matthew and Mark*, p.64].
 - c. The petition is a request for God not to lead us or bring us into temptation. God does not tempt man to sin. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jas. 1:13). *Temptation* is used in two senses in the Bible: to entice to

- sin (which God will not do) and to be tried by hardship (which God often does—Heb. 12). These two usages are found in James 1:1-12 and 1:13-14. The former refers to trials of hardship and persecution; the latter to enticements to sin.
- d. Guy N. Woods an excellent comment on Matthew 6:13 [regarding being led into temptation]:
 - 1) We have here an excellent example of Hebrew poetry which, unlike English versification of meter and rhyme, obtains its rhythmic cadence in repetition of thought and parallel lines. A glance into the poetic books of the Old Testament will provide hundreds of instances. “He will have pity on the poor and needy, and the souls of the needy he will save.” (Psalm 72:123.) “The evil bow down before the good; and the wicked, at the gates of the righteous.” (Proverbs 14:19.) “Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good.” (Job 9:25.)
 - 2) It will be observed that the second clause repeats and is explanatory of the first and the movement is like the steady swing of a pendulum, or the unvarying tramp of soldiers marching in step. It is this which gives it exquisite beauty and intriguing loveliness. The depth of feeling, and the rich spiritual tone of David’s songs are without parallel in literature. Thus, Jehovah “leads us not into temptation,” by delivering us from “the evil one,” and this he does by providing us with a “way of escape” from temptation. (Matthew 4:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:13.) [*Questions and Answers*, Open Forum, Volume 2, p.178).
 - e. Mr. Barnes offers this view: “A petition similar to this is offered by David, Ps 141:4: "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with the workers of iniquity." God tempts no man. See James 1:13. This phrase, then, must be used in the sense of "permitting." Do not "suffer" us, or "permit" us, to be tempted to sin. In this it is implied that God has such control over the tempter as to save us from his power if we call upon him” (Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved).
 - f. We are to pray that we enter not into temptation (Luke 22:40). When we follow Christ, we will not be led into enticements to sin, although we may be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).
6. “...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matt. 6:13b).
- a. The doxology is omitted in modern versions but logically fits the context. Just because these last words are not found in some ancient manuscripts does not mean that the other manuscripts which include them are incorrect.
 - b. The ancient manuscripts which omit such passages as Mark 16:9-20 also leave out much of Hebrews and Revelation.
 - c. The petition is a request for God not to lead us or bring us into temptation. God does not tempt man to sin. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (Jas. 1:13). *Temptation* is used in two senses in the Bible: to entice to sin (which God will not do) and to be tried by hardship (which God often does—Heb. 12). These two usages are found in James 1:1-12 and 1:13-14. The former refers to trials of hardship and persecution; the latter to enticements to sin.
 - d. We are to pray that we enter not into temptation (Luke 22:40). When we follow Christ, we will not be led into enticements to sin, although we may be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).
 - e. The doxology is omitted in modern versions but logically fits the context. Just because these last words are not found in some ancient manuscripts does not mean that the other manuscripts which include them are incorrect. The ancient manuscripts which omit such passages as Mark 16:9-20 also leave out much of Hebrews and Revelation.
7. Verses 14-15: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
- a. These verses are not part of the model prayer, but give additional information about the statement in verse twelve. We are to forgive others if we expect to receive forgiveness from the Father. Matthew 18:15-35.
 - b. Mark 11:25-26: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." The Lord here teaches us to be ready to forgive
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anyone who trespasses against us.

- c. Luke 17:3-4: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Our forgiveness is not to be extended to one who will not repent.
- d. We forgive, but we cannot remove guilt. We forgive in the sense that we receive the offender back into our fellowship, and treat him as though he had never committed the offense.

D. Matthew 6:16-18: The Lord Teaches on Fasting.

1. Verse 16: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
 - a. The hypocrites, which included the Pharisees, were claiming their fasting showed their profound piety and godliness while it was really demonstrating their poverty in these spiritual qualities.
 - b. They were merely putting on a show to gain approval of men. They were successful in that they were lauded by their fellows, but God saw them for what they really were—hypocrites!
2. Verses 17-18: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
 - a. The Lord added his instructions on the subject of fasting which puts it entirely in the private, personal realm. When and if his disciples fasted, they were to do it in secret. In the public eye, there was not to be any indication they were fasting. They were to keep themselves washed and normally clothed; they were not to disfigure their faces as did the hypocrites.
 - b. It was common for those fasting in ancient times to wear sackcloth and put ashes on their heads. Their tears and sweat would mingle with the ashes to disfigure their faces. Their sad countenances, together with their audible mourning and rough clothing, would make it very apparent to all that they were fasting; if they were fasting, then they must be spiritual giants; that would be the intended impression. Many great Bible people (David, Job, et al) were true spiritual giants, but not so with these hypocrites Jesus described. The fasting approved of by the Lord was that which did not call attention to itself, which was done out of deep need, and not for public notice.
3. The following information concerning fasting is gleaned from *Questions and Answers* by Guy Woods, pp.252-256): Instances of fasting are found in the history of most heathen people, and in the Bible. Does God command us to fast today? Is it to be observed as a religious rite? The Hebrew word (*tsoom*, "to cover the mouth") used for fasting, occurs 14 times in the Old Testament; the verb or infinitive is used 20 times. It is not found before the time of Moses, but often in the historical books (2 Sam. 12:16; 1 Kings 21:9-12; Ezra 8:21; Isa. 58:3-5; Joel 1:14; Zech. 8:19). The Greek word (*neesteuoo*) in its various forms appears about 30 times in the New Testament.
 - a. New Testament uses:
 - 1) Matthew 4:2: Christ fasted forty days.
 - 2) Matthew 6:16: In fasting, do not do as the hypocrites.
 - 3) Matthew 6:18: Do not appear to be fasting.
 - 4) Matthew 9:14: The Pharisees fasted more than the disciples.
 - 5) Matthew 9:15: The day was coming when Christ's disciples would fast.
 - 6) Mark 2:19: When the bridegroom (Christ) was present, no fasting would be done.
 - 7) Luke 18:12: Zaccheus fasted twice each week.
 - 8) Acts 10:30: Cornelius fasted.
 - 9) Acts 13:2: The saints fasted when Barnabas and Saul were selected and sent out from Antioch.
 - b. Old Testament cases:
 - 1) Joshua 7:6; Judges 20:26; 2 Samuel 12:16; Exodus 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8; Jonah 3:5-6.
 - 2) Israel fasted when faced with famine, war, pestilence and death. Fasting was conducted on the second and fifth days of the week and lasted through the day, beginning at sunset of the preceding day.
 - c. It does not appear that Christ instituted any fast days for the church, nor did he indicate that the

disciples were, by divine direction, to continue to observe the regulations touching fasts which obtained during the former dispensation. On the contrary, when the Pharisees leveled a criticism against him because his disciples did not fast as often as theirs, or even as those of John, he said: "Can ye make the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bride-groom is with them? But the days will come; and when the bride-groom shall be taken away from them, then will they fast in those days" (Luke 5:33ff).

- 1) Then (at that time), when the bridegroom (Christ) had departed, there would be occasion for fasting. From this, three things may be concluded; (1) fasting was inconsistent with the joy which should characterize the disciples while the Lord was with them; (2) an occasion would come when, because of grief over his leaving, they would fast; and (3) that fasting evidenced an attitude of mind and disposition of heart.
- 2) "And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was *taken* out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:36-39). Is there not here the clear intimation of our Lord that the Pharisees were in error in suggesting that the old patch of Jewish practices should be affixed to the new garment of Christianity; or that the old wine of the ancient order should be poured into the new receptacle of the gospel dispensation?
- 3) Christ removed fasting from the public realm and classified it as a matter of private devotion (Mt. 6:16-18). Therefore, we may conclude: (1) Christ did not enjoin fasting upon the church as a public duty; in his reference thereto, he merely regulated a practice already obtaining among the Jews; (2) he taught that (a) it is to be observed, if at all, in private; (b) without revealing it to others; and (c) for the good of one's own soul. Fasting is not an ordinance of the church; it is not commanded in the Christian dispensation, nor are there penalties given for failure to conform thereto; there is no special virtue in it so that all disciples must engage therein; one may find it a blessing, another may not. When special obligations face us we may, for the time, limit our intake of food; we may, indeed, under the pressure of intense mental and spiritual activity, lose all desire for food. On such occasions it must be done without public display, eschewing all ostentation, or self-glory, and do it for the glory of God.
- d. Jesus said that the Pharisees disfigured (*aphanidzousin*) their faces that they might appear (*phanoosin*) before men to fast. The words are of the same derivation. The Pharisees *disfigure* that they may *figure* with men! He said they were of sad countenance (*skuthroopoi*), like people whose livers are out of order!
- e. Is fasting an obligation of children of God today? It is not specifically commanded in the scriptures; but in the Sermon on the Mount our Lord gave instructions to the disciples on how to *give*, how to *pray*, and how to *fast*, as if each were of equal obligation (Mt. 6:16-18). In view of the fact that giving and praying are items of public worship (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1,2), and fasting is not, it would appear that fasting is in the area of private devotions, and is to be restricted thereto. While Matthew 6:16-18 clearly shows that fasting was not to be engaged in publicly and with ostentation, it also reveals that it did have an important place in the life of a disciple, and that the Father would reward those who thus engaged.
 - 1) That fasting is not intended to be observed under all circumstances, and that its chief purpose is to strengthen us in times of trial and adversity and on occasions of sorrow and grief, is evident from an induction of passages dealing with the subject in the New Testament:
 - a) Matthew 9:14: "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"
 - b) Mark 2:18: "And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?"
 - c) Luke 5:33: "And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers,

- and likewise *the disciples* of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?"
- d) Acts 13:2: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."
 - e) 2 Corinthians 6:5: "In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings."
- 2) Matthew 9:14-15. When the joy of the Lord's presence had been turned into sorrow in his absence, the disciples would fast. Does not this teach us that fasting is an exercise designed to strengthen us and to turn our attention away from the desires of the flesh to the nourishment of the soul? And, that it is to be done only in times of adversity, temptation, grief, or trial?
 - 3) Fasting, properly engaged in, can be a source of great spiritual blessing, a discipline of the will and an exercise producing great inward strength, and power. All of us, on occasion, should resolutely put out of our hearts every semblance of worldly desire, and fleshly appetite, and with prayer and fasting, draw very near to God and claim his support and guidance in life. Such an experience would make us all infinitely stronger, richer in faith, and vastly better equipped to live the Christian life. In view of the fact that neither time nor manner of observance is given for fasting, we must conclude that these are matters to be determined in each instance, and by each person participating.

Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting

Guy N. Woods

How does our Lord's teaching in Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18, regarding almsgiving, prayer and fasting, relate to us today?

Almsgiving, prayer and fasting have a conspicuous place in all the religions of mankind. The Koran, the holy book of the Mohammedans, teaches that these are the chief duties of men. The Koran says prayer will carry a man halfway to paradise, fasting will bring him to the gate thereof, and alms will give him entrance.

The Catholic Church gives great prominence to almsgiving (particularly when she is the recipient), to endless repetitions of prayers, and to bodily mortifications. Buddhism has its prayer wheels by which it speeds its interminable rituals.

Jesus makes it clear that all such formal performances as religious devotions are worthless in His sight, giving an impressive indictment of formalism, insincerity and hypocrisy in worship.

"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them" (Matthew 6:1 ASV). This injunction of our Lord has the force of a general precept and includes any act of righteousness in which men engage for the purpose of enjoying the acclaim of others. In it Jesus deals with the motives of men and condemns any performance the purpose of which is ostentation. Any religious act done where one attracts to himself any unnecessary publicity or where the praise of men is the ultimate object comes under the ban of this precept.

Jesus does not condemn the doing of works of righteousness, even when such works are known. Indeed, He had just said, "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven—(Matthew 5:16). For men to live before others so they will be prompted to emulate that which is good is right. What is forbidden is ostentation and pride in the service of God.

Matthew 5:16 provides a lesson in motives and purposes, and it condemns all hypocrisy and insincerity in our devotions to God. When the righteousness is done for no other purpose than to be seen of men, and men see it, no other reward need be expected. When men seek this reward, they will receive it and it alone. God will not reward those thus influenced.

Having forbidden ostentation in righteousness, the Lord mentions three common acts of righteousness—almsgiving, prayer and fasting—in which self-righteousness often manifested itself among the scribes and Pharisees. He deals with almsgiving by saying, "When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee" (Matthew 6:2).

Trumpets were sounded as signals for the purpose of attracting attention, and when men took pains to draw attention to themselves, they were said to sound trumpets before them. No evidence is available that the Jews

blew literal trumpets in their almsgiving, so the passage is to be taken in a figurative sense signifying an objectionable self-display of one's contributions.

Those guilty of calling attention to themselves are called hypocrites (literally stage actors), men whose outward attitude does not reflect their real condition of heart. The word describes those who hide their real sentiments and assume feelings other than their own, men who, for purposes of praise or gain or laudation, put on the cloak of religion.

The Bible places great emphasis on aiding the poor, and in both Testaments the duty is enjoined. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto Jehovah, and his good deed will he pay him again.- (See also Deuteronomy 15:7,8; Leviticus 25:35; Job 29:16; Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 14:21; 2 Corinthians 9:9; Ephesians 4:28; and James 1 :27.) The doing of alms is therefore an essential act of practical righteousness, and without such we cannot possess the character of those who practice the religion that is pure and undefiled.

The Greek word rendered alms is derived from a root that signifies to have compassion and to be merciful. Thus, it takes us behind the act itself and indicates to us the spirit that prompts it. To be hypocritical in the performance of such duties is to make man and not God the judge of our actions and the approver of our deeds. This attitude is wicked and presumptuous, and we should search our hearts and purge them of any semblance of such a disposition on our part.

The Pharisees, whom the Lord had especially in mind in this section, were the chief culprits in the matter. They had their reward: the approval and approbation of men. The original language signifies, -They have in full their reward," which suggests that this approval is all they sought and all they ever will receive.

Having condemned the manner of almsgiving characteristic of the Pharisees, Jesus then proceeded to instruct the disciples in the proper manner of almsgiving: "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth—(6:3). Jesus is saying that one should do alms with such little show and in so quiet a manner that when the gift is bestowed with the right hand, the left hand does not know what is being done.

The word "know" suggests the idea of approving. Therefore, the act should be done with so little ostentation that the other hand does not take sufficient notice of it to approve of it. We should give our alms for the sole purpose of pleasing God and aiding suffering humanity. When we have done this, we should dismiss it from our minds, instead of keeping it constantly before us and congratulating ourselves because of our liberality. Those thus motivated, though the act be done in secret, may be assured that it will not go unrewarded, for the Father, "who seeth in secret shall recompense" (Hebrews 6:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5).

Matthew 6:5-15 contains our Lord's first recorded utterances on the subject of prayer. That these words contain a solemn warning against hypocrisy in prayer is of great significance. Jesus does not condemn public prayer as such, because it must be engaged in in public devotions and for the edification of others. What is condemned is ostentation in devotion, the public parading of piety in the effort to attract the notice of others, and thus gain for oneself the reputation of great spirituality.

Prayer is a recognition of need and of dependency and, therefore, utterly inconsistent with a manifestation of pride and show of piety. So weak is human nature, however, that men can and actually do unite these opposites. Hence, this warning, "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites."

The hypocrites whom Jesus particularly had in mind were the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13). These men were accustomed to seeking out public places for their private devotions because they wished to be seen of men. They are described as men who "love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men" (v. 5). They have "their reward," that which they sought being the praise of men. This was their "full" reward.

In contrast with this public display of piety, Jesus told the disciples how to pray in an acceptable manner. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee."

The inner chamber is used to represent any place of privacy. That the door is to be shut further suggests the privacy that should be characteristic of such devotions. Because the Father "seeth in secret," such secret prayers in private places will not go unanswered.

Jesus was not forbidding His disciples to pray in public. Paul gave thanks to God in the presence of a whole ship's company (Acts 27:34) and gave orders to the end that men should pray everywhere (1 Timothy 2:8). What is condemned is the assumption of a posture of prayer in a public place when the prayer itself is a secret prayer. Moments of silent prayer sometimes engaged in in public services come perilously close to being the practice

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- e. "The pursuit of earthly treasures is a disease that feeds and increases upon itself...The possession of any number of units does not satisfy the 'collector' but only sends him avidly in search of more. This hungry pursuit of wealth, or any earthly achievement, pierces the pursuer through with many sorrows, temptations, and snares, as well as thrusting him into many foolish and hurtful lusts 'which drown men in perdition' (1 Tim. 6:9,10). In addition to this, there is the uncertainty of earthly treasures. Christ here mentioned moth and rust and thieves, elementary sources of loss which have hardly changed since our Lord spoke these words. Riches make themselves wings and fly away (Prov. 23:5). If one is tempted to disbelieve it, let him ask any man who has seen a flood, a tornado, an earthquake, a volcano, a change in fashion, a war, a revolution, the death of a partner, the betrayal of a sacred trust, a serious illness, or an automobile accident, or any of a million other things that continually illustrate the truth of this divine wisdom" (Coffman, p.85).
 2. Verse 20: "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."
 - a. Treasures in heaven are safe. These are spiritual in nature and eternal in scope; they are **reserved** in heaven. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).
 - b. "The security of such treasures against the moth and the rust and the thieves which threaten earthly possessions is presented as a motive to obedience. The contrast is very striking. No man who pauses a single moment for reflection can fail to realize it" (McGarvey, p.66).
 - c. These heavenly treasures are for the individual, not for someone else; they are yours and no one can deprive you of them without your cooperation. "All that one gives or does for the kingdom of God will accrue to his eternal credit. Not even a cup of cold water will lose its reward (Matt. 10:42)" (Coffman, p.86).
 3. Verse 21: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - a. "Here is the chief reason for laying up treasures in heaven and not on the earth. Where the heart is, there is our source of happiness. If it is on the earth, our happiness must partake of all the uncertainty of earthly things, and it must be lost forever when we leave the world" (McGarvey, p.66).
 - b. The Lord is most interested in where our heart is. The Lord demands the whole heart; the devil is satisfied with only a part for he knows if he has only a part, he actually has it all; the Lord will not take anything less than 100%.
 - c. "The same word is here translated 'lay up treasures' as is translated 'lay by in store' in 1 Corinthians 16:2" (Boles, p.165).
 4. Verses 22-23: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!"
 - a. This passage connects directly to the preceding verses, and emphasizes the great importance of having our full trust in the Lord, and putting the full force of our souls behind our obedience to his will.
 - b. "All the light and vision of the body come through the eye; the eye supplies for the whole body the benefits of light and vision. 'If therefore thine eye be single' means that the eye does not see double or does not look at two objects at the same time...For the eye to be evil is for it to be in a diseased condition so that light and vision are blurred or obscured; in a spiritual sense if the eye be evil the power of distinct and clear vision of spiritual things is lost and the whole body in a spiritual sense is full of darkness...This figure used by Jesus has direct reference to laying up treasures; he who lays up treasures upon earth has an evil eye, but he who lays up treasures in heaven has a clear vision and the whole body is full of light" (Boles, p.165f).
 5. Verse 24: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
 - a. One who lays up his treasures in heaven serves God; one who lays up his treasures on earth serves mammon (a term for riches).
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- b. "If a servant obeys one master he must disobey the other; the very act of obedience to one is disobedience to the other....God and mammon are of such opposite natures that it is impossible to love either one supremely without hating the other; that which attracts to one repels from the other" (Boles, pp.166f).
 - c. Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - d. Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - e. James 2:10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all."
- F. Matthew 6:25-34: Remove Anxiety and Trust in God.
1. Verse 25: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"
 - a. "Therefore" shows the connection between this passage and the foregoing; it is an expansion of the thought introduced in verses 19-24. "The general design of this paragraph, which closes the chapter, is to warn his disciples against avarice, and, at the same time, against anxiety about the supply of their wants" (Barnes, p.71). This he does by a series of statements and arguments, the first being in verse 25.
 - b. *Take no thought.* This phrase "denotes more than 'to be anxious'—it is in the Greek, *melancholy*, and refers to a state of despondence, which reflects on the providence of God....It exhorts the disciples to that which would pacify their minds in the midst of a world of uncertainties, and any forebodings that would divert this singleness of mind is the forbidden anxiety" (Wallace, p.73). When the KJV was made, "thought" was the proper word, as is indicated by various English writers of the time.
 - 1) McGarvey gives the following quotes (p.67): "Harris, an alderman in London, was put in trouble and died with *thought* and anxiety before his business came to an end" (Bacon). "In five hundred years only two queens have died in childbirth. Queen Catherine Parr died rather of *thought*" (Sommers Tracts). "These examples illustrate the expression as used by our translators who were contemporaries of Shakespeare. It expresses, not the mental act of thinking, but the state of feeling which results from a despondent view of the future."
 - 2) The Lord's statement is a straightforward commandment. It is as binding as any other. To disobey it is to show distrust in our Lord; and without faith (and trust) we cannot please God.
 - a) Luke 10:41-42: "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
 - b) Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."
 - 3) The Lord is not forbidding foresight and prudence.
 - a) 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."
 - b) 1 Timothy 5:8: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."
 - c. *What shall we eat or drink, or what shall we put on?* The greatest needs of the body are food, clothing, and shelter. The provision of these is a great concern of mankind. There are many *spongers* and sluggards who apparently have no concern about these; but their lives have no trust in the Lord to provide them. This kind is not ashamed to ask and even demand from you these essentials; many of them have the notion that you owe it to them. A faithful Christian has no logical reason to be anxious over the basic essentials, as the Lord concludes at the end of the chapter.
 - d. The first argument he offers why we should not be anxious is given in the question he raises: "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" The life God gave us is far more important than
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- meat (a general name for food when the KJV was made), and clothing. "Jesus' argument is that God who made man and gave him life will also provide him with the means to sustain it, reinforcing his argument by the fact that God does this very thing for the lower creation" (Coffman, p.88). God cannot be accused of caring for the birds and neglecting his children. God who gave the greater gifts (life and body) will also provide the lesser gifts (food and clothing).
2. Verse 26: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"
 - a. This is the second argument which is an extension of the first. "The mystery of *how* God cares for the myriads of his creatures both great and small is an unfailing marvel. Anyone familiar with wild life is aware of the remarkable continuation of every species from age to age....The weight of our Lord's argument here is overwhelming when it is recalled that of all God's creatures, from insects to the great animals of the forest, man alone is constantly anxious about his survival on the planet. What a glimpse this gives of the ruin and wretchedness that have resulted from man's sin and rebellion against his Maker. Anxiety, that sure corollary of sin committed, has invaded man's every thought, destroyed his serenity, and sent him scurrying in all directions; and, most significantly, anxiety only makes things worse" (Coffman, p.88). Some unknown author said, "The worst misfortunes are those that never arrive."
 - b. The birds do not sow, reap or store; they merely gather what God has provided. Yet there is no suggestion of anxiety on their part about their future provisions. God gave them certain natural functions to fulfill; they perfectly accomplish these duties and do so without worry. God provided the means, but they must do the gathering.
 - c. Man alone has the ability and knowledge to sow, reap, and store; he has been given certain functions to perform for his Creator and fellowman. But he often causes pain to himself unnecessarily by being anxious about whether he will have sufficient to survive. In God's general providence exercised through the laws of nature, he takes proper care of the lower creatures. In his special providence he promises to take full and proper care of his own people (Ps. 55:22; 37:25; Ps. 23; 1 Pet. 5:7; Heb. 13:5-6).
 - d. Therefore, why should a faithful child of God be filled with anxiety? We are of much greater importance than the birds. Luke 12:22-30; Mark 10:29-30; Matthew 10:29-31.
 3. Verse 27: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"
 - a. This is the third reason why a faithful saint should not worry. What good can anxiety accomplish? By being anxious, can you make yourself taller?
 - b. It is worse than useless to worry; it deprives us of needed strength with which we could act to solve the problem about which we are concerned. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).
 4. Verses 28-30: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?"
 - a. This is the fourth argument why we should not be anxious about earthly essentials. The lilies do not toil or spin in order to produce their marvelous attire. God placed in the earth the ingredients necessary and provided the sunshine and rain; the lilies are incapable of worry over whether there will be sufficient of either of these. Solomon was the most glamorous of Israel's kings because of his immense treasures (cf. 1 Kings 10). Yet the Lord, who saw Solomon in all his splendor, and was a perfect judge of such matters, declared that the glorious beauty of the lilies of the field exceeded that of Solomon. The strength of the argument is obvious.
 - b. Vine says there are 90 genera and 243 species of grass in Palestine or Syria (p.172). The timber had long since been used up in the land, so the Jews resorted to burning grass (including the flowering kinds) in their ovens. Barnes reports that the most common ovens, "the one here probably referred to, was made by excavating the earth 2½ feet in diameter, and from 5 to 6 feet deep. This kind of oven still exists in Persia. The bottom was paved with stones. It was heated by putting wood or dry grass
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into the oven, and, when heated, the ashes were removed and the bread was placed on the heated stones" (p.73).

- c. The lilies lived and added their beauty to the earth only for a season, and they were destined to be burned in the ovens in many cases; yet God saw fit to clothe them with splendor for that brief span. Since he thus clothed them with such beauty and otherwise cared for their needs, shall he not also provide for his own children? Who would contend to the contrary! One who can observe God's providential provision for the lower creation and still is anxious and despondent over his future needs, is showing distrust (lack of faith) in God.
5. Verses 31-32: "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."
 - a. The fifth and sixth statements are given in this passage. In view of the foregoing information, Christ admonishes us to be not anxious concerning our food, drink, and clothing.
 - b. The Gentiles (all those who are not a part of the nation of Israel) were wont to be anxious over these things. But the Father of the faithful knows what all the needs of his people are. Thus, he implies he will provide those needs.
6. Verse 33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - a. This is the key verse in the context. If one wants to have the essentials just named, let him meet the requirements of this verse.
 - b. *Seek* denotes an active, diligent search and inquiry, required of both alien and saint, and which characterized our Lord.
 - 1) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
 - 2) John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
 - 4) Galatians 5:6: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
 - 5) Philippians 2:12: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
 - 6) 2 Timothy 2:3-4: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."
 - 7) Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
 - c. *First* gives the order of our diligent search. Above all things, that which Christ here identifies are to be preeminent in our activities of life. Nothing is to equal or to surpass in importance the items he names; these are to be first in importance and in the order of our searching.
 - d. The kingdom of God is the church of Christ (Matt. 16;16-19; Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2-3; 1 Tim. 3:15; Acts 2; Col. 1:13-14; Eph. 1:3; Eph. 5). The common notion of modern religious men is that the church is unimportant. They fail to see that the church and the kingdom are one and the same. If they could learn this truth, then the Lord's statement would become as meaningful to them as it is to us. It is of such great importance that it must be placed first in our priorities. If one puts the church first, will he stay away from the assemblies? Will he refuse to give? Will he work for it?
 - e. God's righteousness is placed on the same plane as the kingdom. They are joined by the conjunction *and*. It is in the church that we are able to work righteousness and be fully obedient to the will of God.

If we do thus, then all these things (food, clothing, etc.) will be thrown in as an added blessing. The primary blessings are spiritual; these material essentials are given *to boot*.

7. Verse 34: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof."
 - a. Don't borrow from tomorrow's possible troubles and struggles; there are more than sufficient in each day. Bridges are to be crossed only when we come to them. Do not be filled with worry over what evil might arise tomorrow. Do not increase the struggles of today by adding to them those which belong to the future.
 - b. "God governs in the affairs of man; and if a sparrow cannot fall to ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? (Benjamin Franklin).
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MATTHEW 7

A. Matthew 7:1-5: The Sin of Judging.

1. Verses 1-2: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."
 - a. To avoid being judged, avoid judging. "Judge" (*krino*) means to judge with the purpose to condemn. The Lord is not forbidding:
 - 1) **All types of judging:**
 - a) Matthew 7:15-20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." We are required by this injunction to examine the fruit of teachers.
 - b) John 7:24: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."
 - c) Romans 16:17-18: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." To fulfill this requirement, the Roman saints [and we] must identify those who cause offenses.
 - d) 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." To fulfill this command, Timothy [and we] must determine who is a faithful man.
 - 2) **Forming or expressing conclusions:**
 - a) Matthew 7:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
 - b) Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."
 - c) Matthew 7:20: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
 - 3) **The judging and condemning of our judicial system:** "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4).
 - 4) **The exercising of church discipline:**
 - a) 1 Corinthians 5:12-13: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."
 - b) 2 Thessalonians 3:6: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."
 - 5) **Identifying and exposing religious error:**
 - a) Matthew 15:9: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men."
 - b) Mark 7:13: "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."
 - c) Galatians 1:6-9: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."
 - d) 2 Timothy 2:16-18: "But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more

- ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."
- e) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."
 - f) 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."
 - g) 2 John 9-11: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."
- 6) **Preaching and teaching against sin and religious error:**
- a) 1 Timothy 5:20: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."
 - b) 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."
- b. The kind of judging we are not to do:
- 1) Pronounce final judgment on men. It is not our prerogative to consign anyone to eternal torment.
 - 2) Condemn another by means of a self-righteous attitude on our part.
 - 3) Hypocritical or hypercritical. We can be critical for another's good, but hyper-criticism is criticism done with gladness. Being hypocritical is to condemn another when we are guilty of the same or greater crimes.
 - 4) Condemning because of prejudice.
 - 5) Reaching a conclusion to another's hurt without possessing all the pertinent facts, or by not properly considering all the evidence.
 - 6) Imputing motives: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11).
 - 7) Not considering the circumstances.
 - 8) Condemning people instead of what they do. We must ever love the individual and despise their sins.
 - 9) Using our opinions as the standard rather than the word of God:
 - a) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - b) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
 - c) Proverbs 16:25: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
 - d) Jeremiah 10:23: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."
- c. "...That only such judging as is not required by the actual conduct of men is here condemned. All judging from surmise, or from insufficient premises, or from ill-will, is prohibited. It is adverse judging, of course, that is referred to" (McGarvey, p.69). The verse immediately following this passage (Matt. 7:6) requires the passing of judgment. We must identify who is a *swine* and who is not a *swine* in order to follow the Lord's counsel required by the passage.
- d. The general rule is, the judgment we unleash on others is the kind we ourselves will receive from men and God.
- 1) James 2:13: "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 10:8: "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him."
 - 3) Haman was hanged on the gallows he had constructed for Mordecai (Esther 7).
- e. "Do not cultivate a harsh, bitter, faultfinding spirit that looks on the ill side of persons and actions and that seeks to see evil in others so they can find fault and complain" (Boles, p.172f). Harsh, unfair,

unkind, censorious judgment is forbidden.

- f. Attitudes necessary to be in harmony with the principle of the text:
- 1) Attitude toward God's truth (Jer. 10:23; John 8:32; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; John 18:37-38; 1 Peter 1:22-23; John 17:17; Acts 17:11).
 - 2) Attitude of love (John 13:35; 1 John 4:7-11; 4:20-21; Matt. 18:15-17; 5:23-24; John 14:15; 15:13; 1 John 3:16).
 - 3) Attitude of consideration toward others (Phil. 2:3-4; Gal. 6:1-2).
 - 4) Attitude toward temptation (1 Cor. 9:27; 10:12).
 - 5) Attitude of compassion (Matt. 9:36; 16:26; Luke 10:25-27; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 John 3:17-18).
 - 6) Attitude of sacrifice (John 3:16; Heb. 2:9; Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:26; Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Cor. 11:1; 9:19-23; Phil. 1:17)
 - 7) Attitude of forgiveness (Rom. 3:23; Luke 23:34; Acts 2:36-38; Matt. 18:21-22; Luke 17:3-5; Matt. 11:25; Luke 6:35-37).
 - 8) Attitude of self-examination (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 6:1-3; James 5:19-20; John 7:24; Psalm 119:172; Luke 18:9-14). Self-righteousness and faultfinding result in other sins: Envy (1 Cor. 3:1-7); strife (2 Tim. 2:22-26); and works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). [See Clark Elkins, Spirit Sword Lectures, p.214ff].
- g. "God's judgment of us is always just, whether we judge others justly or unjustly; but men will usually judge us as we judge them" (McGarvey, p.69).
2. Verses 3-4: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?" NKJ: And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye?
- a. "The mote hunter is the nitpicker, the specialist in fine, disputed points, who focuses on the most minute deviations while ignoring far more basic and important considerations" (Coffman, p.92). The mote is any small particle; the beam signified a large piece of squared timber.
 - b. "It is a very common thing that men who pronounce forbidden judgments on their brethren, possess themselves in a greater degree the fault which they condemn....the command, 'First cast the beam out of your own eye,' must not be construed as requiring us to get rid of all faults before we attempt to correct others; for on this condition none would be qualified for the position of teachers; but it requires that we shall rid ourselves of a given fault preparatory to rebuking that fault in another. The lesson is especially important to public teachers, for they have power for good only as their conduct coincides with their teaching" (McGarvey, p.69). Compare James 3:1; Acts 1:1; Romans 2.
 - c. "What he is emphasizing here is the evil inconsistency of Big Guilt correcting Little Guilt....The ridiculous picture of a man with a plank in his own eye casting a splinter out of his neighbor's eye must have brought a chuckle from those who heard the Master's words" (Coffman, p.92).
3. Verse 5: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
- a. The Lord did not say the brother with the mote in his eye should not be corrected. He is saying that before we can come to his assistance we must ourselves be free of the same or greater sin; that we not be hypocritical. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" (Rom. 2:21-23).
 - b. We should discipline wayward members so that we can be more effective in teaching the aliens in the community. Non-members in a community are able to perceive our inconsistencies; some are inclined to see fault even when no faults exist.

B. Matthew 7:6: Warning Against Giving that which is Holy to Dogs.

1. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."
 - a. "In this precept there is an allusion to the holy meats connected with the service of the altar. Those

parts of the victims which were not consumed on the altar, were eaten by the priests or by the people; but as they were holy, no unclean person, much less an unclean brute, was allowed to eat of them. What was left...was burned with fire" (Lev. 6:24-30; 7:15-21)" (McGarvey, p.70).

- b. "If a herd of hungry and ferocious hogs are called up to be fed, and instead of grain you throw before them a basket of pearls, they will not only trample the pearls under their feet, but in their eagerness for the expected food they may rush upon you, pull you down, and tear you to pieces. Likewise, some men, when you press the claim of truth on their attention, will not only despise the truth, but persecute you for annoying them with it" (McGarvey, p.70).
2. Jesus and the apostles followed this principle.
 - a. Matthew 15:2-3: "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"
 - b. Matthew 21:23-27: "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."
 - c. Acts 13:46: "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
 - d. Acts 19:9: "But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."
3. There are certain people who have no interest in the truth; we are able to discover who they are (thus can pass this type of judgment); we are wasting our time trying to convert such for they will disparage the truth and attack you. "As dogs have no sense of discernment in source and supply, whether from the garbage can or in the dining table, impious men have no reverence for holy truths, and all ill-timed attempts to coerce irreverent men into a reception of sacred things only aggravates their hostilities toward the truth...Christianity penetrates but does not impose; the gospel is persuasive, not coercive....God does not coerce, the gospel persuades, and the inward qualification of desire for it must exist in order to obtain it" (Wallace, p.84).
4. In order for us to use the Lord's counsel given in this verse, the passing of judgment is necessary. How could we know who is and who is not a spiritual *swine* without exercising our judgment-making ability?

C. Matthew 7:7-11: Ask, Seek, and Knock.

1. Verses 7-8: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."
 - a. Wallace says that this asking is not praying, but desiring the blessings of the gospel (pp.85f). The immediate context (verse six) deals with the gospel message, so there is support for this view.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:1-3: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure mercies of David."
 - 2) Luke 11:11-13: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

- 3) Romans 10:13: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- b. Others affirm that prayer is being described. In either case, he who asks will receive; he who seeks will find; he who knocks will have the door opened to him. If one seeks salvation after God's order, he will not be turned away; if an erring Christian seeks restoration, he will obtain it; if a faithful Christian prays for something, that prayer will be answered in some way.
- c. God still answers prayers: [See Coffman, p.93].
- 1) Gradually (cf. Hawthorne's story of "The Great Stone Face").
 - 2) Literally.
 - 3) By denying the request.
 - 4) By sending something other than what we request.
 - 5) By giving something better than what we request.
 - 6) After a delay.
- d. "Of all rash things, a rash prayer is the rashest. Rachel prayed, 'Give me children, or else I die' (Gen. 30:1). God gave her children, *and she died* (Gen. 35:18)" (Coffman, p.94).
- e. We must adhere to the conditions for acceptable prayer.
- 1) Psalms 66:18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*."
 - 2) Proverbs 28:9: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer *shall be* abomination."
 - 3) James 1:6-7: "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."
 - 4) James 4:3: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts."
 - 5) 1 John 5:14: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."
2. Verses 9-10: "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"
- a. The love of earthly fathers for their children is used in contrast to the greater love God has for his children. If fathers are asked for something by their children they will provide the thing requested if possible; they will not give something that is detrimental or is not helpful. Even earthly fathers are this wise and loving. But God is infinitely wiser, has greater love, and far greater ability to give.
- b. A word of caution, as stated by McGarvey: "We are in constant danger of fallacious reasoning here, because God's attributes are not sufficiently comprehended to make our deductions from them reliable. For example, this attribute of paternal feeling has been employed to disprove the reality of eternal punishment with which God himself threatens the sinner, because the paternal feeling in man would prevent him from so punishing his own children. The fallacy of the argument consists in assuming that the feeling in question must work the same results in every particular in God that it does in man. But revelation teaches that such is not the case" (p.71). God slew the sons of Judah (Gen. 38); he also executed Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). Earthly fathers are not wont to slay their children for some "minor" offense.
3. Verse 11: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"
- a. The Lord contrasts the love sinful men have for their children with the greater love God has for his own. In Luke 11:13, *Holy Spirit* is used in place of *good things* in this verse.
- 1) Brother Wallace says, "The good things in Matthew 7:11 are equivalent to the *Holy Spirit* in Luke 11:13. Comparing the two gospel records Jesus *equates* the 'good things' in Matthew with the Holy Spirit in Luke, and the Holy Spirit is put for what he provides or for that which proceeds from him" (p.60).
 - 2) Stevens says that Luke 11:13 is to be understood in the light of Galatians 5:22 (the fruit of the Spirit), and 2 Peter 1:3 (God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness). He concludes by saying, "You see now why the passage does not teach that if we ask anything we like, we will get it. Ask for those things that are good for you—that pertain to your salvation, your

ultimate perfection" (p.221).

- b. This passage (verses 7-11) may, therefore, have primary reference to seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and thereby receiving the "good things" offered by the Holy Spirit-inspired gospel. Could this also be the meaning of Romans 8:28? Some of the great scholars in the brotherhood think so.

D. Matthew 7:12: The Golden Rule.

1. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
2. If this great principle were universally practiced fully, all of earth's social problems would be solved; there would be no more lawsuits, no more wars, no more quarrels, no more disagreements—that could not be settled. While this is called the "Golden Rule," there are other rules others follow.
 - a. The Iron Rule: Might makes right; based on brutality; began with Cain, practiced by the Pharaohs, Alexander, Caesars, Hitler, criminals and heartless men today. "Do unto the other feller the way he'd like to do unto you, an' do it fust!" (Westcott, see Coffman p.95).
 - b. The Brass Rule: Do unto others as they do unto you; treat others as they treat you (good for good, evil for evil); it is the rule for retaliation (cf. Rom. 12:17-21; Matt. 5:38-48).
 - c. The Silver Rule: Let us do nothing to others that we would not want others to do unto us; was introduced by Confucius; it is all negative; it is not constructive.
 - d. The Golden Rule—the more excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31; 13:1-7; Luke 10:30-37; Matt. 22:39; James 2:8). The Golden Rule means that one must start with himself rather than with others. We must ask ourselves how we would want to be treated under similar circumstances. The individual then uses that information as a basis for his treatment of others.
3. There are abuses in the application of the Golden Rule.
 - a. Some think they can be saved by observing this rule, but that is not God's plan for saving aliens: (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 4:11-12; Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 10:13-17).
 - b. Some think it obligates one to grant all the requests of others. "What I could rightly or reasonably wish another to do for me, our places being exchanged, is what I must do for him, no more. To understand the precept otherwise would be to make Jesus approve of unreasonable wishes, and erect them as the standard of right. I must deal with my child, not altogether as I would wish were I the child and he the parent, but as I could *rightly* wish: and so in all the other relations of life' (McGarvey, p.71). A judge realizes he would not want to go to jail, but if he should free the prisoner on that basis, he would be doing wrong. This principle does not give us the right or the obligation to do wrong or neglect our duty.
4. Given the obvious mutual benefits of observing this principle, why is it not followed?
 - a. Man is selfish: the natural man usually thinks of self first and is mostly unconcerned about others outside his own family (and maybe is not concerned about them). This causes domestic disputes, labor troubles, problems among workers, lawsuits, problems between neighbors, insurrections, wars, drug use, crime, and divorce.
 - b. The average man is sinful in his usual conduct (Rom. 3:23; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 8:7; James 4:4). But a faithful Christian is righteous in his usual conduct (1 John 1:7-10).
 - 1) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - 3) Romans 8:7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
 - 4) James 4:4: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
 - 5) 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (spoken to Christians).

E. Matthew 7:13-14: The Two Ways.

1. All accountable humanity is comprehended in this passage.
 - a. In this text the Lord discusses two groups of people (one is comprised of few, the other of many); two gates; two ways; two destinies.
 - b. There are some contrasts drawn: a strait gate and a wide gate; a broad and a narrow way; life and destruction. *Strait* is different from *straight*; straight means "not crooked," and strait means "narrow, pinched, difficult."
2. Verse 13: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."
 - a. Effort is necessary in order to find and pass through this strait gate onto the narrow way. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).
 - 1) "Here the word *strive* is translated from the Greek word *agonizomai*, an expressive and emphatic term, signifying, literally, *to agonize*. We are therefore taught to agonize to enter in at the strait gate, by which it is implied that the attempt requires effort, wearisome and even painful toil. The word appears in the passage, 'And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things,' and has reference to the self-denying discipline the athlete exercises in bringing himself to that standard of fitness essential to the attainment of the goal toward which he strives" (Guy N. Woods, *Spiritual Sword Lectures*, p.253).
 - 2) The same word is used in Colossians 4:12 (*laboring fervently*—in prayer) and in 1 Timothy 6:12 (*fight*—the Christian life is a constant combat). The strait gate must be consciously entered. It does not matter whether our spouse, or parent, or child, or someone else, has entered in on the narrow way: we must personally and individually make the effort to enter ourselves.
 - b. This is true because the gate that enters onto the broad way is wide and is entered without effort, automatically when one either drifts into it, or consciously commits sin. While only those who deliberately obey the Lord enter the narrow way, all those who commit sin and do not obey the Lord transport themselves through the wide gate.
 - c. The broad way is entered by means of a wide gate which is the most inviting as far as the worldly-minded man is concerned; it is alluring at first, and many who travel it are not always mindful they are its captives.
 - 1) John 8:34: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 2:25-26: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."
 - 3) 2 Peter 2:19: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."
3. Verse 14: "Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."
 - a. Christ "makes no secret of the conditions of discipleship; and he makes no attempt to picture the Christian life in gay and attractive colors. The entrance into the way of life is called narrow because all who pass through it must act definitely and decisively; no one can drift through it by chance. No one can obey the Lord by accident. (Cf. Rom. 6:17,18; John 6:44,45)" (ALC, 1959, p.110).
 - 1) Revelation 21:27: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."
 - 2) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
 - b. The way is narrow because truth is narrow. One must dial the exact number to reach the intended telephone; to open a combination lock the exact sequence of numbers must be used; to bring up a computer program or file, the exact name must be selected; for a satellite to be placed into orbit, the velocity of 17,500 mph must be achieved. To become a child of God, the plan of salvation God

ordained for that purpose must be followed:

- 1) John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
 - 2) Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 - 3) Matthew 10:32: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."
 - 4) Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - 5) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 6) Acts 18:8: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."
- c. To remain faithful, certain activities and attitudes are required. "Such things as self-denial, forgiveness of others, monogamy, meekness, renunciation of the pursuit of wealth as the chief end of life, and countless other basic scriptural principles are opposed to the natural man whose baser instincts propel him constantly in the direction of the wide gate and the broad way. Only those who are truly spiritual, who have set their minds upon the things in heaven, shall enter and negotiate the straitened way that leads to life; and yet, 'Whosoever will may come!'" (Coffman, p.97).
- d. "The narrow way is as broad as the love of God can make it; Jesus did not *make* the way narrow; he only states a *fact*; it is a necessary fact. The narrow road cannot be made wider without lessening the good which is to be gained" (Boles, p.178).

F. Matthew 7:15-20: Beware of False Prophets.

1. Verse 15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."
 - a. False teachers are pictured as wearing the clothing of sheep; they have a very definite purpose in mind: to deceive the sheep into thinking they (the wolves) are sheep. Their purpose is to gain the confidence of the people to the extent that they can be influenced in the way the "wolves" want to lead them.
 - b. "The original word for 'ravening' is the same from which we have 'extortioners' in I Cor. 5:10, 6:10, and the meaning is *one who snatches away*. Cf. Acts 20:28-30" (ALC, 1959, p.111). A *ravening* wolf is a *rapacious* wolf.
 - c. Outwardly, a false teacher is often the epitome of gentleness, sweetness, and helpfulness, and often is an accomplished speaker and persuader. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:17-18).
 - 1) The warning of this section (Matt. 7:15-20) naturally follows what the Lord has just taught. There would be many false teachers who would assist people to enter the wide gate and follow the broad way (See Acts 20:28-32; 2 Cor. 11:1ff; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:1ff; 4:1-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; 3:1ff).
 - 2) In order for false teachers to be successful, they must be able to disguise themselves and their message. This is true of deceivers in and out of the church (2 Cor. 11:1-15).
2. Verses 16-18: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."
 - a. But there is a way by which false teachers can be discovered: by inspecting their fruit. Various fruit trees might have similar appearances to a novice, but the sure way to identify each is to inspect the fruit that is produced. An apple tree cannot then be confused with a peach tree or an orange tree.
 - b. The fruit of a teacher is the teaching he produces, as well as the students which are molded by his instruction. A teacher of Communism can be identified by what he teaches and by the nature of his pupils. A false teacher is a teacher of error because he teaches something other than, or contrary to, God's word (the truth), and his products (those whom he has taught) will believe, teach and practice

that which is not authorized by the truth (1 John 4:1ff; 2 John 9-11; Gal. 1:6-12; Col. 3:16-17; Rev. 22:18-19; cf. Isa. 8:20).

- c. We do not expect to find grapes growing on a banana plant (cf. Jas. 3:8-12). A good tree cannot produce evil fruit; an evil tree cannot produce good fruit. But occasionally a false teacher will do and teach good things and a teacher of truth may do or teach an evil thing; but neither is characteristic of them.
3. Verses 19-20: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."
 - a. "The hewing down of the bad trees and casting them into the fire indicate the final destruction of the false prophets. The verse contains a solemn warning against the personal ambition and the pride of opinion which are the chief incentives of false teaching. The true path to honor and usefulness lies in the most scrupulous restriction of our teaching to that which is true beyond all question" (McGarvey, p.72). Cf. John 15:1ff.
 - b. The Lord states again that it is by their fruit that we can know false teachers.

G. Matthew 7:21-23: The Judgment Scene Depicted.

1. Verses 21-22: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"
 - a. The false teachers described here by the Lord are those who openly and plainly identify themselves with Christ. They are very religious folks. Their problem is not one of idleness but of zealous activity of the wrong sort.
 - b. "The Pharisees were exceedingly devoted to prayer, and they led the people to believe that every prayerful man would be saved. The Mohammedans and the Romanists are subject to the same delusion, as may be seen in their punctilious observance of the forms of prayer while habitually neglecting many of the common rules of morality. It is here taught that prayer, unattended by *doing the will* of the Father in heaven, can not save us" (McGarvey, p.73).
 - c. "The double use of 'Lord' probably suggests surprise, as if they shall exclaim, 'What, Lord: How is this? Are we to be disowned? Surely you know that we have prophesied (preached), etc., by thy name?' The three-fold repetition of the question, each time in the same form, expresses in the liveliest manner the astonishment of the speakers at the attitude of the Lord now assumes toward them" (ALC, 1959, p.111).
 - d. Entering the kingdom through obedience applies to the church (kingdom) on earth, and later into the heavenly phase of the kingdom—heaven itself (Acts 14:22; 2 Pet. 1:1-11).
 - e. Faith alone cannot save; sincere prayer does not result in salvation of the alien. Only a faith that obeys the will of God is able to obtain salvation. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). The principle is applicable to both alien and saint.
2. Verse 23: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 - a. *Profess* should be *confess* (McGarvey; ASV). *I never knew you* has the sense of approving, or of knowledge favorable to the person in question (see McGarvey, p.73). He is not saying that he does not recognize them, but that he did not know them as his own. To *work iniquity* is to participate in lawless activities; to so live as if one is not accountable to God, that God has no law to which he is amenable.
 - 1) Romans 4:15: "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." [Where there is no obedience, there is no righteousness.
 - 2) Romans 5:13: "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."
 - 3) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - 4) James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
 - b. The people depicted will be banished from God's presence. They did not obey the Father. "Seeing *it* is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are

troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

- c. "The only test of man's confidence in God (or love for him) is found in his doing what God commands, and doing it because God commands it" (Boles, p.182).
- 1) John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."
 - 2) 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
- d. "Suppose a farmer has a good farm in this country, but he has more children than he can hope to be able to settle, or furnish with homes at the price land sells for in his neighborhood. He therefore determines to sell his land here and go to a new country where lands are new and productive, and so cheap that with what he can get for his land here he can secure as much as will be quite sufficient to make himself a good home, and furnish a home for each of his children. Acting upon these reflections he sells his farm and goes to the Western frontier; and after looking for a time, he finds a large body of fertile land, well-timbered with plenty of good water, in a genial and pleasant climate, with all the prospective conveniences desirable to make him a satisfactory settlement for himself and children. He purchases and secures title to as much as he desires, and draws a plot of it on paper that will enable any one to find it without trouble. He looks out a beautiful eminence that affords a commanding view of the landscape for miles around. Hard by there is a beautiful spring, furnishing an abundant and perpetual supply of clear, cool and pure water; and he determines that on this eminence shall be erected the buildings that are necessary to make his future home. After determining the precise location, shape and size of his dwelling, he marks it off on the ground and on his plot. Next he selects a suitable place for his barns and cribs, and marks them off, giving distance and degree from the site of the dwelling, and then transfers the corresponding marks to his plot. But he remembers that barns, cribs, stables, etc., are very liable to be burned, either by incendiaries or accident, and he determines that he will have his stables for the protection of his stock isolated from his barns and cribs; so that if he should lose part he may not lose all; and he selects, as he thinks, a suitable location for stables, and marks them off on the ground and on his plot.
- 1) "All things completed, he comes home, gladly meets his family, and reports his success. He has a son about grown to whom he shows his plot, and fully explains every thing; and tells him to take the plot, and go to the land, and erect the buildings just as indicated on the plot and bill of directions; and by the time he can get the buildings ready for their reception he will have wound up his business and be there with the family.
 - 2) "The son goes as directed and finds the land without trouble. Before going to work, however, he rides over the land, looks at the lines and the soil, and in short makes a general survey of the whole prospect. He is wonderfully pleased with his father's purchase; and especially is he pleased with the beautiful eminence selected for the dwelling house. It gives a beautiful view of the whole country for miles, and his heart swells with admiration as he contemplates the Eden home they will have in that beautiful place.
 - 3) "Thus delighted he goes to work and erects just such a dwelling as his father directed, on the very spot designated for it. He next finds the place selected for the meat house, and after careful consideration he thinks the place well chosen, and he erects the meat house just where his father had directed. Next he looks for the location selected for the barn and cribs. He thinks the place well chosen in the back ground, and a suitable distance from the dwelling, and feeling sure that a more suitable location could not be found, he builds them there just as instructed in the bill of directions given by his father. Finally he looks for and finds the place for the stables, and on looking around he concludes that his father has made a wonderful mistake here. 'The food for the stock will have to be carried quite a distance; and the stables are to be on one side of the branch and the cribs on the other; and I shall have to cross the branch, and perhaps get my feet wet, every time I feed; and
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when there comes a freshet I may fall in and get wet all over. It is just terrible, and I will not put it in that inconvenient place, I am sure. It must be over here on the same side of the branch the barns and cribs are on,' and he goes to work and puts it there.

- 4) "Now, I submit that that boy has not obeyed his father in any thing he did, and in place of deserving his father's blessing, he deserves the severest censure his father can give him. 'Did he not locate the other buildings where his father directed they should be built?' Yes, but he did it because his own judgment approved it, and not because his father commanded it. Whenever his judgment ceased to accord with that of his father, he left his father's will and went his own way; showing that he would have gone his own way at first, had not his father's way been his way.
- 5) "The obedient child, wishing to honor the father, only wishes to know the father's will, in order to know the line of his duty. When God commanded Abraham to leave his native country and go into a land that he would show him, *he went*, not knowing whither he went. This was an exhibition of faith that met God's approval, and it is recorded for our imitation. Until we can feel a disposition to know God's will and do it, and to want to do it *because it is his will*, we are not in a fit frame of mind to acceptably obey God in any thing" (T.W. Brents, *Gospel Sermons*, pp.133-136).

H. Matthew 7:24-29: The Illustration of Obedience and Disobedience.

1. Verses 24-25: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."
 - a. There are two types of teachers (truth and false); there are two types of hearers (those who obey and those who disobey). The obedient, wise man is pictured in Luke 6:48 as digging down to bedrock before starting his house.
 - b. "The hills of Palestine were subject to heavy rainstorms at certain seasons of the year, and consequently to floods; water rushing down the ravines would soon undermine the foundation, if the house was not built on a rock" (Boles, p.183).
 - c. Notice that tests of faith come in hardship and pain rather than in comfort and ease; not in sunshine but in tempests. The Lord's illustration shows that following Christ is not always easy, that the way is often fraught with hardships. "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin: and ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons, My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed. Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled" (Heb. 12:1-15, ASV).
2. Verses 26-27: "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
 - a. The foolish builder was such because he did not use the right foundation: that of obedience to God.

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- The Lord never set as part of his requirements for us anything that was redundant or meaningless. We may not always perceive his wisdom in a matter, but that is due to our own finite understanding.
- b. Regardless of the fact that a man may sincerely think or feel that he is following God, if his spiritual life is not built on the foundation of genuine obedience to God's will, his spiritual house will inevitably fall, with eternal consequences.
 - c. Notice that our Lord closed the sermon on a negative note. He did not whitewash sin or its consequences in any of his preaching.
3. Verses 28-29: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes."
- a. The effect of Christ's message was profound: they were astonished at his doctrine. What stunned them was not the physical manner of its presentation, but in the amazing truths he affirmed.
 - b. "The simplicity, the content of the sermon, its profound philosophy of life, and the authority by which Jesus spoke 'astonished' 'the multitudes'" (Boles, p.185).
 - c. His authority was absolute, not as the scribes' who spoke by the authority of Moses; or of Moses himself for he spake as he was directed from above. "The truly perceptive must surely have detected the advance indications that here indeed was THE MESSIAH" (Coffman, p.101).
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MATTHEW 8

A. Matthew 8:1-4: Healing of the Leper.

1. Verse 1: "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him."
 - a. These events began to transpire as soon as the Lord ended the Sermon and came down from the mountain. Great multitudes followed him: this shows the immense popularity he enjoyed at the time. Ere long, when they began to grasp more fully or take serious issue with what he said, the numbers who gladly followed him diminished (see John 6).
 - b. Matthew records ten miracles of the Lord (Boles, p.186). "...The sermon shows that he *taught* as one having authority, and the miracles show that he *acted* as one having authority" (ibid.). His miracles proved his authority to teach these new truths. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:1-2).
 2. Verse 2: "And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."
 - a. The Law of Moses contained elaborate rules to be followed in determining and handling leprosy (Lev.14).
 - 1) Cf. Exodus 4:6: "And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow."
 - 2) Leviticus 13:49: "And if the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be showed unto the priest."
 - 3) Numbers 12:10: "And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam *became* leprous, *white* as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was* leprous."
 - b. It was the most dreaded disease at the time. One of the multitude was a leper. "...For thousands of years the lepers in the East had formed a distinct class; they married among themselves, and so perpetuated this fatal disease. Its name is derived from *Lepis*, a scale, because it shows itself in dry, thin scales or scabs, which are white in some instances. (Ex. 4:6; Num. 12;10; 2 Kings 5:27.) There are two kinds of leprosy; one has been considered incurable; the miserable wretches afflicted with this kind of leprosy were clothed in shrouds, as if already dead, while they were separated from other people" (ibid.). There are several likenesses between leprosy and sin. This leper requested cleansing from the Lord. When a curing of the disease is mentioned in the Bible, it is called a "cleansing." Barnes says there are three kinds of leprosy: white, black, and red (p.83).
 - c. The Leper of the passage demonstrated superior faith in the Lord's ability to cleanse him. The only thing he was doubtful about was whether the Lord desired to do so. He showed his respect for Christ by doing obeisance, rendered "worshipping" here. He did not have adequate information to know that Jesus was God's Son at this point.
 - 1) Mark 1:40: "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."
 - 2) Luke 5:12: "And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."
 3. Verse 3: "And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."
 - a. Jesus touched him. Touching a leper was forbidden under Old Testament Law, and one who did so was "unclean" until certain requirements were met. Cf. Leviticus 13,14.
 - b. No one besides Jesus would dare touch him. Perhaps the man was cured an instant before the touch or as the very instant of the touch. In no way did he violate the Law. In Luke 7:14, Jesus touched the bier of the widow's son, without becoming unclean.
 4. Verse 4: "And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and
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offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

- a. The leper was cleansed immediately (vs. 3). The man is told to reveal the cleansing to no one, but to go and show himself to the priest and offer the required gift. In this way proper testimony would be borne of his cleansing.
- b. The man's testimony was of "small value until he had the priest's certificate of cure, as many would not believe his testimony" (Boles, p.187). "...The necessity of guarding against such undue excitement among the people as might have provoked an interference from the military authorities, and such as would have rendered the people incapable of calm thought in reference to the teachings of Jesus' enter into why this veil of silence was imposed (McGarvey, p.75).
- c. But this man could not restrain himself. "And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter" (Mark 1:44-45).

B. Matthew 8:5-13: The Healing of the Centurion's Beloved Servant.

1. Verses 5-6: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented."
 - a. Luke 7:1-10 gives additional details, including the fact that this servant held a special closeness to the Roman soldier. A centurion was an officer in the Roman legion having command over 100 men. Several honorable centurions are mentioned in the New Testament.
 - 1) Matthew 27:54: "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."
 - 2) Acts 10:1: "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*."
 - 3) Acts 21:32: "Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul."
 - 4) Acts 22:25: "And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"
 - 5) Acts 23:17-18: "Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee."
 - 6) Acts 27:3: "And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself."
 - 7) Acts 27:42-43: "And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first into the sea, and get to land."
 - b. There are strong points of similarity between this account and Luke 7:1-10 which indicate they report the same case, despite the presence of some differences. These differences can be easily reconciled.
 - c. The servant was afflicted with palsy, "a contraction of paralysis; the term 'palsy' or 'paralysis' is used by the ancients in a much wider sense than we now use it; the term included what we now call tetanus, catalepsy, cramps, and other fearful maladies. He was 'grievously tormented,' which means that he was in that stage of palsy when the patient suffers great agony; Luke says that he was at the point of death" (Boles, p.189).
 - d. Matthew's account indicates that the centurion personally approached Jesus; Luke's descriptions show that he did so by means of the Jews. What one does through another, he is said to have done himself. Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, but he did not personally baptize any of them (John 4:1-2).
 - 1) Mark 10:35: "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire." Matthew 20:20: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him."

These two apostles made the request through their mother.

- 2) John 19:1: "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*." Pilate did not personally beat Christ.
 - e. The events of the following verses took place in Capernaum where Jesus took up residence for a while, probably staying in Peter's house (cf. vs. 14).
2. Verses 7-9: "And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*."
 - a. Jesus agreed to go and heal the servant, but the centurion responded by saying he was not worthy that the Lord should come to his house. He requested that the Lord merely say the word and the servant would be healed.
 - b. The argument used by the centurion to conclude that it was unnecessary for Christ to come to his house was one based on authority: I am a man of authority; when I command that something be done, my orders are carried out; you are a man of authority (in this case over diseases); when you give the orders, they are carried out.
 - c. When he said "I am a man *under* authority, he may have been adding another dimension to his argument: I am a man who is under authority to others and still have authority over certain subordinates; you have no discernible superior; therefore you have greater relative authority than I to command in your realm." This would be an even greater evidence of his faith in Christ's power.
3. Verse 10: "When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."
 - a. This was one of the very few times that the Lord was surprised. He "marvelled" at the unbelief of the people of Nazareth (Mark 6:6) and here at the faith of the Gentile soldier. In all of Israel, the Lord was yet to find such great faith. The cause of astonishment was not because of his great faith, but that he had not seen such faith in Israel. The Lord's statement here was a severe rebuke of the Jews.
 - b. "The centurion's faith contrasted sharply with the lack of it in the Jewish leaders who, although they should have been the first to recognize Christ and believe on him, were nevertheless his carping critics and sworn enemies" (Coffman, p.107).
 - c. "We may observe, incidentally, that the surprise of Jesus is inconsistent with the theory that he had himself, by a direct operation of the Spirit, wrought this great faith in the centurion; if he had he could not have marveled" (McGarvey, p.76). Faith comes by testimony (Rom. 10:17).
4. Verse 11: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. This statement suggests that many such Gentiles would be converted and enjoy the eternal blessings of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Plainly indicated is the fact that these three Old Testament Patriarchs will be in heaven.
 - b. "In view of the sins and shortcomings of those particular men, it seems that none in our own day should despair of winning the crown" (Coffman, p.107).
 - c. Some think that the kingdom of heaven (the church on earth) is what is being described. However, none of the three Old Testament men named were ever members of the church. Also, the blessed condition described as sitting down with these three is put in contrast with the wicked Jews who would be cast into outer darkness, a description of the torments of hell.
 - d. The figure of sitting down with Abraham and others is an allusion to the ancient Eastern mode of eating a feast. A fuller discussion of the statement of this verse is given in Luke 13:23-30: "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and

Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

5. Verse 12: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - a. "This has the same prophetic import as Paul's words concerning the breaking off of the natural olive branches and the grafting in of the wild olive branches (Rom. 11:17-24)" (Coffman, p.107). "The Jews were 'children of the kingdom' in the sense that they were children and heirs of those to whom the kingdom was originally promised" (McGarvey, p.77).
 - b. "The kingdom of heaven in which many Gentiles were to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (verse 11), must be the kingdom in its final state of glory; for these patriarchs lived too soon to sit down in the earthly kingdom. The outer darkness, then, which is contrasted with it, and into which those are to be cast out who are not admitted into the kingdom, must represent the final punishment of the wicked" (McGarvey, p.77).
 - c. Christ used various expressions to describe the final destiny of the disobedient. No one who believes the Bible will reject these descriptions.
 - 1) Fire—Matthew 3:12.
 - 2) Outer darkness—Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30.
 - 3) Punishment—Matthew 25:46; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
 - d. The image for "outer darkness" may have been taken from the inner dungeons the Romans used as places of confinement and punishment. "'Outer darkness' is an expression which denotes 'blackness of darkness' (Jude 13; 2 Pet. 2:17)" (Boles, p.191).
 - 1) 2 Peter 2:17: "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."
 - 2) Jude 13: "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."
 - e. "'Weeping and gnashing of teeth' describes the anguish and sorrow of being eternally cast away from God. The 'weeping and gnashing' represent intense suffering; they have lost their favor with God, and shall gnash their teeth because others have obtained it" (Boles, p.192). While many are enjoying the spiritual feast of heaven, these will be undergoing the awful torment of eternal condemnation, being additionally tortured by the knowledge that things could have been so different!
6. Verse 13: "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."
 - a. The Lord sent the centurion back to his house with the promise that according to his faith, "so be it done unto thee."
 - b. The servant was healed at that very hour. There was no long period of loud prayer and groaning; there was no excuse concerning a lack of faith on the part of the servant.

C. Matthew 8:14-15: The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law.

1. Verse 14: "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever."
 - a. Here is a thorn in the flesh of Roman Catholicism: they maintain that the pope and all priests must remain un-married. Peter, whom they wrongly claim was the first pope, was married, and remained married.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 9:5: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and *as* the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"
 - 2) Not only was Peter married, but he had at least one child. He stated in 1 Peter 5:1-4 that he was an elder; Paul shows that an elder must have a wife and believing children (1 Tim. 3:2-5; Tit. 1:6).
 - b. Luke reports that Peter's mother-in-law had a great fever. Parallel accounts of this healing are found in:
 - 1) Mark 1:29-31: "And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever,

and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."

- 2) Luke 4:38-39: "And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them."
 - c. "Mark tells us that this was the house of Simon and Andrew, his brother; he also records that James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, were present. This miracle was a domestic scene—a miracle in the very home of his earliest disciples, and in the presence of two more. The original home of Peter was in Bethsaida, which was a suburb of Capernaum; it may have been there that the miracle was performed. (See John 1:45; Mark 1:29)" (Boles, p.193).
 - d. She was confined to bed with a fever; her friends besought him in her behalf as soon as he entered the house (in Mark's account).
 2. Verse 15: "And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."
 - a. He stood over her bed, and rebuked the fever, and it left her (Luke 4:39). He "took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them" (Mark 1:31).
 - b. "A severe fever always leaves a person very weak, but the miraculous healing of Jesus was so complete that the patient was given normal strength at once" (Boles, p.193).
 - c. "It was impossible for the witnesses to doubt that the cure was miraculous" (McGarvey, p.77).
- D. Matthew 8:16-17: Jesus Heals Many and Casts out Demons.
1. Verse 16: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick."
 - a. "The Greeks held that there were two classes of demons: (1) the offspring of the gods and (2) the spirits of dead men. In their view, there was no evil significance to the term. The Bible does not reveal a great deal about demons or evil spirits. *How* the spirits took possession of people is not revealed....While we do not know very much about demons, we do know: (1) that the Bible teaches that demons or evil spirits did dwell in some people and (2) that they were frequently driven out by the power of Christ. There is no Bible proof that people are afflicted with the same type of spirit today" (ALC, 1973, p.49).
 - b. These devils were demons. "There is only one devil, and he is never designated in the Greek by the word (*daimon*) here translated 'devils.' This term was applied by the Greeks to their inferior deities, some of whom were the offspring of the gods and some the deified spirits of dead men. On this account Paul says that 'The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice unto *demons* and not to God' (1 Cor. 10:20). He also said to the Athenians, 'I perceive that you are...very much given to demon-worship.' (Acts 17:22). Some of the same Athenians had just concluded that Paul was himself a proclaimer of *foreign demons*...because he spoke of Jesus and the resurrection—that is, of Jesus as one who had died and risen again" (McGarvey, pp.77f).
 - c. These Jews waited until evening before bringing the sick and demon-possessed to the Lord. Their days were reckoned from sunset to sunset. See Mark 1 and Luke 4 for parallel accounts. They had just come from the synagogue so this event took place after the close of the sabbath day (cf. Mark 1:21ff).
 - d. He cast out the demons with a word and healed all that were sick. There were no half-measure miracles, and not a single failure.
 2. Verse 17: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses."
 - a. This is not a literal quotation from Isaiah 53:4, but gives the sense of Isaiah's meaning. "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; that is, to save them from their sin. (Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10.) However, he first had to convince them that he was the Christ, the Son of God—the Messiah. (John 20:30,31.) Therefore, it is clear that the purpose of the miracles performed by Jesus was to prove: (1) that he was the Son of God and (2) that God was with him. The miracles were performed, therefore, not so much for the benefit of the people who had physical maladies, but primarily in order to present evidence that he was the Son of God" (ALC, 1973, p.50).
 - b. The part of Isaiah's prophecy referred to as stated in the Old Testament passage is, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (53:4a). Isaiah 53 deals prophetically with the death of Christ

for our sins. "The prophet referred, not merely to the cure of bodily and mental diseases by Jesus, but also and chiefly to the final sufferings of Jesus by which our spiritual maladies may be healed" (McGarvey, p.78).

- c. "The original words were spoken with reference to the sacrifice of Christ for our sins and they were fulfilled in that high sense when Jesus died on the cross; but they were also fulfilled in a secondary sense when the Lord *sympathized* with people in their afflictions and healed their diseases. The term 'bare' is significant; he *acted* because he *felt* (ALC, 1959, p.115).
- d. Matthew gave this detailed insight into the broader meaning of "griefs" and "sorrows" as including our infirmities and diseases. Isaiah did not mean that Jesus died in order to heal our physical afflictions and diseases; rather he died for our sins. But one aspect of his work for a limited period of time was in healing certain cases of affliction for the purpose of confirming his message and identity. In his miracles he healed many infirmities and diseases; in his cross he removed griefs and sorrows of a different nature, for the obedient.

E. Matthew 8:18-22: The High Cost of Following Christ.

1. Verse 18: "Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side."
 - a. When the press of the multitudes became great, Jesus often sought isolation where he could rest and pray. The multitudes pressed about him now because of the many miracles they had seen or about which they had heard.
 - b. Thus the Lord gave instructions to the disciples to depart for the other side. They were on the Sea of Galilee, and he prepared to go to its eastern side (cf. 8:23ff).
2. Verses 19-20: "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head."
 - a. Prior to his departure, one of the scribes asserted that he would follow Christ where ever the Lord went. The Lord's reply was calculated to stress the want of even the common amenities of life to which nearly everyone is accustomed. As the Lord conducted his personal, earthly ministry, he often was in need. He had no place to live which he could call his own. Even the common people had a steady place of residence.
 - b. However, in a broader sense, consider how short-lived earthly properties really are. Who now owns the lands and houses of those who lived on earth when Jesus was here? How much of their possessions did the people of two-hundred years ago take with them? Who owns the lands and houses of the great men of a few generations ago?
 - c. The Lord was dependent on others for the provision of day-to-day needs of food and shelter. We frequently find Christ eating and sleeping in the houses of various people. But was he worried about the future? Should we be? "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).
 - d. The scribe is not identified, but his claim is commendable. "This is a claim of very strong dedication to the following of Jesus. He seemed to be saying, 'No matter what the cost, I will follow you where you lead.' As is the case with every person, Jesus wanted the man truly to understand what was involved in such following. Jesus made clear to the man that following him offered no material advantages....Jesus was saying, in effect, 'Even after you truly understand what is involved in following me, will you still hold to your decision to follow me wherever I go?'" (ALC, 1973, p.50). We are not told whether this scribe fulfilled his aim.
 - e. The Lord in his personal ministry and the gospel message in its written form make the hardship and problems plain to any would-be follower. It is better not to become a Christian than to obey the gospel and then fall away. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of

righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

- f. Jesus called himself the Son of man. This is his most common self-designation, being used in description of himself about 40 times. Only in one instance in the New Testament is the term used by someone else (Acts 7:56). He is also called the son of David (Matt. 1:1), the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1), the Son of God (Matt. 16:16), the son of Adam (Luke 3:38), the [legal] son of Joseph (Luke 3:23), and the son of Mary (Matt. 13:55).
3. Verses 21-22: "And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."
 - a. Another disciple made a request that he be allowed to first bury his father before following Christ. This implies that the scribe of verse 19 was a disciple. McGarvey asserts that this disciple was James or John, claiming that Zebedee had died. He states that Salome is later called "the mother of Zebedee's children" instead of "Zebedee's wife." However, it is uncertain to say that Zebedee was the one who had died here. Notice also that the disciple referred to here is an individual. If this was a son of Zebedee, why did not the other join in with the request?
 - b. There are two possibilities: that the disciple's father had just died and the disciple was requesting permission for a delay before joining Jesus in his work; or that the father was not yet dead and that the disciple was asking for an indefinite stay before assisting the Lord in the work. In either case, the reason for the Lord's strong reply is obvious. If the father was not yet dead, why should the disciple delay doing the will of Christ? If the father had just died, there were others who would be able to attend to those final arrangements. Jesus was to leave for Eastern Palestine in just moments and there was no time for him to delay starting his journey since the multitudes were pressing him so. He either had to go with the Lord now or forget about the whole venture. Christ was not being callous or harsh, but realistic.
 - c. There is a play used on the word "dead." He is saying, "Let those who are dead in the spiritual sense take care of burying your physically dead father. Let those who are more concerned with worldly things take care of the funeral: you follow me."

F. Matthew 8:23-27: The Calming of the Storm.

1. Verse 23: "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him."
 - a. Jesus boarded the ship to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The ship was probably a small open sail boat commonly used for fishing on Galilee. Coffman thinks that the disciples allowed Jesus to board first in keeping with ancient sailing protocol.
 - b. Mark 4:36 shows that many other ships accompanied the Lord in crossing the sea. However, nothing is said to indicate that the scribe and the disciple of verses 19-22 went with him.
2. Verse 24: "And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep."
 - a. A violent storm endangered the boat; the text calls it a "great tempest." "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full" (Mark 4:37).
 - 1) "Many travelers to Palestine have commented on the violent storms which so often lash the Sea of Galilee, their intensity augmented by the steep mountain gorges that rim its shores, and by the greater density of the atmosphere so far below sea-level. Such storms are common, still; but that this was no ordinary storm is evident from the terror it struck into the hearts of these bold men who were so familiar with the usual character and intensity of such disturbances" (Coffman, p.112).
 - 2) "Small as the lake is, and placid, in general, as a molten mirror, I have repeatedly seen it quiver and leap and boil like a caldron, when driven by fierce winds from the eastern mountains" (Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, vol. ii, p.59; quoted by Barnes, p.90).
 - b. The boat was filling with water and in serious danger of sinking, but the Master was asleep in the stern of the boat (Mark 4:38). The Lord was the perfect example of fearlessness.
3. Verse 25: "And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish."
 - a. The disciples were terrified and awoke the Savior. Mark gives a fuller picture: "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou

not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38).

- b. They called on him to save them from drowning. We are not told what happened to the other ships. Perhaps they made for shore when the storm struck.
4. Verse 26: "And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."
- a. Christ rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. Fear and faith are opposites.
 - 1) "And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" (Mark 4:40).
 - 2) "And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him" (Luke 8:25).
 - b. He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea. Mark records him saying, "Peace, be still" (4:39). Instantly the storm ceased! What modern "miracle-worker" would attempt this? The winds did not taper off—they completely stopped instantly.
 - c. On the Lord "rebuking" the wind, Trench says: "To regard this as mere oratorical personification would be absurd; rather there is here, as Maldonatus truly remarks, a distinct tracing up of all the discords and disharmonies in the outward world to their source in a person, a referring them back to him, as to their ultimate ground; even as this person can be no other than Satan, the author of all disorders alike in the natural and in the physical world" (p.156). Whether Satan is behind all the storms, etc., of nature, we may not be able to know, but it appears that his handiwork is behind this particular storm, for if he could cause the untimely death of Christ in a storm, he would have defeated God's plan. But the Lord demonstrated his superiority over even the forces of nature.
5. Verse 27: "But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"
- a. The disciples were awed at this tremendous miraculous demonstration. McGarvey thought that their amazement was further evidence of a lack of faith. However, these men had never seen anything like this miracle; it would naturally make a very strong impression on them, even though they had seen many miracles from Christ already.
 - b. They had shown a measure of faith when they awoke Jesus and asked him to save them; they believed he was able to give them deliverance, but perhaps never thought he would do so in the manner he chose. "It was then plain that every area of existence was totally under our Lord's authority. The spiritual world, the physical world, time, life, and death were, and are, utterly subject to his will. The force of this incident is multiplied when it is recalled that the rugged Galilean fishermen were perfectly capable of handling any ordinary turbulence with skill and efficiency" (Coffman, p.113).

G. Matthew 8:28-34: The Gadarene Episode.

1. Verse 28: "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way."
 - a. The other side of the sea was the country of the Gergesenes, or as it is also called, the country of the Gadarenes. Gadara was one of the ten cities of Decapolis (which means "ten cities"), a province of Palestine on the east side of Jordan. The area they landed was near the cities of Gadara and Gergesa, hence Matthew called the area the "country of the Gergesenes" and Mark called it the "country of the Gadarenes."
 - 1) McGarvey notes that Matthew uses the more specific designation of the territory while Mark and Luke give a more general name.
 - 2) Mark and Luke mention only one demoniac approaching the Lord, while Matthew says there were two. Critics have judged this a contradiction, however if a logical explanation can be given, the "contradiction" vanishes. It appears that there were two such persons, but that Luke and Mark merely focused on the one who was the fiercer. The one was included in the two. Neither of these two inspired writers said there was only one; Matthew's account simply gives added information regarding the number of demoniacs Jesus healed.
 - 3) "There is a similar incident in the account of the healing of the blind near Jericho. Matthew (20:30-34) speaks of two, while Mark (10:46-52) and Luke (18:35-43) speak of but one. No special importance is attached to these differences" (Boles, p.200).

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- b. "Mark and Luke say that they dwelt in the tombs. The sepulchres of the Jews were frequently *caves* beyond the walls of the cities in which they dwelt, or excavations made in the sides of hills, or sometimes in solid rocks. These caves or excavations were sometimes of great extent. They afforded...to insane persons and demoniacs a place of retreat and shelter. They delighted in these gloomy and melancholy recesses, as being congenial to the wretched state of their minds. Josephus also states that these sepulchres were the haunts and lurking places of those desperate bands of robbers that infested Judea..." (Barnes, p.92).
 - c. "When the Lord Jesus Christ had taken to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, when the word was made flesh and dwelt among men, Satan, by himself or by his servants took possession of the bodies of men, cruelly torturing their flesh and agonizing their spirits" (Givens, J.J, *Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1962; quoted by Coffman, p.114). The problem these demoniacs had was not some mere illness or insanity; rather they were being afflicted by the demons possessing them.
 - d. These were exceedingly fierce and dangerous men. Their strength was not bound by the normal bodily restraints. When one is in a great state of agitation or terror, he is capable of lifting huge weights; so also are those who are not in their right minds; and so also in this case of demon-possessed men. "Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones" (Mark 5:3-5). Fetters were foot shackles.
2. Verse 29: "And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"
 - a. The demons, speaking through their hosts' mouths, cried out to Jesus, asking if he had come to torment them prematurely; in Mark's account they also implored him not to torment them at all. The time of their torture was not to begin, according to their thoughts, until the day of Judgment.
 - b. We learn from 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 that sinful angels were cast down to Tartarus, and delivered "into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment." This Tartarus is undoubtedly the same place to which the sinful rich man of Luke 16 was consigned and is being punished in the dreadful fire of that awful place. Thus, if these angels which sinned are identified with these demons, they are likewise even now being tormented, and will continue in that state subsequent to the "judgment of the great day."
 - c. These demons knew the identity of Jesus, and thus called him the "Son of God." "Saying, Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
 - 1) Acts 16:17: "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."
 - 2) James 2:19: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."
 3. Verses 30-31: "And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine."
 - a. There was a great herd of swine off in the distance; the demons requested that they be permitted to enter into these animals if the Lord was going to remove them from the men.
 - b. Mark reports that the Lord asked the name of the demons, to which they replied, "Legion: for we are many" (5:9). A Roman legion was normally comprised of 6,000 men.
 4. Verse 32: "And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."
 - a. The Lord permitted the demons to enter the herd of swine, which promptly stampeded over a cliff and drowned in the sea. Luke gives an additional detail in the request they made to the Lord. "And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep" (Luke 8:31).
 - b. "The abyss [deep], rendered 'the bottomless pit' in Rev. 9:1,2,11, and in other places, was their proper abode. To be expelled from a man, under ordinary circumstances, was to be driven back into this
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abode, and consequently, to be sent away 'out of the country.' How they had managed to escape from the abyss and get into this man, is one of the unsolved mysteries of the spirit world. Knowing so little as we do of that world, we need not be surprised that we know not this" (McGarvey, p.291).

- c. The Lord did not destroy these swine: the demons did!
 5. Verses 33-34: "And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts."
 - a. The swine-keepers reported these events to the owners, who promptly asked Jesus to leave their land. The physically and spiritually sick of that area did not receive the healing hand of the Master. They thought more of their hogs than they did of the two demoniacs or their own afflicted countrymen.
 - b. There is no record that Christ ever returned to that place. Quick decisions can spell spiritual disaster.
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MATTHEW 9

A. Matthew 9:1-8: The Forgiving and Healing of the Palsied Man.

1. Verse 1: "And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city."
 - a. This verse is the bridge between the events in Gadara and those of this chapter. According to Mark 2:1, "his own city" was Capernaum.
 - b. He was born in Bethlehem, reared in Nazareth, and resided during this part of his life in Capernaum, where many of his mighty works were wrought.
 - 1) Matthew 4:13-14: "And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet...."
 - 2) Matthew 11:20-24: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
2. Verse 2: "And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."
 - a. This story is also covered in Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26, where additional details are given. Mark reports that the crowd was so great that the four men bearing their sick friend could not enter the house where Jesus was. They got on top of the house, removed part of the tile roof (cf. Lk. 5:19), and lowered the sick man, still on his bed, into the Lord's presence.
 - b. Christ observed the faith of the four friends and said to the sick man, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." We have only two occasions where the Lord expressly stated, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Matt. 9:2; Luke 7:48; cf. Luke 23:43). Why the Lord addressed the man's sins is revealed in verse six.
 - c. No mention is made of faith on the part of the palsied man. The Lord could dispense his blessings on man as he saw fit, with or without conditions, since his Law (his will) had not yet taken effect.
 - 1) Galatians 3:15: "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto."
 - 2) Hebrews 9:15-17: "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."
3. Verses 3-5: "And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?"
 - a. Luke 5:17 reports that certain Pharisees and doctors of the law were on hand and heard this remark to the sick man. Matthew and Mark refer to them as scribes. The things these enemies of Christ said were not aloud but "within themselves." Yet the Lord was fully aware of their thoughts. This ought to have alerted them to the fact that this was no ordinary man: he knew they were thinking evil in their hearts although this evil remained unspoken. Deity has the ability to read men's hearts. Notice, that it is the heart of man that thinks.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 16:7: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."
 - 2) 1 Chronicles 28:9: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth

- all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."
- 3) Jeremiah 17:10: "I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings."
 - 4) John 2:24-25: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."
 - 5) Romans 8:27: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*."
 - 6) Revelation 2:23: "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."
- b. These men were all thinking the same thing: "Jesus is blaspheming God; only God can forgive sins; he asserts he can forgive sins, thus is putting himself in the place of Almighty God!" "The scribes were right in charging him with blasphemy if he was not the Son of God. He doubtless made the remark for the purpose of forming this issue, and thereby preparing his hearers for the demonstration which followed" (McGarvey, p.81). Their error was in assuming Jesus was merely a man.
- 1) Isaiah 43:25: "I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."
 - 2) Isaiah 44:22: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."
- c. "The word *blaspheme* originally means to speak evil of anyone; to injure by words; to blame unjustly. When applied to God, it means to speak of him unjustly; to ascribe to him acts and attributes which he does not possess; or to speak impiously or profanely" (Barnes, pp.97f).
- 1) Mark 3:28: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme."
 - 2) Romans 2:24: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 1:20: "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."
 - 4) Revelation 13:6: "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven."
 - 5) Revelation 13:11: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon."
 - 6) Revelation 13:18: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."
- d. Jesus raised the question: Which is harder to say: Your sins are forgiven, or Arise and walk? "Of course, one of these is as easily 'said' as the other; but the overwhelming impact of this lies in the plain truth, presented here by Christ, that a person who cannot do *both* can do *neither*! Those of every age who dare say, 'I absolve thee,' should prove their power really to do it by demonstrating the other side of the same power, performing miracles. Christ consented to do this, and 'the servant is not above his master' (Matt. 10:24). Inability to do the miracle is proof that the pretender is also unable to forgive sins" (Coffman, p.120).
4. Verse 6: "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."
- a. The power to work miracles does not itself mean the individual has also the authority to forgive sins: the apostles and others of the first century were empowered to perform miracles, but only Deity can forgive sins. However, if one who claims to have the authority to forgive sins confirms his claim with a genuine, undeniable miracle, that one's authority has been proved.
- 1) No one *not* having the authority to forgive sins could perform a miraculous act to prove a claim that he *has* the authority to forgive sins. God did not empower evil men or false teachers with the ability to perform miracles. He did not work a miracle to confirm a false doctrine.
 - 2) "The power to work miracles does not in itself imply the authority to forgive sins; but it does when

the authority is asserted and the miracles are wrought in proof of it" (McGarvey, p.81).

- b. The Lord asserted his authority to forgive sins and then promptly and undeniably proved that authority by the miracle he immediately wrought, as well as by the many others which followed. No one could sanely deny the miracle.
 - 1) The man had been brought into the Lord's presence on a bed; he could not transport himself; when he left he was carrying his bed.
 - 2) He was a man whose condition was known: four friends brought him to Christ.
 - 3) "It would be impossible without a miracle for this paralytic to do as Jesus commanded him; that they might know that Jesus had both right and might, authority and power, to forgive sins on earth, he would command the man sick of palsy to arise and take up his bed and walk: if the man obeyed his command, then they would know that he had the power and authority to forgive sins" (Boles, p.204).
 - 4) He was healed easily, instantly, completely; there were no "magical" incantations, no agonizing, no long and loud prayers; there was no prior staging or preparations; it was done in plain view of all; there was no doubt about the genuineness of the miracle.
 - c. In order to prove to them that he had the right to forgive, it was necessary for him to perform such a miracle. One cannot do one without the other.
5. Verses 7-8: "And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitude saw *it*, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men."
- a. The effects of these events on the multitudes were great. They marvelled (were afraid, ASV), and glorified God for providing this power to men. "The fear of the multitude is proof that they saw in this great miracle nothing but the power of God in a dramatic display of authority over sin and disease. God's power, even in nature, is always awe-inspiring; and it is much more so when seen in those areas of the soul itself which are concerned with man's spiritual health" (Coffman, p.121).
 - b. The phrase, "which had given such power unto men," is Matthew's record of what the multitude was thinking or saying. "Those who profess to see in this spontaneous comment from the rabble positive sanction of *their* authority to forgive sins certainly see far more than is in it" (Coffman, pp.121f). Apparently they still thought of Jesus, not as Deity, but as a unique man.
- B. Matthew 9:9-13: Matthew Becomes a Follower and Gives a Feast.
1. Verse 9: "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him."
 - a. As the Lord "passed by," he saw a man; many only saw a despised tax-collector. The call of Andrew and Simon and James and John (Matt. 4:18-22) appears to be spontaneous, but John 1 shows that contact had already been made with Jesus. It is probable that some kind of previous contact had been made with Matthew.
 - b. The brevity of the account given by Matthew of his call suggests a high degree of modesty and humility. Mark 2:14-17 and Luke 5:27-32 furnish additional details. All Matthew reports is that as Jesus passed by, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the place of toll.
 - 1) Mark 2:14-17: "And as he passed by, he saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
 - 2) Luke 5:27-32: "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous,

but sinners to repentance."

- c. "Publicans, especially Jewish publicans, were hated, despised, disreputable men; for the opportunity to grow rich by fraud and extortion was so great that publicans failed to resist the temptation, and this gave a bad name to the whole class. Matthew was 'sitting at' the place of toll; literally he was sitting *on* the elevated platform or bench which was the principle feature of the toll office" (Boles, p.205).
 - d. "We are not to conclude, from the apparent abruptness of his movement, that he neglected to settle the accounts of his office. An honest settlement of accounts was indispensable to a good name in the future" (McGarvey, p.82).
 - e. Matthew is also known by the name Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). Luke adds that he "forsook all" to follow Christ.
2. Verses 10-11: "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"
 - a. The other accounts show that Jesus was eating a feast in Matthew's house, which this new disciple had provided. This apostle does not record that it was he who made this feast. During the course of the proceedings, certain publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus. These were probably former associates and friends of Matthew.
 - b. "The publicans and other sinners habitually neglected the law and the traditions in regard to legal purifications, and therefore the Pharisees regarded it as incompatible with religious purity to associate with them" (McGarvey, p.82).
 - c. "The Pharisees were not present at the feast, but they could pass along the street and observe what was going on in Matthew's house; the self-righteous Pharisee would not pollute himself by going into the house of a publican and making common with sinners" (Boles, p.206). Thus, they asked the disciples of Jesus why their Lord ate with such people. His association with such people was shocking to their sense of morality. However, they were operating by tradition, not by God's word.
 3. Verses 12-13: "But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
 - a. "Had Jesus been unable to vindicate himself in reference to these associations, his cause would have been damaged in the estimation of many good persons. But he here presents three brief arguments which are so conclusive, and so tersely expressed, that they must have taken his accusers by surprise" (McGarvey, pp.206f).
 - b. Those in need of a physician are sick people; those who are well have no need to seek medical assistance or treatment. If Jesus was to heal the spiritual ills of men, it was necessary for him to go where they were. Who could argue with such logic!
 - c. God had said in Hosea 6:6 that he wanted mercy and not sacrifice. It would do man little good to be careful to observe the outward formalities of the Law while ignoring the mercy which God also required.
 - 1) 1 Samuel 15:22: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams."
 - 2) Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - 3) Matthew 23:23: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."
 - d. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance; to do this he must talk to them. This does not imply that the Pharisees did not need to repent; they had the appearance of being righteous, but the publicans and sinners obviously needed to repent.

C. Matthew 9:14-17: Why His Disciples Did Not Fast: Cf. Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-38.

1. Verse 14: "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"

- a. John's disciples came with a logical question. They fasted regularly as did the Pharisees, but Jesus' disciples did not. Why not? Mark's account shows that some of the Pharisees were with them in asking this question.
 - b. The Pharisees regularly fasted twice weekly, on Monday and Thursday, and on other special occasions (personal or national emergencies). "Fasting twice in the week was regarded by the Pharisees as a mark of superior piety (Luke 18:12)...The feast at Matthew's house, which occurred on a fast day...very naturally brought the matter up for consideration, because it shocked the sensibility of the objectors" (McGarvey, p.83).
2. Verses 15-17: "And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."
- a. He asks whether the children of the bridechamber can mourn (which was done when one fasted) while the bride groom was present. The friends of the groom, his close friends, were called "sons of the bridechamber" because they "had access to it during the bridal week; the guests invited to a wedding go for joy and to have a good time generally; they go to feast and not to fast" (Boles, p.209).
 - 1) When the groom departed, or was no longer accessible to these friends, or if he were taken away by accident or sickness, then there would be occasion for fasting. But while the wedding feast was in progress, then was the time for merriment and happiness.
 - 2) Jesus describes himself here as the bridegroom and his disciples as the sons of the bridechamber. While he was present with them, there was no reason for sadness and fasting. But the time is coming when the groom will be taken away (an allusion to his death); then will be the time for them to mourn.
 - 3) Notice that the Pharisees would be ringleaders in the murder of Jesus. They often bound piddling rules and complained when Jesus ignored them, but they were not averse to murder.
 - 4) The first answer is that his disciples did not fast because they had no cause to fast. The rule of regular fasting was man-made anyhow.
 - b. "No one 'seweth' a new piece of cloth, rough from the weaver, 'undressed,' unshrunk, upon an old garment; if it should be done the new would shrink and would rend the garment" (Boles, p.209). "He draws an argument from the absurdity of putting a patch of *new* (properly rendered *unfulled*) cloth on an old garment. The unfulled piece, never having been shrunk, would shrink the first time it got wet, and would tear open the rent still wider" (McGarvey, p.84).
 - 1) In this illustration, the old, torn garment represents the old law; the new cloth stands for the gospel; Jesus did not come to make his new law a part of the old, merely a patch for the "rents" in the old.
 - 2) This would have destroyed the old law; he came to fulfill the old and to give an entirely new and different law—the New Testament. He was instituting a new system which did not call for or allow for their traditional fasts.
 - c. The third illustration refers to the old custom of storing wine in animal skins, especially goat skins. "Only new wineskins could serve for unfermented or new wine. After fermentation, the skins hardened and became brittle, thus becoming entirely unsuitable for new wine, yet continuing to serve well enough as containers for old wine" (Coffman, p.125). This is identical in application to the preceding: the new wine of the gospel was not intended to be poured into the old wineskin of Moses' law. It was so powerful that it would burst asunder that old law and destroy it.
 - d. But McGarvey thinks that all three illustrations are identical in application and simply show that it was not appropriate for his disciples to fast while he was with them: it was inappropriate for the bridegrooms' friends to mourn while he was there, it would be inappropriate to patch an old garment with an unshrunk piece of new cloth, or to put new wine in old wineskins.
 - 1) Coffman asserts that the new wine is the gospel and the old wineskins were John's disciples and the new wineskins were the disciples of Christ.
 - 2) Boles suggests that this latter illustration was "intended to teach that his disciples were correct in
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not following the traditions of the Pharisees in fasting" (p.210).

- 3) Luke adds this thought: "And no man having drunk old wine desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (5:38). This lends credence to McGarvey's view.

D. Matthew 9:18-26: The Raising of Jairus' Daughter, and Healing of the Issue of Blood.

1. Verses 18-19: "While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and *so did* his disciples."
 - a. The parallel accounts are given in Mark 5:22-43 and Luke 8:41-56. Mark's record appears to give the greatest detail. Matthew's account merely describes the man as a ruler, but the other accounts say he was a ruler of the synagogue. Matthew's record indicates that the daughter was already dead, while the others show that she was at the point of death. When Jesus arrived at his house, the daughter was indeed dead. Luke points out that the man's name was Jairus, that this was his only daughter, and that she was about twelve years of age.
 - b. Jesus arose and started toward Jairus' house with him. When Jairus left home his daughter was then at the point of death; she lay dying. He could properly say that by now she was dead.
 - c. Resurrections in the Bible are found in 1 Kings 17, 2 Kings 4, 2 Kings 13:21, Luke 7, Matthew 9, John 11, Acts 20, and Acts 9.
2. Verses 20-22: "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."
 - a. As he made his way toward Jairus' house, a great crowd of people thronged about him (Luke 8:42; Mark 5:24). Obviously, what the man requested of Jesus was overhead, and quickly spread.
 - b. One woman in the throng had been diseased for twelve years with an issue of blood. We are not told the particulars, but the obvious supposition is probably right (cf. Lev. 15:19-33). She had found no relief from the doctors; her condition had only grown worse (Mark 5:26).
 - c. She reasoned within herself that if she could but touch the hem of his garment she could be healed. The hem or border of the garment literally means "a tassel of threads suspended from each of the four corners of the upper garment; it means the fringe worn on the border of the outer garment." (Num. 15:38)" (Boles, p.211).
 - 1) She had such faith in Jesus' power to heal her that she thought if she could only touch his garment her disease would be healed. She forced her way through the crowd and touched his garment.
 - 2) Mark and Luke tell that Jesus demanded to know who it was that had touched him. Peter and the others were incredulous at such a question since there were so many people around them. But Jesus was not asking for information; he looked at the woman; she was very fearful and trembled at what she had done, and told the Lord all. Her faith had brought her to Christ, to touch him, and by that faith she was healed.
 - d. Two quotes given by Coffman are interesting, even though they may be fanciful in some details, but at least they give ancient testimony of this episode of the Lord's ministry.
 - 1) "She was a heathen living at Caesarea Philippi, near the sources of the Jordan. Her house is shown in the city...and at the gates of which, on an elevated stone stands a brazen statue of a woman on her bended knee, with her hands stretched out before her like one entreating. Opposite to this is another statue of a man, erect, of the same materials, decently clad in a mantle, and stretching out his hand to the woman. This statue, they said, was a likeness of Jesus Christ" (Eusebius, p.127).
 - 2) "And a woman that had an issue of blood for many years, and whose joints and veins were drained by the flowing of the blood, so that she did not present the appearance of a human being, but was like a corpse, and was speechless every day, so that all the physicians of the district could not cure her, (was in such a condition) that there was not any hope of life left to her. And when Jesus passed by, she mysteriously received strength through his overshadowing her; and she took hold of his fringe behind; and, immediately in the same hour, power filled up what was in her empty, so that, no longer suffering any pain, she began to run swiftly to her city Kepharnaum, so as to accomplish the journey in six days" (Pontious Pilate, quoted in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*; Coffman, p.127).

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- e. Mark 6:56: "And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."
3. Verses 23-26: "And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land."
- a. After the episode of the woman, the great company arrived at Jairus' house; the news that the daughter was dead greeted their ears. The minstrels (flute-players, ASV) were present; these were the professional mourners that those who were affluent could hire. "Minstrels in a house of mourning would be incongruous according to western taste. But among the Jews it had been customary for ages to call to their service, on funeral occasions, certain women who were professional mourners, and who, by continual wailing and plaintive instrumental music, intensified the grief of the family and friends of the deceased" (McGarvey, p.85).
- 1) Jeremiah 9:17: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning *women*, that they may come."
 - 2) Jeremiah 16:6: "Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them."
 - 3) Ezekiel 24:17: "Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men."
 - 4) Amos 5:16: "Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing *shall be* in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing."
- b. That the little girl was dead is evident from the fact that Jairus had already hired the professional mourners. We do not call the undertaker until we know that our loved one is dead. All those present knew that the girl was dead, and were shocked when Jesus said she was only sleeping. They laughed him to scorn. Death is often figuratively described in the Bible as sleeping, a figure growing out of the appearance of the body in death. Some have mistakenly make a literal application of this figure of speech. To take this view forces one to the position that there is no consciousness after death, a view that is contradicted by the story of Lazarus and the rich man, and Paul's experiences he related in 2 Corinthians 12:1ff.
- c. "At the command of Jesus the crowd left the room and Jesus in the presence of Peter, James, and John and the father and mother 'took her by the hand; and the damsel arose.' In the presence of these five persons who could be witnesses to the miracle Jesus brought the damsel to life; the noisy crowd and minstrels were excluded from the presence of so sacred a scene. Jesus did not take her by the hand to raise her up, but accompanied his miracle with some outward act....'The damsel arose' shows that Jesus did not raise her up; according to Mark and Luke, Jesus had said, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise,' and 'Maiden, arise.' 'Her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately'; Jesus then commanded that food be given her" (Boles, p.213).
- d. Following this miracle, the Lord's fame spread throughout the land. Raising up one who was plainly and undeniably dead would be an event impossible to conceal. But one miracle is as great as another; the effect some had on the witnesses was greater than that of others. It is as easy for the Lord to raise up a person who has been dead for thousands of years as it is to raise one who has been dead only for a few moments.
- e. This miracle and the others in this chapter were wrought in Capernaum. It is most strange that after such wonders the general population remained in unbelief. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall
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be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:20-24).

E. Matthew 9:27-31: The Healing of Two Blind Men.

1. Verse 27: "And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* son of David, have mercy on us."
 - a. As Jesus was leaving the house of Jairus, he was followed by two blind men who cried out for mercy; of course, they wanted to have their sight restored. Matthew is the only gospel writer to describe this event; so also with the other events of this chapter.
 - b. "The blind man at Jericho (Matt. 20:29-34) and the man born blind (John 9) were distinct from this miracle....Blindness was one of the very common afflictions of the natives of Palestine; the blear eyes, often crusted round with dried secretion and fly-infested, make some of the most sickening sights that may be seen in a Syrian village today. This common affliction in Palestine was thought to be due to ophthalmia, caused partly by the sun glare and partly by lack of cleanliness" (Boles, p.213).
 - c. These blind men addressed Jesus as the "Son of David," indicating they believed him to be the Messiah. The men who studied and taught the Law, the learned, religious men of the day, did not see Jesus as the Messiah, but these blind men could "see" that great truth. See Matthew 12:23, 15:22, 20:31, 21:9,15, and 22:14-15 for other uses of "Son of David."
2. Verse 28: "And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord."
 - a. The Lord apparently ignored their cries until he reached his destination, a house where he was residing, perhaps. These men being blind, could not see the previous miracles Jesus had done; thus the Lord asked them, after they had entered the house, if they believed he was able to give them sight.
 - b. His allowing them to follow him in the way, and persist in their quest to the point of entering the house after Jesus, had the effect of putting their faith to the test. They responded affirmatively to his question.
3. Verses 29-31: "Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country."
 - a. He touched their eyes and immediately gave them sight. These men are not said to have been born blind, as was the case with the man in John 9; so in their case, their sight was restored, not an insignificant miracle.
 - b. The Lord commanded them strongly not to spread the news about their healing. This may have been to keep the multitudes to a smaller number; this would also explain why he waited until the two men entered the house—that the miracle would be less public.
 - c. Miracles were to confirm the word; but the multitudes were more interested in the miracles; they "mobbed" the Lord. These men spread the news despite the Lord's instruction. "The cure of the woman with the issue of blood, immediately followed by the resurrection of the ruler's daughter, and this by the cure of the blind men, had probably thrown the people into an ecstasy which once more required repression by the injunction of silence. (Comp. 8:4.) Mark tells us that Jesus gave the same injunction to the parents of the girl just mentioned" (McGarvey, p.86). These two former blind men were too full of euphoria to hold in the news.

F. Matthew 9:32-35: Healing of the Dumb, Demon-Possessed Man.

1. Verses 32-34: "As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils."
 - a. Ordinarily, one who is deaf is also unable to speak (is dumb). This had nothing at all to do with one's intelligence. "The word for 'dumb' in the original also means 'deafness' (Matt. 11:5; Mark 7:32; Luke 7:22); it means 'dull' or 'blunted'; in the New Testament the word is used only of hearing and speaking, the meaning in each case being determined by the context" (Boles, p.216).
 - b. But his man was also possessed by a demon. The demon probably caused his dumbness. Those who had been taken over by demons were afflicted in various ways. Some were deprived of their reason (cf. men in Gadara); in other cases one or more of the natural senses were affected; some were caused to go into convulsions, and try to destroy themselves (cf. Mark 9:18; Luke 13:11,16).
 - c. The people who witnessed this latest miracle by the Lord, combined with their knowledge of the
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former miracles, were overwhelmed with these events. Nothing like this had ever been seen in Israel before. At various times in their history, miracles were occasionally done, but not with this frequency or of these kinds.

- 1) "After seeing a few sick persons cured, they naturally ceased being surprised at cures of sickness; but when they saw this dumb man restored to speech, they were almost as much surprised as if they had seen no previous miracle. The range of fresh miracles, however, necessarily had a limit, and therefore miracle working, as a means of impressing men, had to be of temporary duration. A permanent continuance of miracles would have robbed them of their value by making them common" (McGarvey, p.86).
 - 2) Mark 16:15-20: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."
 - 3) John 20:30-31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."
 - 4) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - 5) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by *them* that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
- d. The Pharisees had long since decided to reject Jesus, his work, and his message. They had to account for these miracles in some fashion. Thus, they attributed them to Satan, not to God. "The Pharisees were absolutely unwilling to admit any good thing about Jesus. When they were unable to deny his wonderful deeds, they questioned the source of his power...It may be assumed, they denied, whenever practical, that any good deed had been done. There is an implicit admission of this in their words, 'A notable miracle hath been wrought through them...and we cannot deny it' (Acts 4:16). This is very nearly the equivalent of their saying that they would have denied the miracle of the apostles performed at the Beautiful Gate of the temple if they could have done so with any prospect of being believed" (Coffman, p.132).
- e. Jesus made no reply to their assertion at this time as far as the record is concerned. Later, in chapter 12, the Lord addressed this charge, turned it against them, and routed them.
2. Verse 35: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."
 - a. The Lord continued his work in the general area, visiting the various cities and villages in the vicinity of Capernaum. He preached the gospel of the coming kingdom and taught them in the synagogues.
 - b. In the process of this work, he healed **every** sickness and **every** disease. There was no ailment too big for him to heal! He never had a single failure in his miraculous healing; he never "staged" the miracles; he did not "weed out" the more difficult cases, and select only those cases that could not be verified. This is what fake healers of today do! But the miracles of Christ and his apostles were genuine.
 - c. "This was Jesus' second missionary tour in Galilee; the first in Matthew 4:23....This is identified with
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the tour recorded by Luke 8:1; the first tour occurred some six months before this" (Boles, p.217). This work was preparatory to the limited commission on which he sent the disciples as described in the next chapter.

G. Matthew 9:36-38: The Compassion of Jesus on the Multitude.

1. Verse 36: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."
 - a. "Jesus very aptly compares them, in their bewildered state, to a flock of sheep without a shepherd, scattered over the hills, and faint from fright and running. He has compassion on them, and is moved by this to provide for their relief by appointing twelve men who shall assist him in teaching them..." (McGarvey, p.87).
 - b. "He saw the people neglected by those who ought to have been teachers; they were ignorant, helpless, hopeless, dying, and unfit to die; the sight moved him to deep pity" (Boles, p.218).
 2. Verses 37-38: "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."
 - a. He changes the figure from flock and shepherd to the field and harvesters. "The harvest of souls was ready, but there were but few laborers or those who were interested in the spiritual condition of the people" (Boles, p.219).
 - b. "Christ here asked his disciples to pray for that which he himself was about to initiate, namely, the sending forth of more witnesses to the truth of the kingdom....He asked the disciples to pray about it; and he himself continued all night in prayer before naming the Twelve (Luke 6:12,13)....If Jesus leaned so heavily upon the arm of prayer, how much more should his disciples...to obtain that providential support, without which every human endeavor must inevitably come to naught" (Coffman, p.133).
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MATTHEW 10

A. Matthew 10:1-4: The List of the Twelve.

1. Verse 1: "And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."
 - a. There is continuity here with the statements with which the previous chapter ended. The Lord lamented there over the frightful condition into which the sheep of Israel had plunged themselves. He then did something about it by sending the twelve out to announce the coming kingdom and call Israel to repentance. These twelve were not his only disciples for Luke 6:13 says, "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve...." By definition a disciple is a learner. From Luke 6:12 we learn that prior to calling these twelve, the Lord spent the entire night in prayer.
 - b. These twelve were selected earlier in his ministry, and in Matthew 10, Luke 9, and Mark 6 they are sent out on the limited commission. It was limited because they were to preach only to the Jews, the gospel had not been fully given, and the kingdom had not come as yet. Mark reports that Christ sent them out two-by-two—a sensible arrangement. Their total number of twelve is suggestive of the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - c. The twelve were miraculously empowered to handle the job. God did not send forth any one on a mission without insuring he was able to fulfill his function. In the case at hand, miraculous powers were needed to confirm the word spoken by the apostles. They were able to cast out demons and heal all manner of sickness and disease.
2. Verses 2-4: "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."
 - a. They are called apostles here for Christ was sending them forth: "apostle" means "one sent." Christ and Moses were sent by God (thus were apostles of God—Heb. 3:1); Barnabas was sent (along with Paul) on a missionary journey by the church at Antioch (thus he was an apostle of the church—Acts 14:14); Matthias was selected in Acts 1 to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Judas; Paul was appointed as apostle of Christ to the Gentiles.
 - 1) Acts 9:15: "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."
 - 2) Romans 1:1: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:8-9: "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."
 - 4) Galatians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)."
 - b. Every child of God is a disciple (learner), and any child of God can make another disciple (Matt. 28:19-20); but only Christ could select an apostle on the order of the twelve and Paul.
 - c. "Inasmuch as one of the chief duties of an apostle was to bear witness of Jesus, it was necessary therefore that the apostle see Christ. (Cf. Acts 1:21,22; 26:16,16.)" (ALC, 1959, p.119).
 - 1) Acts 1:21-22: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."
 - 2) Acts 26:16-18: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."
 - d. Listings of the twelve apostles are given in the following four passages:

Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	John
James, Son of Zebedee	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James	James	James
Lebbeus, Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon Zelotes	Simon Zelotes
Simon the Canaanite	Simon	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

- e. Peter is listed first in each of the passages, but not because he was superior to the others (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12-13; Matt. 16:18; 18:18; Acts 2:1-4). He did not possess more power or authority than the other apostles; he simply lived up to his name, *Cephas* (a stone: John 1:42). He was rash, unstable, and impetuous at first, but became strong, resolute and firm under the influence of Christ.
- 1) 2 Corinthians 12:12-13: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong."
 - 2) Matthew 16:18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
 - 3) Matthew 18:18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [All the apostles were included].
 - 4) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
- f. Matthew and Mark list Thaddeus, while Luke in his two lists has Judas the son of James; Thaddeus (also called Lebbaeus by Matthew) is likely the same as this Judas.
- g. Matthew and Mark list Simon the Canaanite, while in Luke's lists he is called Simon Zelotes (Simon the Zealot). "'Zealot' is a translation into Greek of the Aramaic 'Canaanaean.' Both terms indicate Simon's connection with the Zealot party of Galilee, a sect which stood for the recovery of Jewish freedom and the maintenance of distinctive Jewish institutions" (ALC, 1959, p.120).
- 1) "The original is the Syro-Chaldaic name of a sect among the Jews, who took into their own hands, without process of law, the punishment of flagrant offenses. They acted the same part in Jewish society that those bands of men sometimes called 'Regulators' perform in American society at the present day; and they justified their conduct by the example of Phinehas, who, in the time of general corruption about Baal-peor, executed summary vengeance on Zimri and Cozbi. (See Num.

25)" (McGarvey, pp.88f).

- 2) We know less about this Simon than any of the other apostles. He is not mentioned by name outside these four lists.
- h. Judas Iscariot: "*Iscariot* designates Judas by his former place of residence. It means a man of Kerioth, a town in the tribe of Judah. (Josh. 15:25)" (McGarvey, p.89).
- i. Matthew is called *the publican*. "Notwithstanding the reproach attached to the name *publican*, and the long period since Matthew had ceased to be a publican when his narrative was written, he still writes himself, 'Matthew the publican.'" (McGarvey, p.88).
- j. Bartholomew is in all four lists but many Bible scholars think he is the Nathanael of John 1:45 and 21:2. These are the only two places his name is given. The reasons given why Nathanael is thought to be identical to Bartholomew are:
 - 1) Both passages list him with the apostles of Christ or those who became apostles.
 - 2) In the Synoptics, Bartholomew is always named immediately after Philip; John joins Nathanael with Philip.
 - 3) Nathanael is not mentioned by the Synoptic writers and Bartholomew is not named by John.

B. Matthew 10:5-8: The Commission of the Twelve.

1. Verses 5-6: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
 - a. This commission is commonly called "the limited commission." They were limited to carrying the message only to the Jews. They were specifically barred from going to the Gentiles or Samaritans. When the Great Commission was given, these other groups would be included, for the gospel was for everyone.
 - 1) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 2) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 3) Luke 24:47-49: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - 4) Colossians 1:23: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."
 - b. Their work at this time was limited to Israel because the Jews were the only ones prepared for such preaching: the nearness of the kingdom's coming would be meaningless to the Gentiles. It was limited to the Jews also because of the time element involved: the apostles would not have had sufficient time to go through the cities of Israel before the "Son of man be come" (Matt. 10:23).
 - c. Even the chosen people of God would not all receive them and their message kindly. That being so, how much less likely those who did not even profess to follow God. Christ himself limited his personal ministry to Israel, with only few exceptions.
 - d. The Samaritans occupied the territory formerly assigned to Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. It was located between Jerusalem and Galilee so that to avoid Samaria, the Jews traveling between these two places would often cross to the east side of Jordan.
 - 1) "This people was formerly composed of a few of the ten tribes and a mixture of foreigners. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity...the King of Assyria sent people from Cutha, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to inhabit their country, 2 Ki. 17:24; Ezer. 4:2-11. These people at first worshipped the idols of their own nations; but, being troubled with lions, which had increased greatly while the country remained uninhabited, they supposed it was because they had not honoured the *God of the country*. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Babylon to

instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed partially from the books of Moses, but still retained many of their old rites and idolatrous customs, and embraced a religion made up of Judaism and idolatry, 2 Ki. 17:26-28" (Barnes, p.108).

- 2) Barnes also points out some reasons for the dissension between Jew and Samaritan:
 - a) The Jews rejected the Samaritan offer to help rebuild the temple; their aim may have been to share with the Jews in the bounty of King Cyrus. This rejection led to a long and bitter animosity. (See Ezra four).
 - b) The Samaritans tried to thwart Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 4:1-14).
 - c) The Samaritans obtained permission to build a temple on Mount Gerizim, Sanballat appointed his son-in-law (Manassas) high priest, and asserted that this was the proper place of worship (See Keil on Neh. 13:28; pp.294-296; Josephus Ant. xi, 7.2, xi.8.2-4; cf. John 4).
 - d) Samaria was a refuge for outlaws from Israel.
 - e) The Samaritans received only the Pentateuch as authority.
2. Verse 7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - a. The Lord gave them the essence of their message here, just as Jonah was given his message, and Micaiah was given his (2 Kings 22). See 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:1-5; Acts 20:27. They were to announce to Israel that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.
 - 1) Psalms 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."
 - 2) Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."
 - 3) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 4) Matthew 3:1-2: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 5) Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 6) Luke 10:9: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."
 - 7) Acts 2:30-31: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."
 - b. **At hand:**
 - 1) "The time of departure is at hand [*ephistemi*]" (2 Tim. 4:6). The term represents the vivid force of the statement, expressing suddenness of imminence (Vine, p.191).
 - 2) Matthew 26:18: "And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is **at hand**; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."
 - 3) Luke 21:30-31: "When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh **at hand**." The term here is *eggus*: near, nigh, here (of time).
 - 4) In Matthew 10:7 (*aggiken, eggitzo*): to draw near, to approach, from *engus*, near (of time) (Vine, p.70).
 - 5) The point in the message was to announce the nearness of the time for God's kingdom to appear.

The statement could not be construed to refer to a time 2,000 years in the future. Those hearing the promise of Matthew 3:2, 4:17, and 10:7 would naturally and properly conclude that the kingdom of Daniel 2:44 was to appear in the very near future.

- c. By announcing the soon-to-come kingdom, they implied that the Messiah was also to come soon. It was his kingdom that was being established. The kingdom and the King go together; and the King was the Messiah. However, they were not instructed to preach just now that Jesus was the Messiah. This they did proclaim after his resurrection (Luke 9:20-22; Mark 9:9).
 - d. "The work which the apostles were now to do was in preparation of the coming kingdom; but after the resurrection of Jesus he gave the 'unlimited commission,' and it is a noticeable fact that it contains no such prohibition. The kingdom was fully set up on the day of Pentecost, following the Lord's ascension; and no one since that day has preached, by divine authority, that the kingdom is at hand. Cf. Col. 1:13" (ALC, p.121).
3. Verse 8: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."
- a. He empowered them to perform a wide range of miraculous feats to confirm the truth of their message. They had not been charged for this power, and they were to dispense freely the benefits of this power. They were forbidden to receive any monetary compensation for the use of these miraculous powers.
 - b. These apostles were common people; they were not learned men, or men with any great or special talents; they were not men of wealth with which to bribe men to accept their message; they were not powerful men so as to compel men to believe. But they were just average men, the kind that make the best witnesses in a court of law; men of good sense and character; men who were entirely convinced that their message was truth. They were fully prepared to suffer all manner of opposition, deprivation and shame in behalf of their message.
 - 1) These facts, coupled with the exercise of supernatural powers, were sufficient to convince any fair-minded person that their message was truly from God.
 - 2) Today, we have their confirmed word, accompanied with a clear record of their willingness to suffer for the truth they preached; this is more than enough to convince fair-minded people today of the reliability of their message.
 - c. This was the first bestowal of miraculous power on the apostles. "The Lord has never asked people to believe his word which was meant for their salvation in the absence of sufficient evidence that it was from on high. Cf. Mark 16:19,20. But after the kingdom of Christ was set up and the message confirmed, there was no further need for the exercise of miraculous power by man. Cf. I Cor. 13:8; Eph. 4:11-14; Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-9" (ALC, 1959, p.121).
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 13:8: "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."
 - 2) Ephesians 4:11-14: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."
 - 3) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."
 - 4) Galatians 1:6-9: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."
 - d. The statement of this verse may have anticipated one of the gross errors in the world of religion in our country today. There are several "fake healers" of prominence who have enriched themselves

immensely by claiming miraculous powers, and defrauding millions of gullible folks of their money in the process. If the apostles, who had been given genuine supernatural powers, were forbidden from profiting by these gifts, how much more sinful it is for these false teachers of today to profit by their fake miracles!

- e. Four kinds of miracles are specified: healing the sick, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons. The power to accomplish these great things "might have been made a source of great gain, had the apostles been allowed so to employ it; but this would have robbed the power of its dignity and turned it into an article of merchandise; hence in no age of the world did the true prophets of God accept fees for the exercise of their miraculous powers" (McGarvey, p.89).

C. Matthew 10:9-15: Instructions on How They Were to Carry Out This Limited Commission.

1. Verses 9-10: "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, Nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat."
 - a. They were forbidden to take gold, silver or brass along for money. Brass coins were the lesser pieces of money; our pennies are made of copper; the greater coins were made of more expensive metal, just as in more modern times.
 - b. "The prohibition is against procuring the articles mentioned before starting, and at their own expense. They were to thus procure neither money to pay expenses; nor script (provision bag) which would enable them to carry cold provision..." (McGarvey, p.89).
 - c. These prohibitions made it necessary for them to place their trust in God to provide their necessities. This mission was a proving and training experience for their later and greater mission of taking the gospel to the entire race. Without learning to trust God, they could not perform their mission. And neither can we!
 - d. They were not to take an extra coat, extra shoes (sandals), or a second staff. (Note: a stave is a staff; cf. Matt. 26:47). Mark's account tells them to take a staff; Luke's appears to tell them to take no staff at all; Matthew's account resolves the "problem" by saying they were not to take an extra staff.
 - e. Barnes explains the resolution in a different, but less clear, way: "Some of them, probably, when he addressed them, *had staves*, and some had not. To those who *had*, he did not say that they should throw them away, as the instructions he was giving them might seem to require, but he suffered them to take them (Mark). To those who had not, he said they should not spend time in procuring them (Matthew)" (p.110).
 - f. "The workman is worthy of his meat." God has always required his people to support his special servants as they go about their duties. Provisions for the support of the Levitical priests were made; provisions for the support of the apostles and gospel preachers, and certain elders (I Tim. 5:17) have been made (cf. I Cor. 9:7; Luke 10:7; Gal. 6:6; John 13:20; I Thess. 4:8; 5:12). God would see to it that the apostles would be provided for by means of the "worthy" Jews to be found in many of the cities.
 2. Verses 11-13: "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you."
 - a. When they entered a city, they were to inquire for a "worthy" family with which to stay. They were to make this house the center of their work in that city. "An unnecessary change of one's lodging-place, while temporarily laboring in a town or city, is attended with many slight disadvantages, as every experienced evangelist can testify, and the Savior exhibited a wise foresight in forbidding it during this hurried mission of the twelve" (McGarvey, p.90). They were not to be shifting from house to house; this would imply that they were not satisfied with the hospitality given, or were looking for an improved situation. This would detract from the power of their message.
 - b. A worthy family was one possessed of a good and spiritual character; one which would be a ready audience to the message they were to deliver. Through the influence of such a family, others could be drawn in to hear this message; and through the efforts of such people, the message could be insured of a wider audience after the messengers departed to another locale. When Paul, in his travels, came to a strange city, his practice was to go to the synagogue, for there he would expect to find kindred souls, who already believed in God, knew the Old Testament to some degree, and who knew about the coming Messiah. This kind of people frequently made an ideal audience for the gospel.
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- c. When they entered the house, they were to salute it; actually, the "salute" would be directed toward the inhabitants of the house, the family dwelling there. They were to search out "who" was worthy, not which edifice was worthy (cf. John 4:53; Matthew 12:25).
 - d. If the house (family) was worthy, they were to let their peace come upon it. [Instructions are given to the seventy disciples in Luke 10:5-6]. By saluting the family, "...the apostles were to pronounce a benediction or blessing upon the homes they entered, or at least make some expression of good will on behalf of every member of the home into which they came" (Coffman, p.138).
3. Verse 14: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet."
- a. If they were directed to a family that turned out to be less than claimed, who did not wish to show them hospitality, they were to shake off the dust of that house, or of that city if no one in the city was worthy, and go on to another house or city. It is twice recorded that Paul did this very thing:
 - 1) Acts 13:51: "But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium."
 - 2) Acts 18:6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
 - b. "It has been said that the Jews considered their land so peculiarly holy that when they returned home from any heathen country they stopped at the borders, and shook or wiped the dust from their feet, so that the holy land might not be polluted by it. The Lord's injunction here...shows that the Jews who rejected the Lord's message...were no longer holy, but were on the level with the heathen..." (ALC, 1959, p.122).
4. Verse 15: "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city."
- a. Men are judged according to their opportunities. The wicked people of Sodom, though they were exceedingly evil, did not have the opportunity those Jews under consideration had; hence, the judgment on the Sodomites would be more tolerable (more easily borne) than that judgment to be experienced by these Jews. "Though the sin of these Jews in rejecting the apostles was not of so gross a character as the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, it was more inexcusable on account of their superior opportunities" (McGarvey, p.90).
 - 1) Matthew 11:20-24: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
 - 2) Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."
 - 3) James 3:1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."
 - b. The way one treats a gospel preacher or an elder who is performing his work for the Lord, is the way that person treats Christ.
 - 1) Luke 10:16: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."
 - 2) John 13:20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

D. Matthew 10:16-20: Supernatural Guidance Promised to the Apostles.

1. Verse 16: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and

harmless as doves."

- a. The Lord was sending them forth as sheep into a cruel and evil world. One wolf amid a flock of sheep can result in slaughter and carnage. A few sheep in the midst of many wolves would be worse. Sheep are characterized as innocent and harmless. But the innocence of the sheep is no protection from wolves; even so with the apostles in preaching to a hostile, cold, and indifferent world.
 - b. Therefore, they were to be as wise as serpents. "The serpent was considered a symbol of wisdom among the ancients, especially the python. The maid at Philippi who followed Paul and Silas was said to have had a 'spirit of divination' (Acts 16:16), but the Greek word denotes that she had a *python!*" (Coffman, p.139).
 - 1) "The Egyptians used the serpent in their hieroglyphics as a symbol of wisdom. Probably the thing in which Christ directed his followers to imitate the serpent was in its caution in avoiding danger. No animal equals them in the rapidity and skill which they evince in escaping danger" (Barnes, p.111).
 - 2) "Under these circumstances they were to be as wise as serpents, whose only wisdom is displayed in escaping from danger..." (McGarvey, p.91).
 - c. The dove is a symbol of innocence and purity. The disciples were to be as harmless and innocent as sheep and doves, but not "stupid and silly as those animals" (Boles, p.227). People who would foolishly destroy a helpful snake would not harm a dove.
 - d. The description of things which begins here has primary application to the Great Commission (cf. vs. 18). The Lord would be well aware of the dangers and ill-treatment his apostles would suffer, especially in the universal mission on which they were later to go. He did not conceal from them beforehand the dangers and hardships they were to face; rather, he graphically described what was in store for them.
2. Verses 17-18: "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."
 - a. By mentioning the synagogues as the place of some of their troubles, the Lord plainly implied that the Jewish religious leaders would be behind much of their persecution. For the first several years of Christianity, the persecution came almost entirely from the Jews, the very people who had been specially prepared to receive the gospel.
 - b. The councils (*sunedria*) and synagogues were Jewish powers. From this passage we learn that scourging was administered in the synagogues.
 - 1) Matthew 23:34: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city:"
 - 2) Acts 22:19: "And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee."
 - 3) Acts 26:11: "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities."
 - c. Scourging was a very cruel beating. "The law of Moses directed that the number of stripes should not exceed forty...De. 25:2,3. The person who was sentenced to scourging was formerly laid upon the ground, and the blows inflicted on his back in the presence of the judge. In later times the criminal was tied to a low post....The instrument formerly used was a *rod*. Afterward they employed thongs or lashes attached to the rod. To make the blows severe and more painful, they sometimes fastened sharp points of iron or pieces of lead in the thongs. These were called *scorpions*, I Ki. 12:11....The Jews, to secure greater accuracy in counting, used a scourge with three lashes, which inflicted three stripes at once. With this the criminal was struck thirteen times, making the number of blows thirty-nine. Paul was five times scourged in this way. See. 2 Cor. 11:24. The Romans did not feel themselves bound by the law of the Jews in regard to the *number* of stripes, but inflicted them at pleasure. Thus our Saviour was scourged till he was so weak as not to be able to bear his cross" (Barnes, p.111f).
 - d. "This prophecy was fulfilled when the apostles were arraigned before Herod (Acts 5:18; 21:1), before the Sanhedrin, and perhaps before other authorities" (Coffman, p.140). The governors and kings who

ruled in Palestine were appointed by the Roman (Gentile) government. Paul was before such secular rulers as Lysias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Nero. The testimony which came forth from the apostles on these occasions was a testimony against those rulers because they stood opposed to the gospel. It was the truth of the gospel that was being opposed. Cf. 1 Samuel 8:7: "And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

3. Verses 19-20: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."
 - a. This is one of the strongest statements in the New Testament affirming the inspiration of the apostles. We would naturally suppose the apostles would be fearful on hearing the warning Jesus gave them about the forthcoming hardships, hence the Lord gave them this assurance.
 - 1) Mark 13:11: "But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost."
 - 2) Luke 21:14-15: "Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."
 - b. "Take no thought." This is from the same Greek term as used in Matthew 5:25, and means "do not be anxious." They were not to be worried about what they should say or how it should be said. Mark's account says, "Do not premeditate" what was to be said. They did not need to plan their words, for the Holy Spirit would miraculously supply them. This is a very strong claim to their inspiration. What they taught, orally and in writing, had the same guidance by the Spirit.
 - 1) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."
 - c. Today, anyone who wants to teach or preach the gospel must study to learn it. "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13). "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).
 - d. They could not take credit for what came out of their mouths for the Spirit was providing the message. Preachers today should not take credit for the stirring gospel messages they deliver: the power is in the gospel, not in the oratory of the preacher. The physical act of speaking belonged to the apostles, but it was not their genius that decided what was to be spoken or how it was to be delivered. "There could not be a more explicit declaration of the complete verbal inspiration of the apostles on such occasions" (McGarvey, p.91).
 - e. "Eastern people regarded kings as raised far above common mortals—as approaching to divinity. How consoling, then, the assurance that God would aid them [the apostles] and speak within them" (Barnes, p.112).

E. Matthew 10:21-25: Further Details of the Persecution and Admonitions to Persevere.

1. Verse 21: "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death."
 - a. The ties between brother and sister, and parent and child, are so strong it would seem that nothing could break this bond and cause one to turn so hard against the other as to willfully turn them in to authorities to be put to death. The cases Christ had in mind were ones where family members willfully turned in others.
 - b. "Nothing else but this dreadful opposition to God and his gospel ever *has* induced or ever *can* induce men to violate the most tender relations, and consign the best friends to torture, racks, and flames. It adds to the horrors of this, that those who were put to death in persecution were tormented in the most

- awful modes that human ingenuity could devise. They were crucified; were thrown into boiling oil; were burned at the stake; were roasted slowly over coals; were compelled to drink melted lead; were torn in pieces by beasts of prey; were covered with pitch and set on fire. Yet...incredible as it seems, parents and children, husbands and wives, were found wicked enough to deliver up each other to these cruel modes of death on account of attachment to the gospel. Such is the opposition of the heart of man to the gospel!" (Barnes, p.113).
- c. Hatred of the gospel can destroy the natural affections in a family. The things the Lord here describes happened to many of his followers in the years that came, and possibly even to some of the apostles.
2. Verse 22: "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
 - a. He did not say that every man would hate his people, but that they would be hated by all kinds of men. "The diabolical hatred that was vented against the Twelve exists yet. In the Jefferson Room of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., one may see in *Pravda* and *Isvestia* caricatures and slanders of every kind against Christ and the apostles. There was a report in *Pravda* of a farmer who named his asses after the Twelve and called a sow 'The Virgin Mary!'" (Coffman, p.141).
 - b. The reason for the hatred hurled against the apostles was the name of Christ. Men hate the name of Christ but they cannot attack Christ personally; they therefore vent their hatred at his followers. That the name of Christ is hated is evident (1) by the use of his name as a swear word, (2) by the rejection of the truth of his gospel on the part of the vast majority, (3) by the refusal on the part of most movie writers to appropriate his name in connection with movie "prayers," and (4) by the opposition we of the churches of Christ still face from our own liberal "brethren" and the sectarian religious world in general. Even some members of many congregations do not want to hear the "whole counsel" of the Lord. If one does not love the Lord's truth he cannot love the Lord; if he opposes the truth, he opposes the Lord; and if he opposes the Lord or the truth, he hates both the Lord and his truth!
 - c. There is no blessing in being persecuted because of wrong-doing; only when we are persecuted because of the Lord's sake is there any reward. And even then, we must "endure to the end" (cf. Rev. 2:10). We are to persevere even though our lives are required: we must be faithful until death and unto death. "He that bears all these unspeakable sufferings, and who does not shrink and apostatize, will give decisive evidence of attachment to me, and shall enter into heaven" (Barnes, p.113). This is quite an admission from a Calvinist! Calvinism teaches that it is impossible to apostatize, but even such a staunch Calvinist as Barnes, a fine scholar, had to admit that one must endure to the end of his life in order to go to heaven! This is exactly what the Lord here says.
 - d. Other scriptures showing the necessity of faithfulness to the end include:
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."
 - 3) Hebrews 2:1-4: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"
 - 4) Hebrews 3:12-13: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."
 - 5) Revelation 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."
 3. Verse 23: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."
 - a. "The true martyr never sought death, never made a display of heroism, and never failed, when reposing faith in Christ, to meekly suffer for his sake" (Boles, p.230). No Christian is told to throw away his life if he can preserve it without violating the Lord's will. If we preserve our lives by denying the Lord
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- and in some way disobey some gospel precept or command, we lose our souls; if we sacrifice our life by remaining loyal to the Lord, we preserve our souls.
- b. They were told to flee to another city when persecution arose in the former place. A dead martyr cannot actively serve the Lord here any more. While we must be willing to lay down our lives for the gospel's sake, we are not to do so if there is a proper way to avoid it.
 - c. "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till..." They were to flee from persecution where possible so as to preserve their lives to preach somewhere else; there was a limited number of workers already, so much so that they would not have covered all the cities of Israel during the time-frame they were given. This statement grew out of, and is a specification of, the more general precept, "Be wise as serpents."
 - d. "Till the Son of man be come." "What coming of the Son of man is meant, has been a matter of dispute. But it is a coming which was to take place before all the cities of Israel should be evangelized..." (McGarvey, p.92).
 - 1) Some think it was a figurative coming of Christ when the nation of Israel was destroyed in 70 A.D. However, Colossians 1:6, 23 show that the gospel had been taken to "all the world" and "to every creature which is under heaven." The Book of Colossians was written about 62 A.D. This suggests that not only had the saints been able to proclaim the gospel throughout Palestine, but also to the whole of the civilized world of that generation.
 - 2) For the same reason, it is evident that the second coming of Christ is not meant.
 - 3) A better suggestion is the coming of Christ in his kingdom was meant. The events of this chapter occurred about two to three years before the kingdom was set up on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2 (33 A.D.).
 - 4) Or, which would perhaps be the most obvious meaning, the apostles would not be finished with their work under the limited commission before they were rejoined by the Lord. He did not accompany them on these travels; in fact, the twelve were divided into six two-man teams. While the Lord worked in other places, they traveled to the various towns and cities of Israel, announcing the coming of the kingdom.
4. Verse 24: "The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord."
 - a. The Lord referred back to this statement in John 15:20: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."
 - b. "The argument here is, that the disciple should expect exemption from no hardship endured by his teacher (*master* here means *teacher*), nor the servant from any endured by his lord...When a disciple suffers and feels like complaining of his hard lot, let him think, Who am I, to complain of suffering, when my Lord and Master suffered so much more for me!" (McGarvey, p.92).
 5. Verse 25: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?"
 - a. The disciple had no right to expect better treatment than his Lord received. The apostles rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). If his enemies called Christ the master of the house of Beelzebub, what could the apostles expect to be called? Probably something as bad or worse.
 - b. "*Beelzebub* was a god of the Ekronites. See 2 Ki. 1:2. The word literally means *the god of flies*, so called because this idol was supposed to protect them from the numerous swarms of flies with which that country abounded. The correct reading here, as in Lu. 11:15,18,19; Mar. 3:22, is supposed to be, not *Beelzebub*, but *Beelzebul* (Griesbach, Hahn, Rob., *Lex.*) an Aramean form of the word meaning the *god of dung* or *filth*. The name, thus altered by the Jews by changing a single letter, was given to Satan to express supreme contempt and aversion. The Jews seem to have first given to Satan the name of a heathen god, and then, to express their sense of the character of Satan, to have changed that name by altering a single letter so as to express their aversion in the most emphatic manner. By giving the name to Christ, they poured upon him the greatest possible abuse and contempt" (Barnes, p.113).
 - c. "Baal," the name of the god of the Canaanites, was coupled with "zebul" which means "dunghill." By this, they called the old god of their ancient enemies "the dunghill god!" Their unqualified hatred of
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Christ is seen in their use of this same vile word as a name for the Savior. (See Coffman, p.143).

- d. The Lord's enemies still rely on name-calling tactics when they are unable to meet the truth of the gospel. Thus, we are called "Campbellites" and "water-dogs."

F. Matthew 10:26-28: Fear Not the Enemy.

1. Verses 26-27: "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops."
 - a. There is no place in the Master's service for a coward. While we are all prone to moments of fear, we should pray and work to develop a greater degree of courage. The first thing listed in the seven graces of 2 Peter 1:5-7 is virtue (courage, manliness). If the apostles feared their opponents, the great message they had would not be proclaimed as the Lord intended. It was his will that everything he had taught them and those other truths which he would later reveal to them should be preached far and wide. But there were those who did not want the truth to be preached (Acts 4:13-18). If it was preached anyway, there were bitter consequences to face (Acts 5:17-18, 25-28,33,40-42). The apostles did not quail before the enemy.
 - 1) Acts 4:19-20: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."
 - 2) Acts 5:29-32: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."
 - b. All the things which the Lord had taught them privately were intended to be proclaimed publicly. The time was coming when the whole counsel of God, the fullness of the mystery of God's eternal plan, was to be reported boldly to all. The apostles were to have boldness in the face of opposition so that all those things they had heard from the Lord were disclosed fully. "They were not to allow persecution to suppress the word, but they were to carry it forth from privacy to publicity" (*ibid.*).
 - c. "...The enemy will not punish men as good men, but will attempt to make it appear that they are bad and deserve punishment; this requires that the reputation be blackened by falsehood; hence, Jesus admonishes that his disciples fear not their calumny, for it shall all be revealed or made clear; the truth will surely come to light, and your commission is to reveal truth" (Boles, p.231).
 - d. The point of these two verses is not that God will bring to light in the Judgment all things men did on earth. God will surely do that as the Bible elsewhere teaches, but this is not the present point. The Lord is simply saying that the time was at hand for the whole world to learn of God's wonderful plan of the gospel. It had been hidden through the centuries in the inscrutable counsel of the Almighty, but it was their great pleasure to present the fullness of that plan to the world (Eph. 3:1-11).
 - 1) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
 - 2) 1 Peter 1:9-12: "Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."
 - e. Even persecution was not to hinder the spread of this holy message. Persecution had the positive effect of (1) intensifying the zeal of the apostles, (2) arousing sympathy for them, and (3) spreading the saints abroad to many places where the message was even more broadly disseminated. But before this could be done, the apostles had to endure faithfully the opposition they faced.

2. Verse 28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - a. The apostles were not to fear men but they must fear God. The worst that men can do is kill the body; God can "destroy" both body and soul in "Gehenna."
 - 1) There is a natural fear that Christians have of unbelievers. There was a greater danger posed by unbelievers of that day than that which is posed by unbelievers of our day. But great as that danger might have been (or be), the danger of not going is far greater: men can only kill the body, but God can punish disobedience in unquenchable, unending fire.
 - 2) "Let the danger, then, of going be as great as it might be, the danger of refusing to go, or of turning back, is still greater. As a mere choice of evils, the most cruel persecution is to be patiently endured in preference to neglect of duty to God" (McGarvey, p.93).
 - b. "Materialists are wont to catch at the word *destroy* in this place, as proof that the soul can be annihilated. But in doing so they ascribe to the term *destroy* a sense which it does not bear, and they overlook the fact that this passage utterly refutes the doctrine that the soul dies with the body. Jesus says, 'Fear not them who kill the body, but *can not kill the soul,*' but if the soul dies with the body, then he who kills the body kills the soul too, and can not avoid killing it. To destroy, is not to annihilate, but to bring to ruin; and the soul and body are brought to ruin when they are cast into hell" (McGarvey, p.93).
 - c. Destroy (*apollumi*): "a strengthened form of *ollumi*, signifies to destroy utterly; in Middle Voice, to perish. The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being" (Vine, p.302). This definition is born out by its usage in the New Testament.
 - 1) Matthew 10:6: "But go rather to the **lost** sheep of the house of Israel."
 - 2) Luke 5:37: "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall **perish**."
 - 3) Luke 15:4,6: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he **lose** one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is **lost**, until he find it?...And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was **lost**."
 - 4) Luke 15:24: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was **lost**, and is found. And they began to be merry."
 - 5) John 6:27: "Labour not for the meat which **perisheth**, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."
 - 6) 1 Peter 1:7: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that **perisheth**, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."
 - 7) Other passages:
 - a) Luke 13:3: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 - b) Luke 13:5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 - c) John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - d) John 10:28: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
 - e) John 17:12: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."
 - f) Romans 2:12: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."
 - g) 1 Corinthians 15:18: "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."
 - h) 2 Corinthians 2:15: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish."
 - i) 2 Corinthians 4:3: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."
 - j) 2 Thessalonians 2:10: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;
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because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

k) James 4:12: “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”

l) 2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

d. "As the body and soul both are to be destroyed in hell, hell (gehenna) can not belong to the intermediate state, but to that state which follows the reunion of body and soul at the resurrection. Hell, then, lies beyond the final judgment' (McGarvey p.93). "...Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnon, was used by Christ to describe the place of eternal punishment of the wicked. Whatever metaphor was employed, Christ left no doubt of the reality and dreadful nature of that punishment" (Coffman, p.144).

"Gehenna" is used 12 times in the New Testament; Christ uses it 11 times; it is also used in James 3:6.

e. "Here we have a recognition of the natural immortality of the soul, which cannot be killed by men; and of the mortality of the body which may be killed: whence we learn that the resurrection of the dead is a resurrection of the flesh; for, unless it were raised again, it would be impossible for the flesh to be 'killed in hell'" (Coffman, pp.143f).

f. Luke 12:4-5: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." God is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; after God has killed, he is able to cast into hell. To destroy body and soul in hell is equal to casting the individual into hell.

G. Matthew 10:29-39: Value of Confessing Christ -vs- Tragedy of Denying Him.

1. Verses 29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

a. Sparrows abounded in Palestine; they were sold in the market places; since they were so plentiful and so small, their value was little. The loss of one sparrow might go unnoticed by man, but God is fully aware when one of these little birds falls to the earth in death. He even knows how many hairs are on our heads. We scarcely notice when a strand of hair falls, but God knows about even this insignificant thing and keeps up with how many hairs remain.

b. God's people are of much greater worth than many sparrows. If God is interested enough in their affairs to note the passing of even one of them, of how much greater interest are you in his holy sight!

c. This point is made for the purpose of moving the disciples to be fearless in the face of the enemy. The previous passage (verses 26-28) gave another reason for courage on their part.

d. "The proof that God does actually watch over the tiniest citizens in his universe is seen in the fact that the sparrows one sees now are the descendants of sparrows which have lived upon earth for uncounted thousands of years....Reference to numbering the hairs of the head suggests the infinite detail and solicitude of that loving care lavished by the Father upon his human creation" (Coffman, p.144).

2. Verses 32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

a. Here is a further reason the Lord gives for being fearless before enemies of the faith: Christ will confess before the Father those who fearlessly confess him before men, and will deny before the Father those who fearfully deny him before men. "To confess Jesus is to make him the object of our faith and life; it is to own him as a Savior; it is to honor him in the life; it is to espouse his cause and to face opposition and reproach for his sake. Those who do this he will honor as his friends before the Father" (Boles, p.233).

b. Confession is a basic part of the plan of salvation:

1) Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

2) Romans 10:10: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

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- c. When one concludes his primary obedience to the gospel, it is then that his name is inscribed in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 20:15; 21:27; Phil. 4:3). It is called the "good confession" (1 Tim. 6:12-13), and for good reason:
- 1) Christ made it; it led him to the cross:
 - a) Mark 14:62: "And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."
 - b) John 19:7: "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."
 - 2) God made it audibly from heaven:
 - a) Matthew 3:17: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
 - b) Matthew 17:5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
 - c) John 12:27-30: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes."
 - 3) All men will eventually make it: "And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).
 - 4) Peter made it and was blessed: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:16-18).
- d. Verse 33 is the negative of the preceding verse. "...It is not likely that denial of Christ is limited to any formal, blasphemous remark but pertains to all godless words (Titus 1:16)" (Coffman, p.146). Although Peter confessed the great truth about Jesus' true identity and nature (Matt. 16:16), yet he denied the Lord three times following the Lord's arrest (Matt. 26:69-75). We are to confess Christ when we obey the gospel, and continue to confess him in our words and deeds while we live for him.
- e. John 12:42-43: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."
3. Verses 34-36: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household."
- a. The gospel is called the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15). It establishes peace between those who obey the gospel, and between these obedient ones and God (Eph. 2:16-17). However, the gospel of peace becomes a stumblingblock to those who reject it. With many of these, they are not content merely to neglect or refuse to obey it; they also oppose the gospel and those who follow it.
 - b. He came to bring peace to man (Luke 2:14), but that peace is possible only by obeying the gospel. Although he is the Prince of Peace and his message is the gospel of peace, yet his work produced many enemies, and thus he correctly says he came to bring a sword.
 - c. This dissension is caused by man's stubbornness and sin. The gospel demands a decision, but too often the decision is to reject that inspired Word. The wickedness of man, not the message of the gospel, causes this spiritual warfare. He clearly revealed beforehand, to the disciples, the harsh reaction of ungodly men toward their preaching.
 - d. "When the right goes forth into a world of wrong there must be war; each principle will rally its own adherents and its own armor under its own banner, and terrible will be the struggle until right or wrong heaven or hell, attain the victory; the disciples of Jesus believe in the ultimate victory of good, righteousness, peace, and God. Jesus gave spiritual peace which 'passeth understanding' in the joys of
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- forgiveness of sin, the hope of holiness, the satisfaction of a true, faithful obedience; but this peace was not given to the world...The sword is the symbol of war, the very essence of the vision (Luke 12:51), civil commotion, and domestic discord (Jer. 14:13), the opposite of peace and concord" (Boles, p.235).
- e. "He knew that the existence and activities of the Church would cause the sword of persecution to be drawn, and in ordering the establishment of the Church he assumed the responsibility of indirectly sending that sword into the world" (McGarvey, p.94).
 - f. A man's foes shall be of his own household. William Tyndale was betrayed to his death by a "faithful" servant (Coffman, p.147). Judas betrayed Christ. "In nearly all quarrels, except those about religion, the members of the same family stand together, but in religious feuds the family circle is often broken, and its parts arrayed against each other. When a man abandons the religion of his ancestors his own kindred feel more keenly than others the shame which the world attaches to the act, and are exasperated against the supposed apostate in a degree proportionate to their nearness to him" (McGarvey, p.94).
4. Verses 37-39: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."
- a. Religious differences put the disciple's faith to a strong test. He must decide whether he loves the Lord or his family member more. Christ will not take second place. He that loves father or mother more than he loves Christ is not worthy of the Lord. This verse is parallel and thus explains Luke 14:26. To hate, as used in Luke, means to love less.
 - 1) "And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah....And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated..." (Gen. 29:30-31). Jacob did not hate Leah, he simply loved her less than he loved Rachel.
 - 2) Romans 9:9-12: "For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." [God *hated* Esau only in the sense that he chose Jacob to be in the lineage of the Messiah, and not Esau].
 - 3) One who loves his parent more than he loves Christ is said to hate Christ. He hates him only in the sense that he loves him less than he loves the parent.
 - b. It is impossible to have the approval of the Lord while holding some one or some thing else in higher esteem.
 - 1) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 2) Matthew 12:30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
 - 3) Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - 4) Luke 9:23: "And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - 5) 1 Corinthians 16:22: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."
 - c. "The cross, on account of its use in the execution of the basest criminals, was a symbol of dishonor. The dishonor attached to being a disciple of Jesus is here graphically symbolized by taking a cross on one's shoulder and following Jesus" (McGarvey, p.94).
 - 1) To "take up his cross" means to willingly submit to whatever hardship or persecution which being a faithful Christian entails.
 - 2) To remain faithful to Christ despite the rejection and opposition on the part of unbelievers
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demonstrates the highest degree of love for the Master. Bearing the cross involves bearing our obligations and refusing under any circumstance to cast them aside.

- d. "Note the qualification, *for my sake*. Whatever good one does, or whatever sacrifice is made, if such is not undertaken for the glory of Christ, it may not claim the reward promised here" (Coffman, p.168). The point here is not limited to those who literally lose their lives for the cause of Christ, but extends to every member of the church of Christ. It includes losing our lives in sacrificing our own personal wishes and pleasures to the enhancement of the Lord's great work.
 - 1) "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).
 - 2) "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves...for even Christ pleased not himself..." (Rom. 15:1,3).
- e. Our text is a call for selflessness. Virtually every significant problem in our country is traceable to selfishness, in its many forms. Why do people rob banks? Why do they cheat? What motive causes drug deals to sell their unholy product? Why are many murders committed? The major problems of any society could be cured if all the members of that society subscribed to the principles of the gospel, one of which is unselfishness.
 - 1) This is one of the several paradoxes of the Bible. To get we must give. To live we must die. To be exalted we must be abased.
 - 2) The one who attempts to preserve his life by shunning the cross is doomed to die spiritually. The one who loses his life for the Lord's sake will find (save) his life spiritually. "By denying Christ before persecutors in order to escape persecution, one loses his soul; but when one remains faithful to Christ and suffers persecution even unto death, that one finds eternal life" (Boles, p.238).

H. Matthew 10:40-42: Kind Treatment of Disciples Will be Rewarded.

1. Verse 40: "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."
 - a. That the mission they were about to undertake was important is underscored by the fact that those who rejected them were rejecting both Christ and the Father, and those who received them were likewise receiving Christ and the Father.
 - b. Those today who will receive or reject us (in our teaching of the gospel) are doing the same toward Christ and his Father. Our mission is of the greatest importance. It is through the word delivered through the apostles that all the benefits of the Lord are acquired.
 - 1) John 17:20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:2: "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3,19-21; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).
2. Verses 41-42: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."
 - a. "'In the name of a prophet' is a Hebraism for 'because he is a prophet.' (Alford.) He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet, or a righteous man because he is a righteous man, or who gives a drink of water to a disciple because he is a disciple, distinctly recognizes the person's relation to God as the ground of the act; and to that extent God is honored by the act. Not so, however, with him who performs a simple act in the name of humanity, or because the recipient is a man" (McGarvey, p.95).
 - b. "A prophet's reward is not synonymous with final salvation; for while it is true that in heaven we will have full reward for all the good we do on earth, we will have infinitely more than this, and our admission into heaven is a matter of *grace* and not of reward. So, then, the promise of the text does not imply the salvation of all that receive a prophet, etc., but simply that he shall be rewarded. If he be a pardoned man, he may receive his reward in heaven; if not, he will receive it only on earth" (McGarvey, p.95).
 - c. "The utmost heavenly concern for the apostles and their message is seen in the fact that even a single cup of cold water given to them shall not lose its reward. *These little ones* is a term of endearment spoken by Christ of the Twelve. One may suppose that the principle of heavenly recognition for any

- favor extended to a disciple still holds..." (Coffman, p.149).
- d. "A cup of cold water" represents some small service or kindness shown one of God's people. Even those small acts do not go unnoticed by the heavenly Father. And none of these actions will go unrewarded. God observed the kindness Lydia showed to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:15); the many kind deeds done by Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43); he saw those done by Cornelius (Acts 10:2,22). He also sees the acts and words of hatred and harm done by such men as Diotrephes (2 John 9-11). What is done to a disciple is felt by the Lord. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:1-6). Compare Matthew 25:35-40; Hebrews 6:7-10.
 - e. Mark 6:12 and Luke 9:6 reveal that the disciples left immediately and fulfilled this mission: "And they went out, and preached that men should repent." "And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where."
 - f. "The departure of the Twelve on their mission took place about five weeks before the second passover of Jesus' ministry. They were gone about a month during which Jesus taught in both Galilee and Jerusalem, where he went to keep the feast of purim at the beginning of March (John 5:1). The twelve rejoined him before the Passover (John 6:15); and, shortly after that, Christ fed the five thousand (Luke 9:10). Matthew does not chronicle the events in chronological sequence and does not mention the return of the Twelve, picking up in the narrative, without mention of their absence, at the beginning of chapter 12" (Coffman, p.149).

A. Matthew 11:1-6: John Sends Messengers to Jesus.

1. Verse 1: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities."
 - a. The preceding chapter relates the instructions Jesus gave the apostles while in the vicinity of Capernaum. "Their cities" has reference to the various cities of the province of Galilee of which Capernaum was a part. The twelve had been sent out on the limited commission (Matt. 10; Mark 6:12; Luke 9:6); in their absence it appears that the following events took place.
 - b. "This verse could properly belong to the close of chapter ten, as it informs us how Jesus was engaged during the absence of his twelve apostles; while each pair of the apostles took their own way, Jesus himself was active about his Father's business....'To teach' means to give instruction; this was done in their synagogue; to 'preach' means to proclaim as a herald; this is more general and public than teaching" (Boles, p.240).
 2. Verses 2-3: "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"
 - a. In the meantime, John the Baptizer had been cast into prison because he rebuked the king for his sinful marital relationship (Matt. 14:1-12). Luke 7:18 shows that John's disciples had brought him word of Jesus' activities. Josephus says that John was held in the castle of Machaerus, located east of the Dead Sea (Ant. Book 18,1,2, p.382). "John had been in prison about twelve months at Machaerus, a point fifteen miles southeast from the northern extremity of the Dead Sea and about seventy miles distant from the cities on the Sea of Galilee..." (Boles, p.241). It was no small journey for these two disciples of John to take in seeking information from Jesus for John.
 - b. We are not told precisely why John sent these disciples. Some commentators have supposed that John's faith that Jesus was the Messiah had weakened. Coffman suggests the following for the uncertainty John was showing (p.151):
 - 1) John had been cast into prison, and Christ had made no move to free him.
 - 2) John was suffering cruel and unjust persecution and probably foresaw his approaching martyrdom.
 - 3) Jesus' identity as the Messiah was not being proclaimed at that time with the dogmatic certainty which John doubtless expected.
 - 4) The reasons for Christ's reticence about his Messiahship could not have been clear to John.
 - c. Our Lord came to the earth to die for the sins of the world. He did not come to die for sedition against the constituted civil authority. He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom after the order of David and Solomon's kingdom. The Jews thought the Messiah's kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 2 Sam. 7:12) would be earthly in nature (John 6:15; Acts 1:1-7). The Lord's apostles thought the same, and it is likely that John likewise looked for a literal reign. John knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but he had seen no sign that Jesus was in the process of fulfilling Jewish expectations regarding the supposed overthrow of Roman rule and the establishment of an Israelite kingdom. Thus, John sent disciples to make inquiry regarding this.
 - d. "The natural and obvious supposition that he inquired merely because he wanted to know, has been very generally rejected as inconsistent with his previous testimony for Jesus, and with his inspiration. But we must remember that his inspiration passed away with the ministry on account of which it was bestowed, and that it was only the man John who made the inquiry. Moreover, it was the man John in hopeless imprisonment, and filled with the despondency natural to his situation....The inquiry is not, Are you what I declared you to be? but, being all of that, are you the one who should come, or must we look for *another*? Looking, as John did, in common with all the Jews, for an earthly king in the coming Messiah, and seeing in Jesus no aspirations for such a position, he was so far confused as to think that while Jesus fulfilled a part of the promises, there might be another Coming One who would fulfill the remainder. To satisfy his own mind, then, was the object of his inquiry, and he shows unabated confidence in Jesus by submitting the decision of the question to him" (McGarvey, p.96).
 3. Verses 4-5: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."
 - a. The times in which Jesus lived on earth were dark and dangerous, times when one could be arrested
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easily, charged and convicted of crimes such as sedition, with or without proper evidence. It was important that the Lord keep his true identity quiet in the early part of his ministry lest he be hailed into court as a seditionist.

- b. The Lord replied to their question by making reference to the miracles which he wrought. He referred to the statement in Isaiah 61:1 in giving this reply. "The spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*" (Isa. 61:1). This was adduced as proof that he was the Messiah. John did not perform miracles (John 10:41).
 - c. Remember also the occasion when certain men tried to take the Lord by force and install him as king (John 6:15). He would not allow it; first, because that was not the true nature of his kingdom, and second, their attempt would have brought the full might of Rome against him, requiring heavenly intervention in a miraculous way to prevent such an ill-advised scheme.
 - d. In the Lord's infinite wisdom, he chose not to give John's disciples a plain, categorical answer to their question. He simply called attention to Isaiah 61 which listed certain miracles the Messiah would do when he came, saying that these miraculous events are being wrought. To one who believed the Scriptures, this was a positive declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. He let his works prove his identity. This shows the true purpose of miracles: to confirm the Messenger and message as being from God. "The miracles Jesus mentioned to John's messengers were precisely those which Isaiah identified with the advent of the Messiah (Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1)" (Coffman, p.153). Jesus had earlier referred to Isaiah 61 in his presentation at the synagogue at his hometown of Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21).
 - 1) Isaiah 35:5-6: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."
 - 2) Isaiah 61:1: "The spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*."
 - 3) Luke 4:18-21: "The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."
 - e. Regarding the poor, Barnes states: "No sect of philosophers had condescended to notice them before Christ, and no system of religion had attempted to instruct them before the Christian religion. In all other schemes the poor have been passed by as unworthy of notice" (p.118).
4. Verse 6: "And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me."
- a. "The earnest plea from Jesus' very heart and soul is a moving and powerful request that John would not take offense at our Lord's inability openly to declare himself at that time, nor at differences such as marked their attitudes toward fasting. The absence of any further inquiries from John shows that John understood" (Coffman, p.153).
 - b. "The chief reason why the scribes were offended at the claims of Jesus, was because he did not come up to their expectations concerning the Messiah; and now John seemed in danger of falling into the same fatal error: hence the warning to John, 'Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me'" (McGarvey, p.97).
 - c. The word "offense" means "stumblingblock." "'Happy is he to whom I shall not prove a stumbling-block.' That is, happy is he who shall not take offence at my poverty and lowliness of life, so as to reject me and my doctrine. Happy is he who can, notwithstanding that poverty and obscurity, see the evidence that I am the Messiah, and follow me. It is not improbable that John wished Jesus publicly to proclaim himself as the Christ, instead of seeking retirement" (Barnes, p.118).

B. Matthew 11:7-15: Jesus Gives the True Estimate of John.

1. Verses 7-8: "And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went

ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses."

- a. In the area where John did his preaching, in the valley of Jordan which overflowed each year, there is said to have been cane or reeds in abundance (Barnes, p.118). These were lightweight and fragile in appearance, and were easily swayed to and fro, even by a small breeze. "A reed shaken by the wind symbolizes a man who is swayed by public opinion; and one clothed in soft raiment, is a man of self-indulgence. The questions of Jesus brought out with great emphasis the contrast between John and all such characters. In contrast with a reed shaken by the wind, stood his firmness in withstanding the Pharisees, and his fearlessness in rebuking sin even when Herod was the sinner, and when liberty and life were at stake. In contrast with soft raiment stood his camel's-hair coat with its raw hide girdle, and his food of locusts and wild honey. To remind the people of these things, was to rekindle their admiration of John" (McGarvey, p.97f).
 - b. "His praise of John the Baptist is unequalled by his praise of any other....He is no reed bowing in whatever direction the wind blows....The aptness of this reference to 'soft raiment' is notable. Nearly 2000 years after Jesus spoke these words, it is still true that the clothing that brings the highest price and is held as the most desirable is nearly always marked by its 'softness'" (Coffman, p.154).
 - c. Notice that the Lord did not praise John in the presence of John's disciples, but waited until they had left before offering this glowing tribute to their master.
 - d. The Lord in these questions simply asked the audience what it was that attracted them to John. He reminds them that they did not go out into the wilderness expecting to find an unstable character wearing soft garments. John was not such a person. And neither was Jesus! Neither John nor the Lord was weak, effeminate types. They were strong, dependable, fearless proclaimers of God's word. "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ" (Eph. 4:14-15, NKJV).
2. Verse 9: "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet."
 - a. John was the last and greatest of the prophets pointing to the Messiah and his kingdom. But John was more than a prophet for he actually introduced and identified Jesus as the "lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
 - b. John not only was a prophet, but his birth was announced beforehand, his name was given by the Lord, he was born of a previously barren mother, both his parents were well-stricken in years, he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15), he was the last in the line of prophets leading up to Christ, he was privileged to baptize Jesus, and was the link that joins the old and new covenants.
 3. Verse 10: "For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."
 - a. "Christ's selection of this prophecy from Malachi 3:1 and application of it to John proves two things, (1) that John the Baptist is that first messenger mentioned in that passage, and (2) that Jesus Christ is the Lord, 'the messenger of the covenant' who even then had suddenly come to his temple" (Coffman, p.155).
 - b. Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."
 - 1) The question was raised by the Israelites in the previous verse concerning the whereabouts of the God of justice. The reply given by Malachi is found here. God promised that he would come; God's coming was in the person of Christ, who was preceded by his *messenger*, John the Baptizer.
 - 2) The messenger is identified in Malachi 4:5 as Elijah the prophet. But this was not the literal Elijah, but John the Baptizer.
 - a) Isaiah 40:3: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."
 - b) Matthew 3:3: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

- c) Mark 1:3: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
- d) Luke 3:4: "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
- e) John 1:23: "He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."
- f) Luke 1:17: "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."
4. Verse 11: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."
- a. Of all those born of women, no greater (prophet—Luke 7:28) has risen. Thus, he is placed on a par with Enoch, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, et al. None of these is greater than John. "The point of comparison is still the same—the superiority consisting in closer connection with Jesus, and greater knowledge of him. In these respects, the least in the kingdom is greater than John, because he is a member of the body of Christ, and this is more than to be the messenger to go before him and to inquire, 'Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?'" (McGarvey, p.98).
- b. "This remark implies that John was not in the kingdom; for, otherwise, the *least* in the kingdom could not be greater than he. The language can not be treated as a hyperbole, as when Paul declares himself, 'less than the least of all saints' (Eph. 3:8); for the contradiction in terms employed by Paul shows that he speaks hyperbolically; but there is no evidence of hyperbole in the passage before us. Neither can the expression 'kingdom of heaven' be construed as equivalent to *heaven*, for in the next verse it is said to suffer violence, and this language can not be construed as referring to heaven. Neither is the present sense, 'He that is least in the kingdom,' to be construed as implying that some were already in the kingdom; for, in that case, John himself would have been in it, and the comparison could not have been made. Moreover, it is not uncommon to use the present tense in making comparisons between things yet in the future. (See Matt. 22:30). The comparison in question is accounted for only by the fact that the kingdom of heaven, though preached, was not yet set up, and therefore John was not a citizen of it" (McGarvey, p.98).
- c. "The least in God's kingdom are greater than John because (1) their sins are forgiven, whereas those of John were merely rolled forward to the cross, and (2) they enjoy full fellowship with Christ in his kingdom" (Coffman, p.155).
5. Verse 12: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."
- a. "'The kingdom of heaven is being forced, and men of force are seizing it.' The kingdom of heaven can not be literally *forced*; therefore, this term is to be understood metaphorically. The kingdom is compared to a walled city, into which men are trying to force their way in order to get possession of it, and this is said to have been going on 'since the days of John the Baptist.'
- 1) "In order to see what actual conduct of men is thus depicted, we must glance back at the history from the time of John. When the multitude first rushed out to John at the Jordan, many of them thought that he was the expected Messiah, and they were eager to set up by force the expected kingdom.
- 2) "Disappointed in this, the same 'men of force' soon gathered around Jesus, and on the very day in which the news of John's death reached Galilee, there followed Jesus into the wilderness about five thousand men, who, near the close of the day, tried to 'take him by force and make him a king.' (14:12-21; comp. John 6:15.) It was this disposition to force their way into the misconceived kingdom, which made it necessary for Jesus to frequently avoid the multitudes, and to sometimes command persons whom he had healed, 'Tell it to no man.'
- 3) "The verse, then, refers to the eagerness of the people to enter by violence into the privileges and honors of the kingdom—a disposition which arose from the mistaken idea that it was to be a political or military kingdom" (McGarvey, p.98).
- b. Notice these verses:

- 1) Matthew 20:21: "And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."
 - 2) Luke 22:24-30: "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye *shall* not *be* so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is* not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - 3) John 6:15: "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."
 - 4) Acts 1:6: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"
 - c. When John initially announced the nearness of the kingdom, there was a "mad rush" by many "to take it by storm." This "describes the impatience with which men were entering into the kingdom of God with a misunderstanding of its nature" (Boles, p.245). As the Jews became more aware of the true nature of the kingdom and the Lord's teaching, the carnally minded ones forsook him (John 6:60-69).
6. Verse 13: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."
- a. Luke's account sheds additional light: "The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (16:16). The statement that "all the prophets and the law prophesied until John," implies that a change occurred at that time. Luke tells us what that change was: the kingdom of God then began to be preached, first by John, then by Jesus and his disciples.
 - 1) Matthew 3:2: "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 2) Matthew 4:17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 3) Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 4) Luke 10:9: "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."
 - b. The Old Testament made predictions about the coming kingdom, but now the kingdom was said to be at hand: definite promises about the soon-to-come kingdom. John was the first to have the privilege of announcing the nearness of the kingdom.
 - c. This passage is not saying that the Mosaic Age ended with the work of John, but that there was a shift in the information given regarding the kingdom: whereas the Old Testament scriptures merely predicted that a great kingdom was coming, John announced that this kingdom was "at hand!" John introduced a new dispensation which had its beginning when Christ died on the cross.
7. Verse 14: "And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come."
- a. "The Jews expected the prophet Elijah to reappear, according to the prediction of Malachi, and they believed his coming would immediately precede the Messiah's kingdom. (Mal. 4:5,6; comp. Matt. 17:10.) They had at first thought it probable that John was the literal Elijah (John 1:21), but John denied it. Jesus now informs them that John, though not literally Elijah, was the person so called by Malachi; and he does this to show that Malachi's prediction had been fulfilled, and that consequently, according to their own doctrine, the kingdom of God must be at hand, and what he had just said about the kingdom should be believed. John was called Elijah, because, as predicted by the angel who announced his birth, he was to go before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah.' (Luke 1:17.) He had the *spirit* of Elijah, in that he exercised similar self-denial in his mode of life, and maintained the same stern opposition against prevalent iniquity; and the *power* of Elijah, in that he swayed the people by his word, and gained a popular triumph analogous to that which Elijah gained at Mt. Carmel. (I Kgs. 18:20-40.)" (McGarvey, p.99).
 - b. The Jews thought that the same Elijah who was carried from the earth in a chariot of fire would literally come again to the earth to presage the coming kingdom. They took the Old Testament
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prophecy literally. Luke 1:17 and Matthew 11:14 show that John was the one predicted, and that he came in the likeness of Elijah.

- c. "If ye will receive it" implies that what Jesus was here saying was contrary to their expectations. If they chose to disbelieve what he said, the consequences of their rejections of the truth would be upon their own heads.
8. Verse 15: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
- a. "Jesus used the proverb contained in this verse when he desired to fix especial attention on something which his hearers were inclined to reject. The foregoing speech about John was distasteful to those who had rejected his preaching and baptism; yet it was of the utmost importance to the cause of Jesus that the reputation of John, thus far his chief human witness, should be properly sustained, and the more so, as he was now in prison, and men were likely to think less of him on account of his waning fortune" (McGarvey, p.99).
 - b. "Elijah did actually return and met with Christ on the mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:17); but in this passage Christ revealed that the true intention of the prophecy was not a literal return of Elijah, but his spiritual return in the person of John the Baptist....Elijah actually came, therefore, in both ways, (1) literally on the mount of Transfiguration, and (2) spiritually in the person of John....This did not prevent the Pharisees, however, from trying to subvert the Lord's apostles by the allegation of their own biased views on the subject (Matt. 17:10). The scribes had one thing going for them in this attempted subversion in that John himself had said that he was not 'that Elijah' (John 1:21). John's statement, however, in answer to their question, was given in the literal sense in which they asked it. He was not, in truth, that Elijah who had been translated. That the scribes' objections on such grounds had some weight with the apostles is evident in the pains Jesus took to answer it and remove it" (Coffman, p.157).

C. Matthew 11:16-19: The Childishness of Jesus' Opponents.

1. Verses 16-17: "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."
 - a. There are many excellent qualities pertaining to the nature of children. The Lord made these virtues of prime importance in entering the kingdom (Mt. 18:1-6; 19:14). But there are other attitudes and practices common to many children that are objectionable. Christ here refers to some of the unfavorable dispositions and applies them to his enemies.
 - b. "In the comparison here instituted, two groups of children are supposed to be at play. One group makes a sound in imitation of a pipe, for the others to dance by, thus imitating the professional dancers; but the others refuse to dance. Supposing, then, that they feel more like weeping, the first group begins to mourn in imitation of the hired mourners at a funeral...but they others will not lament" (McGarvey, pp.99f).
 - c. "The ancient markets were places in which not only men transacted their business, but children played with each other. The figure not only represents the attitudes of the people as childish, but it represents them as being like crowds of children who are dissatisfied with one another and the games which they are playing; it is like one set wanting this plan and another that, one is angry or silent, while the others try to soothe and persuade to join their sport. They were not pleased with John or with Jesus; they wanted their own way, or no way" (Boles, p.247).
2. Verse 18: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil."
 - a. Jesus showed that his enemies had rejected both John and Jesus, without any good reason. When John came not taking ordinary food and drink, they said he had a demon. When Jesus came eating and drinking normally, they accused him of being a gluttonous man and winebibber. "And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:31-35).

- b. "When Jesus, as if for the very purpose of pleasing them in that wherein John displeased them, came eating and drinking, they were still displeased, and said, Behold a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They acted like the ill-tempered children" (McGarvey, p.100).
 - c. John was a Nazarite (Luke 1:15), and had to live as he did. The Jews exaggerated the conduct of Jesus for he was neither a glutton nor a winebibber. In charging the Lord as a friend of publicans and sinners, "they over-reached themselves, because what they intended as a slander is in fact the glory of our Lord..." (Coffman, p.159). One can be friendly toward sinners without encouraging them in their evil lives, and indeed contact must be made before they can be taught.
3. Verse 19: "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."
- a. "Wisdom is justified by her children when they act as wisdom's children should, thereby showing that she had trained them wisely. Jesus here assumes that he and John were both children of wisdom, and that they acted wisely though they acted so differently. John's life of Nazarite abstinence was wisely adapted to the special mission on which he was sent, that of preaching repentance. But Jesus, coming on a mission addressed not to one but to all the aspects of human life, assumed no peculiar personal habits, but preserved that evenness of balance and harmony of attributes which wisdom attributes, which wisdom demanded in the Son of God. Wisdom was thus justified in both of her children..." (McGarvey, p.100).
 - b. Both John and Jesus did the will of God. Also, those who are wise would justify both John and Jesus. They both did what they were sent to do.
- D. Matthew 11:20-24: The Unbelieving Cities Upbraided.
1. Verse 20: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not."
 - a. "Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the fact that one's responsibility before God will be determined, to a large extent, in the light of his opportunities..." (ALC, 1959, p.124). Cf. Luke 12:47-48; Matthew 25:14-30.
 - b. We cannot evade responsibility on the basis of the belief we only have limited abilities (Matt. 13:12; 17:7). Some of the greatest preachers became such in spite of limited opportunity and ability. Such worthies as David Lipscomb and Benjamin Franklin were not given much hope of being successful preachers at the beginning of their work.
 - c. Jesus upbraided the cities. To upbraid means to accuse, reprove, to blame, to denounce the conduct of someone. The reason for this strong reproof was on account of their unwillingness to repent. All the information and confirmation necessary were given, but despite that, these people for the most part did not repent. The hardest command of God is repentance: the will power of the human heart is addressed. Few are willing to look honestly into their own heart in the light of the Bible. It is impossible to repent without doing so. If a heart remains stubborn, it cannot be made to repent.
 - d. The mighty works attributed to the Lord are those powerful, supernatural works he produced. Those who saw them could not logically deny that they were miraculous feats. A mighty work was a great confirming factor (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4).
 - e. Most of his mighty works are said to have been wrought in the cities indicated. "The NT records only a few of the mighty works done in Capernaum and only one at Bethsaida Julius, where the five thousand were fed. The wonder of why those cities did not repent remains and can be explained only upon the basis that the majority of mankind are not disposed to repentance, even if the Christ himself should be their instructor" (Coffman, p.159).
 - f. Only a few of the Lord's miracles are recorded (John 20:30-31; 21:25).
 2. Verses 21-22: " Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you."
 - a. "The exact locations of Chorzin and Bethsaida are not certainly known..." (ALC, 1959, p.125). "These small towns were on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum....Bethsaida was the town of Philip, Andrew, and Peter. (John 1:44). The name means a 'place of hunting or fishing'; the woe denounced against it was soon fulfilled..."(Boles, p.249). "Chorazin is not mentioned in the
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- Scriptures except in the denunciations of it. Jerome, who traveled in Palestine in the latter part of the second century, represents it as two miles from Capernaum..." (McGarvey, p.100).
- b. Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician cities, situated on the Mediterranean coast. They were noted for their idolatry, wealth, commerce, luxury and sin (cf. Isa. 23:7-18; Ezek. 26:14; 27:1ff; 28:1ff). These heathen cities were not privileged to see and hear what these Jewish cities had seen and heard. If they had had those privileges, Jesus said those people would have quickly repented in sackcloth and ashes (cf. Jonah 3:5). It is possible to become hardened against the gospel. If we hear it so often, and take it for granted, its power and appeal may be lost on us. That the wages of sin is death, that Jesus died for our sins, that we will all face him in Judgment to be judged according to our works, may become unimportant and unimpressive to us.
 - c. "Jesus here assumes that miracles, when rightly regarded, lead to repentance. Their power is not inherent, but depends on the proposition demonstrated by them. As Jesus preached repentance, his miracles demonstrated his divine authority to demand it, and the impenitence of his hearers proved them to be perverse and obdurate. High privilege abused render men more and more obdurate. The Galileans had abused their former privileges, and now they were not so susceptible to good influences as their Gentile neighbors, who had never known the will of God. The same difference is still seen between communities, and between individuals of the same community. When the proper time came for evangelizing the Gentiles, Tyre and Sidon both received the gospel, and verified the words of the text. (See Acts 21:3-6; 27:3)" (McGarvey, pp.100f).
 - d. The Lord said it would be more tolerable for those foreign cities (cf. Luke 12:47-48). Their penalty will be more easily borne, however their penalty will still be severe. To be beaten with few stripes still involves a beating. This apparently teaches the idea of degrees of punishment in hell.
3. Verses 23-24: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."
 - a. "Jesus, near the beginning of his public ministry, left his home in Nazareth and 'came and dwelt in Capernaum.' (Matt. 4:13.) This accounts for the figure of Capernaum's being exalted unto heaven, that is, the city's opportunities were greater because of the presence and miracles of Jesus. But the exaltation, if it is disregarded, must have a corresponding degradation, hence, 'thou shalt go down unto Hades.' This, of course, is also a figurative expression, used to indicate the plight of lost opportunities. The city has long since been in a state of complete ruins" (ALC, 1959, p.126).
 - b. McGarvey's comment agrees with the above statement: "The expressions, 'exalted to heaven,' and 'brought down to hades,' are both used figuratively; the former to denote the high privileges which Capernaum had enjoyed, and the latter, the ruin which awaited her. The prediction has long since been fulfilled, and the traveler now searches among the rank weeds on the lake shore to find, in the fragments of stone which lie there, uncertain vestiges of the once populous and well built city" (p.101). The exaltation to heaven here does not refer to their salvation, and being brought down to hades does not speak of eternal condemnation (although they all are lost if they did not repent); rather they would lose the privileges and blessings they had been given.
 - c. Again, the Lord brings up wicked Old Testament people, and states that if those people back then had had the opportunities and privileges the citizenry of Capernaum had been given, they would have repented, and their city (Sodom) would have continued in history. God is under no obligation to sinful man to give him any chance whatsoever to rectify his wicked conduct. Condemnation is the proper penalty, and physical death could be immediately dispensed and God would be just in so doing. But in his love for fallen man, God is often longsuffering (Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).
 - d. The Lord knew full well what the reaction of Sodom would have been if it had been given the opportunity to receive the truth. Why did not God send them a warning? He was not obligated to do so: they had more than earned their punishment. Further, the rest of mankind needed a demonstration of God's wrath against sin to encourage righteousness in the future. It is not our privilege to know all the deep things of God. "The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law" (Deut.
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29:29).

- e. "In summing up the truths of this section....(1) Every hearer of the gospel message is either better or worse for his opportunity [2 Cor. 2:14-16]. (2) The 'mighty works' (miracles) which Christ performed were calculated to lead men to repentance, since they demonstrated his authority to demand that men repent. (3) There is a difference among those who stand condemned at the judgment, since it shall be more tolerable for some than for others. (4) God takes into account one's opportunities when he comes to measure his guilt. Cf. Matthew 5:21,22; John 9:39-41; 15:22-24; Romans 2:12" (ALC, 1959, p.126).
- 1) Matthew 5:21-22: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."
 - 2) John 9:39-41: "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."
 - 3) John 15:22-24: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."
 - 4) Romans 2:12: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."
 - 5) 2 Corinthians 2:14-16: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?"

E. Matthew 11:25-27: The Lord's Prayer of Thanksgiving.

1. Verses 25-26: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."
 - a. Christ had just upbraided the many people who had rejected him, but here he speaks of those who had received him. He rejoiced that these had believed him. Those who accepted him he described as "babes", but those who had rejected him he called "the wise and prudent." He thanked God for having hidden the truth from the latter and for revealing it unto the former. This was his response to the way various ones responded to his message.
 - b. "The object of his prayer was a thanksgiving because God had hidden 'these things from the wise and understanding,' and had revealed 'them unto babes.' Frequently what God permits to be done, it is said that he does, hence having permitted these things to be hidden to the wise, he now reveals them unto children in knowledge. (Ex. 7:3,4; 2 Sam. 12:11,12; Isa. 12:1; Rom. 6:17.) Jesus does not so much thank God for concealing the gospel truths from the worldly-minded, as for revealing them to simple believers; these words describe the wisdom of the world which 'is foolishness with God'" (Boles, p.253).
 - c. The wise and prudent are those who trust in their own intelligence and knowledge. God had hidden the gospel truths from them only in the sense that the simplicity of the gospel was not appealing to them; it did not meet with their ideas and prejudices, hence was rejected by them. 1 Corinthians 1:21-24 is an excellent commentary on this: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Compare Acts 17:22-34; 1 Cor. 2:9-14; Col. 2:8.

- d. The "babes" are those simple, honest, sincere souls who are willing to examine the truth of the gospel with open minds, and thus can be molded by the precepts of the gospel. They are babes in comparison with the so-called wise and understanding ones. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:27-31; cf. Mark 12:37; 1 Cor. 1:26; 2:1-8).
 - e. "It has never been the divine plan that men through their wisdom should arrive at a knowledge of God's will; that is possible only by inspired revelation. 'The preaching' in 1 Corinthians 1:21 means *inspired preaching*" (ALC, 1959, p.126). Today, we preach inspired lessons only in the sense that we preach the inspired word.
 - f. This plan is the way God intended his system to be. This is necessary in order that men follow the Lord willingly and lovingly, on the terms God has set.
2. Verse 27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*."
 - a. "This statement must be understood in the light of the context. The 'wise and understanding' professed to want to know the things of God, but Jesus says that such is impossible apart from him" (ALC, 1959, p.126f). Cf. John 14:6; Hebrews 1:1-4; Matthew 13:10-17; Acts 4:12.
 - b. The Lord speaks here in anticipation of the glory and power he was to receive following his ascension.
 - 1) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 2) John 17:4-5: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."
 - 3) Acts 2:29-36: "Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."
 - c. "There is positively no other way to know God except through Christ (John 14:6). Man's only hope of eternal life lies in a knowledge of God, and this is possible only through Jesus Christ. In a practical sense, this means that the NT is the only source of accurate knowledge of God in matters pertaining to salvation; for, of all books on earth, there is not another source, save only the New Testament, of the teachings of Christ. The positive, unqualified uniqueness of the New Testament is more and more apparent with the passing of each generation" (Coffman, p.162).

F. Matthew 11:28-30: The Great Invitation.

1. Verses 28-30: "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light."
2. "In the preceding section, Christ appears in his relation to God. In that part of our lesson, he stands before us as the devout worshipper, the only one who has exclusive knowledge of God, and the authorized and

indispensable revealer of the eternal Father. In this section, he appears in his relation to humanity" (ALC, 1959, p.127). "Again we have in this place, and in verse 27 preceding, words from Christ which demand that we hail him as God Incarnate, or a fool. That *only* he knows the Father, that he will give all the weary rest, that only those may know God to whom Christ reveals him—these are all statements that cannot be reconciled with ordinary man. Christ was more than a man, and every line of the NT emphasizes this transcendent fact" (Coffman, p.163).

3. **Come unto me:** the manner in which one comes unto Christ is a point much in dispute among those who claim to be followers of the Lord. It is claimed that one comes to Christ by (1) faith only, (2) praying through, (3) a direct operation of God independent of the individual's actions, (4) was decided before time began, (5) was accomplished by our parents in our behalf when we were babies.
 - a. The gospel must be proclaimed before men may know of the need to come to Christ and how that coming is achieved. Mark 16:15; Romans 3:23; 10:13-16.
 - b. The one who comes must be a believer. Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24; Romans 10:17; Mark 16:15-16.
 - c. The believer must repent. Acts 2:36-38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31.
 - d. The penitent believer must confess his faith. Acts 8:36-37; Romans 10:10; John 12:42-43.
 - e. The penitent believer who has confessed Christ can then be buried with the Lord in baptism for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4.
 - f. One can come to Christ only on His terms; and his terms are the foregoing.
4. **All ye that labor and are heavy laden:** "Christ's teaching has a special appeal for the poor, the downtrodden, the despised, rejected, and suffering of earth; but it is incorrect to assume that only these are invited. Rather, all men are invited to fly unto Jesus for peace and redemption; and, in one sense or another, at one time or another, every soul ever born into this world is 'weary,' 'heavy laden,' and troubled by the common sorrows and calamities to which flesh is heir....The Great invitation excludes no one. The common burden of sin, sickness, death, doubt, disillusionment, and sorrow is an invariable heritage of every man coming into the world" (Coffman, p.163).
5. **And I will give you rest:**
 - a. "The labor and the rest here spoken of are those which affect the soul (verse 29); the labor and the heavy burden which sin imposes, the rest which follows the forgiveness of sins. Physical burdens are also made lighter by coming to Jesus, because the soul is made stronger to bear them" (McGarvey, p.102).
 - b. "The burdens of life fall into two classes: the inevitable and the self-imposed. Most of ours are self-imposed; being, as they are, brought on by carelessness, thoughtlessness, sins of the past and the present, force of evil habits which are allowed to go unchecked, by declining to exercise self-discipline, refusing to heed the wise advice of others..." (ALC, 1959, p.127).
6. **Take my yoke upon you and learn of me:** "The yoke is the emblem of subjection and service, whether oppressive and painful (Deut. 28:48; Jer. 28:14; Lam. 1:14; Gal. 5:1), or easy and pleasant, as 'the law of Christ,' whose service is perfect freedom (I John 5:3)" (Boles, p.254).
 - a. "In Pusan, this writer once saw a Korean Papa-San struggling up an inclined road with an incredibly large burden of hay. The progression of that haystack up that road appeared absolutely impossible, until investigation revealed the secret. The worker was using an 'A-frame,' padded, and fitted across his shoulders. The long sides of the 'A' came down almost to the ground, and the cross member formed the span across his shoulders....Now that 'A-frame' itself was a burden, but it was the burden that enabled him to carry an immensely greater burden which would have been impossible without the 'A-frame.' In exactly the same manner, Christ's...'yoke'...makes all other burdens bearable" (Coffman pp.163f).
 - b. The yoke is taken up and carried by learning of Christ, which means that we learn his gospel.
7. **I am meek and lowly in heart:** This fact "assures the invited that no grievous exactions will be made of them; and that his yoke is easy, and his burden light, is a good reason why the heavily laden should come. The tenderness and beauty of this invitation are the admiration of the world" (McGarvey, p.103).
8. McGarvey makes these further observations on this section of the text:
 - a. "By the speech of Jesus, which constitutes the body of this section, Matthew proves that the Jews were both inconsistent and inexcusable when they rejected John and Jesus. Inconsistent, because they

condemned each for not living as the other did; and inexcusable, because they disregarded evidence which would have convinced the wickedest cities in the world.

- b. "There is also a dignity and grandeur in the authoritative sentence which Jesus pronounces on the impenitent cities; in his lofty assertion of divine power and knowledge; and in his benevolent invitation for all who are weary and heavy laden to come to him, which are in perfect keeping with his claim to be the Son of God.
 - c. "These sentiments impress the soul as being truthful and pertinent utterances from a being full of divine power and goodness, whereas in any created being they would appear the extreme of arrogance and pretentiousness. They could not have originated in a false and deceitful spirit, such as the spirit of Jesus must have been if he was not the Son of God. It is internal evidence such as this that enables the Bible to furnish in itself the proof that it came from God" (p.103).
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MATTHEW 12

A. Matthew 12:1-8: The Disciples Eat Grain on the Sabbath.

1. Verses 1-2: "At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hundred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day."
 - a. Farms of ancient times were not fenced as in our day, and often paths led through the grain fields. The *corn* which the disciples picked was not what we know as corn, for that grain was not known in the old world until America was discovered. This grain was wheat or barley. Luke 6:1 says they rubbed the grain out in their hands. The heads of grain would be near the path and could easily be pulled off as the disciples passed by. The Mosaic Law gave them the right to thus eat as they traveled. "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deut. 23:25).
 - b. The Pharisees were closely watching the Lord, and quickly learned what the disciples had done. Their knowledge of this shows how minutely they spied on him. They accused the Lord with allowing his disciples to violate the law of the Sabbath, but this was a false charge since God did not prohibit the preparation and eating of food on the Sabbath day. Exodus 16:23 deals with gathering manna which was available only on six days during the week.
 - 1) Christ said the disciples were without guilt (verse 5) when they plucked and ate on the Sabbath day. The only things they had transgressed were the Rabbinical traditions. The Talmud says: "In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs heads of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherencies, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing" (ALC, 1959, p.130).
 - 2) "In the Pharisees' view, the disciples were guilty of *threshing wheat!* Such pedantry, nit-picking, and magnification of trifles would also have made them guilty of *irrigating land*, if they had chanced to knock off a few drops of dew while passing through the fields" (Coffman, p.165).
 - c. A Sabbath day's journey was about seven-eighths of a mile. "From the injunction in Exodus 16:29, that every man is to 'abide in his place,' and not 'go out of his place' on the Sabbath, the ancient Hebrew legislators deduced that an Israelite must not go 2000 yards...beyond the temporary or permanent place of his abode" (McClintock & Strong, Vol. IX, p.198). A Sabbath day's journey is given different values by various scholars.
 - d. "The Pharisees did not accuse them of taking what was another's, but only for doing manual labor on the Sabbath; they argued that the small labor of plucking and rubbing out of the grain with their hands was considered as harvesting and grinding, and hence violated the Sabbath....They were over-strict and scrupulous about the Sabbath; they had weighed it down with many traditions and laws which were made by their leaders....The laws of the Jewish Sabbath or seventh day of the week were clear enough. (Ex. 20:10; 35:2f; Num. 15:32-36.)" (Boles, pp.255f).
 - 1) Exodus 20:10: "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."
 - 2) Exodus 35:2-3: "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day."
 - 3) Numbers 15:32-36: "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses."
2. Verses 3-4: "But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not

- lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?"
- a. The Lord replied by showing that his accusers were being inconsistent when they justified David's unlawful act and condemned the disciples' action which he shows to have been lawful and right.
 - b. "Jesus expressly admits that what David did was unlawful; and some have supposed that he here intends to justify it on the ground of necessity, and then to argue that his disciples, though guilty of violating the law of the Sabbath, are justifiable on the same ground. There is no doubt that on this ground David excused himself for eating the showbread, and that the Pharisees did the same for him.
 - 1) "But it can not be that he who refused to turn stones into bread when tortured by a forty days' fast, and who said, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven,' would approve such a violation of law as David was guilty of. Neither can it be that he allowed his own disciples while under the law to break the Sabbath. If Christians may violate law when its observance would involve hardship or suffering, then there is an end of suffering for the name of Christ, and an end even of self-denial.
 - 2) "But it is clear that by the Pharisees David's act was thought excusable; otherwise they could have retorted on Jesus thus: Out of your own mouth we condemn you: you class your act with David's; but David sinned, and so do you.
 - 3) "Now the real argument of Jesus is this: David, when hungry, ate the show-bread, which it was confessedly unlawful for him to eat, yet you justify him: my disciples pluck grain and eat it on the Sabbath, an act which the law does not forbid, and yet you condemn them" (McGarvey, p.104).
 - c. The showbread was replaced each Sabbath day, and the old bread eaten only by the priests: "And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute" (Lev. 24:9).
3. Verse 5: "Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?"
- a. "Having silenced his opponents by the argument *ad hominem* (argument addressed to the man), he next proves by the law itself that some work may be done on the Sabbath day. The priests in the temple were required to offer sacrifice, trim the golden lamps, and burn incense on the Sabbath, and these acts required manual labor. In this case, the general law against labor on the Sabbath was modified by the specific law concerning the temple service. The term 'profane' is used, not because it was a real profanation, but because, being labor, it had the appearance of profanation. The example proves that the prohibition of labor on the Sabbath was not universal, and as it was not, it might not include what the disciples had just done" (McGarvey, p.104).
 - b. The priests did not violate the law of the Sabbath because they were obeying a higher command from God which required certain actions of them. "And on the Sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: *This is* the burnt offering of every Sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering" (Num. 28:9-10).
4. Verse 6: "But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple." "But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here" (ASV).
- a. "A greater *thing*, not *person*....The disciples who ate the grain are compared to the priests in the temple; and the temple with that which led the disciples to the act in question. This was the service which they were rendering to Jesus—a service which sometimes prevented the usual means of providing food. It was their obligation to serve him which was greater than the temple; that is greater than the obligation of the temple service on the priests. If then, the priests were justifiable, much more the disciples" (McGarvey, p.104).
 - b. "Just as the priests were required to perform some manual labor on the Sabbath in meeting the demands of the temple worship, just so it was in the case of Christ and his disciples. The service which they rendered to him sometimes prevented their obtaining food in the usual way, and they were therefore put to the necessity of gathering it as they did on the Sabbath day in question; and since Christ himself is greater than the temple, those serving him were justified in performing a needful service on the Sabbath....If the priests in the temple can profane the Sabbath and remain guiltless, how much more can the disciples of him who is greater than the temple do so in his service and by his

- authority?" (ALC, 1959, p.131).
- c. "Who but God himself could be greater than the temple God ordained? Christ again made a statement fixing a gulf between himself and all ordinary men. This is a dramatic reference to the analogy between Christ and the temple, mentioned under the preceding verse, and makes it crystal clear that Jesus' disciples were totally within the law, and were, like the temple priests, *guiltless!*" (Coffman, p.167).
 - d. The disciples were not violating the Sabbath law because they were following a higher principle—obeying Christ who was Deity in the flesh and greater than the temple.
5. Verse 7: "But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."
- a. See the notes under Matthew 9:3. "The argument is, that mercy toward these hungry disciples was more acceptable to God than sacrifices at the altar; and that, if the Pharisees had known the meaning of the passage, they 'would not have condemned the guiltless'" (McGarvey, pp.104f).
 - b. The scripture referred to is Hosea 6:6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." The Lord was not trying to justify the disciples on the basis of David's actions, but cited the Old Testament passage to show that the Pharisees were being unmerciful and were thus in violation of God's will. The real problem was with the attitude of the Pharisees, not with Jesus and his disciples.
 - c. "They were cruel in their rigidness, and while they thought they were keeping the Sabbath law, they were destroying themselves by crimes against mercy and truth. God has ever required mercy of men; the sacrifices and ceremonies, when understood, called for mercy and justice" (Boles, p.259). "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).
 - d. "The contrast between 'mercy' and 'sacrifice' is the same in principle as Paul's contrast between 'love' and 'religious deeds' in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3....Just so, sacrifice great and important as it is in God's sight, is not pleasing to him, if it is to be done at the expense of mercy. Cf. James 2:13. Satisfying hunger while following Jesus was more acceptable to God, in the case of these disciples, than the keeping of the letter of the law in a spirit of austerity" (ALC, 1959, p.131).
 - e. Matthew 23:23-24: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."
6. Verse 8: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day."
- a. "That he was Lord of the Sabbath—a fact which his previous works had demonstrated—placed his conduct in regard to the Sabbath above criticism, and made it really a guide as to the proper way to observe the Sabbath. This remark takes the question outside the range of argument, and brings it within the range of authority. It should be observed that, in this discussion, Jesus sought chiefly to expose the inconsistency of his assailants, and to assert his own divine authority. He reserved to another opportunity a more detailed argument to prove the innocence of acts of mercy on the Sabbath" (McGarvey, p.105).
 - b. "This proclamation of his own authority took the whole matter out of the context of their law, and their interpretations, and their opinions, and even out of the Law of Moses. Christ had the right to set aside all of those; and, in the final analysis, his disciples needed no permission except Christ's to do whatever he permitted. This place had been cited as proof that Christians should keep the Sabbath day, but the opposite is taught. The Sabbath should be ignored and rejected utterly, unless Christ commanded it (which he did not); for Paul said, 'He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross' (Col. 2:14)" (Coffman, p.168).
 - 1) Matthew 28:18: "...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
 - 2) Ephesians 1:22-23: "And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - 3) Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus...."
 - c. Mark's account gives a more detailed statement here: "And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark

2:27-28). The Sabbath was given for the good of man; it was not meant to hinder or harm him. God provided the Sabbath for man's welfare; it gave him a day of rest from his daily labors, and made it possible for him to spend some time in important religious activities. God created man first, and many generations later instituted the Sabbath, which was in effect only as long as the Mosaic Law was in force.

- d. "Principles are eternal and cannot be changed, any more than God can; and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But precepts are the different embodiments of principles and are called 'laws.' These *precepts*, or *laws*, may be changed any time the Maker of them desires to do so, for he is the Maker of them and has absolute authority over them' (Hall L. Calhoun)" (ALC, 1959, p.132).
- e. "The Sabbath of the Decalogue was abolished, and the Lord's day of the New Testament was established...the two days are not the same...the Lord's day is not to be observed as the Sabbath was kept. The Lord's day...belongs to him, and if people will devote the day to him by doing those things which he authorizes, they will be better....Public meetings, private prayers, Bible study, visiting the sick, encouraging the weak, exhorting the disorderly, teaching the lost, and similar duties are sufficient to keep Christians busy doing the entire Lord's day....Brother Calhoun continues: 'In modern life there are many even professing Christians who shamefully neglect the Lord's day. They take it and use it for their own purposes without ever thinking of the Lord's claim to it—visiting for *personal* gratification, excursions, sleeping, entertaining friends for their own pleasure. Reading papers and magazines and books just to amuse themselves, attending games and contests for the amusement they get out of it. Often these things are done because those who do them have never learned the Bible teaching about how to keep the Lord's day'" (ALC, 1959, p.132).

B. Matthew 12:9-13: Jesus Heals the Withered Hand on the Sabbath.

1. Verse 9: "And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue."
 - a. The Lord entered into their synagogue. He probably knew what would occur in the synagogue and reserved any further comment regarding the encounter of the previous eight verses.
 - b. Since the following episode deals with the same subject, it amounts to a continuation of the preceding. What the Lord did and said here routed the opposition.
2. Verse 10: "And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him."
 - a. Luke 6:6 shows that this took place "on another Sabbath" thus indicating that Matthew grouped some events together under the same subject. Also, Luke points out that it was the man's right hand that was withered, while Matthew and Mark simply say that one of his hands was withered.
 - b. "In the field the Pharisees had boldly declared that it was unlawful to pluck grain on the Sabbath; in the house, reminded of another aspect of the Sabbath question by seeing the man with a withered hand, but taught discretion by their previous defeat, they approached the subject with a question: 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days?' They desired to appear as if seeking information, but Matthew says they asked the question 'that they might accuse him;' that is, that they might find in his answer or his act some ground of accusation" (McGarvey, p.105).
 - c. Mark 3:3-5 says that he asked the man to stand forth, and then adds: "And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored..."
 - d. "Mark and Luke have mentioned some circumstances omitted by Matthew. They say that Jesus first addressed the man, and told him to stand forth in the midst. He then addressed the people. He asked them if it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. This was admitted by all their teachers, and it could not be denied. They were therefore silent. He then appealed to them, and drew an argument from their own conduct" (Barnes, p.127).
3. Verses 11-12: "And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days."
 - a. "The argument in this case is drawn from the practice of his accusers, and on their account it is an

argument *ad hominem*; but the practice was proper in itself, and therefore it is also an argument *ad rem*. Assuming, with the consent of all parties, that it was lawful to relieve the sufferings of 'one sheep' on the Sabbath, he argues, much more is it lawful to do the same for a man; and hence the general conclusion that 'it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days.' It is not an excusable violation of law, but it is *lawful*. From the two disputations taken together, the people learned that works of religion, like those of the priests in the temple, and works of humanity, like feeding the hungry and healing the sick, were lawful on the Sabbath" (McGarvey, p.105).

- b. Even the Pharisees would think it right to pull an ox from a ditch on the Sabbath. They could see the truth when a beast was involved, but in their blindness of heart they could not see it when it was applied to a man.
 - 1) Exodus 23:4-5: "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 22:4: "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift *them* up again."
 - c. It was obviously right to do good on the Sabbath; doing so was not a violation of the Sabbath law for there was a higher principle involved.
4. Verse 13: "Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other."
- a. Jesus was not only strong enough to repulse their error and establish the truth, but he demonstrated the truth in practice. Having argued successfully that it was right to do good on the Sabbath, he proceeded to heal the withered hand of the man in question. He did not touch the man but simply asked the man to stretch forth his hand; when he did so, the hand was fully restored.
 - b. This miracle required not physical activity on the part of Jesus; the man was only required to raise up his hand—a common action normally done perhaps scores of time each day, even on the Sabbath. In obeying the plan of salvation, baptism is the only part which requires not actions on the part of the subject: someone else lowers him into the water and then raises him up again. The four steps mandate an action for the alien to do:
 - 1) Faith (ASV):
 - a) John 6:29: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."
 - b) 1 John 3:23: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment."
 - 2) Repentance (ASV):
 - a) Luke 13:5: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
 - b) Acts 17:30: "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent."
 - 3) Confession (KJV):
 - a) Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
 - b) Romans 10:9-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
 - c. Notice the faith required on the part of the man. "The man *might* have said that he had no strength—that it was a thing which he could not do. Yet, being *commanded*, it was his duty to obey. He did so, and was healed" (Barnes, p.128).
 - d. "When a miracle follows a doctrine as it does in this case, it becomes a proof of what was before said. Jesus did not labor on the Sabbath; it was easy for him to speak the word and restore the withered hand. The Pharisees could not claim that a *word* is unlawful labor; Jesus showed himself to have divine power to sustain his claim to the Lord of the Sabbath" (Boles, p.261).

C. Matthew 12:14-21: The Pharisees Plot to Kill Jesus.

1. Verse 14: "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him."

- a. "When men are determined to maintain a position, without regard to truth or justice, defeat in argument always throws them into a passion. The Pharisees were true to depraved human nature in now holding a council to determine how they might destroy Jesus" (McGarvey, p.106).
 - b. Mark relates also that the Herodians were called in to assist in the plot. These were supporters of Herod who "maintain the rightfulness of the Roman dominion over Judea, and the propriety of introducing Greek and Roman customs among the Jews" (Boles, p.262). The Herodians would have a natural ambition to accuse anyone they opposed of sedition against Roman authority. Rome kept their party in power.
 - c. The Pharisees and Herodians were natural enemies, but here they set aside their party differences in opposing a common foe—Jesus. The Lord exposed all sin and error. Rather than repenting, the Pharisees and others rebelled against him. "We see here these Pharisees, sticklers for the law of Moses, unite with its bold political subverters in order to accomplish their evil designs against Jesus. Malice as well as misery makes 'strange bedfellows.' (Matt. 22:16.) These Herodians had greater interest at court and possibly had more influence in court than the Pharisees, so they are brought into the council" (Boles, p.262). Sectarians who are bitterly opposed to each other have often united in their opposition to us when we press the truth.
2. Verse 15: "But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all."
- a. "In contrast with the course of his enemies, Jesus, though victorious, retires from the conflict, and pursues, in other places, the even tenor of his way—still healing the sick and forbidding them to give unnecessary publicity to his name" (McGarvey, p.106). Mark tells us that he went to the Sea of Galilee (3:7).
 - b. "Jesus was no coward; he was not fleeing from danger. They could do nothing with him until his hour arrived....As his hour was not yet come, he did not wish to have his work interfered with or reduce himself to the necessity of working miracles to prevent it" (Boles, p.262).
 - c. The Lord knew it was not wise to spend too much of his time in opposing errorists and their error; there were many positive things that must be done. It is right to oppose errorists and their error today, but we are also commanded to preach the truth to the lost. Often we must uproot error and put the errorists to flight before we can plant the truth; but the truth must be planted. There is great need for negative teaching; there is a great need for positive teaching. There is a time to fight, and there is a time to flee (1 Tim. 6:12; 1 Cor. 6:18)—wisdom dictates the difference.
 - d. Among the great multitude of people which followed him were large numbers of diseased and afflicted. He healed them all. There were no failures.
3. Verse 16: "And charged them that they should not make him known."
- a. "To have given wide publicity to his deeds at that time would have prematurely precipitated his eventual show-down with the Pharisees; and Christ was not yet ready for that. He was the Great Architect of all those events; and, although he intended to die, he intended also to accomplish his death at a time and manner fully in harmony with his own eternal purpose" (Coffman, p.169).
 - b. The Lord timed his death to occur at the proper time. This required supernatural knowledge and wisdom and power. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18).
4. Verses 17-18: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles."
- a. What the Lord did was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. 42:1-4).
 - b. The prophecy quoted is descriptive of the Messiah's person and character. The reference shows that
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- Christ was doing exactly what had been predicted of him.
- c. The Father was well-pleased with him and loved him; he put his spirit upon him. The three persons of the Godhead are referred to in the verse.
 - d. He would show judgment to the Gentiles.
 - 1) "The area into which Christ then entered had a heavy Gentile population. 'Judgment' as used in this place, means 'God's truth.' The meekness and submissiveness of the Lord in that withdrawal were also in keeping with prophecy" (Coffman, p.170).
 - 2) "Christ in his own person preached to those who bordered upon the heathen nations (see Mark 3:6-8), and by his apostle showed his gospel, called here his judgment, to the Gentile world. The way and method of salvation, the judgment which is committed to the Son, is not only wrought out by him as our great High Priest, but showed and published by him as our great Prophet. The gospel, as it is a rule of practice and conversation, which has a direct tendency to the reforming and bettering of men's hearts and lives, shall be showed to the Gentiles. God's judgments had been the Jews' peculiar (Ps 147:19), but it was often foretold, by the Old Testament prophets, that they should be showed to the Gentiles, which therefore ought not to have been such a surprise as it was to the unbelieving Jews, much less a vexation" (Matthew Henry).
 - 3) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 4) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 5) Luke 24:46-47: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
 - 6) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
5. Verse 19: "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets."
- a. "Jesus was no street corner egotist, bawling for attention. Techniques of the rabble rouser, the sensationalist, and the soap-box orator were beneath his dignity....In keeping with these words concerning Christ, some of the antics of certain religionists appear to be totally improper. On Times Square in New York City, one often sees screaming advocates of this or that doctrine jostling the throngs pouring forth out of the theaters; and, although their zeal may be commendable, one cannot help remembering that the Christ drew the throngs to himself. He did not invade them, beating on a bucket, and yelling for the attention of the passers-by" (Coffman, p.170).
 - b. The Lord never intended to foment riots by his preaching. He went about teaching whenever a situation presented itself; he taught publicly, when he had opportunity; he taught privately on many occasions. But never did he seek to arouse the multitudes against the civil authorities (cf. Rom. 13:1-7). Nor did he degrade the gospel by reducing by side-show antics.
 - c. Our Lord's tactics are to be ours. He did not use street-corner antics; he did not call attention to himself by religious garb.
6. Verses 20-21: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."
- a. "A bruised reed, barely strong enough to stand erect, or bowed with its head toward the earth; and smoking flax (a lamp-wick), its flame extinguished and its fire almost gone, fitly represent the sick, and lame, and blind who were brought to Jesus to be healed. The statement that he would not *break* these bruised reeds, not *quench* this smoking flax, was an emphatic declaration, by contrast, that he would heal their bruises and fan their dying energies into a flame" (McGarvey, p.106).
 - b. "He would continue his mild and unostentatious career until he had finished his mission and 'judgment unto victory' 'in his name' shall have come to the Gentiles. The case exemplified his quiet, unobtrusive ways, his wonderful gentleness of bearing, and the strong and striking contrast in all these respects
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between 'the Prince of Peace' and the world's proud conquerors and monarchs; yet Jesus was to become the mightiest of earth's conquerors and kings, for under him justice and judgment should become victorious in all the earth, and in his name the nations should put their trust" (Boles, p.264).

- c. "It is also an expressive emblem of the soul broken and contrite on account of sin; weeping and mourning for transgression. He will not break it...not be severe..." (Barnes, p.129).

D. Matthew 12:22-30: Jesus is Accused of Casting Out Demons by Beelzebub.

1. Verse 22: "Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw."
 - a. Parallel accounts of this episode are given in Mark 3:2-27 and Luke 11:14-23. The afflicted man had a three-fold problem: he was possessed by a demon, was blind, and dumb (mute). The miraculous cure was also three-fold. It was often the case that demon-possession was accompanied with some physical disease or affliction.
 - b. Mark tells that certain scribes had come down from Jerusalem, no doubt to see for themselves the work of Jesus and to try to undermine his influence. These scribes were probably men of considerable influence in their party, and thus were thought to be sufficiently able to bring about the downfall of Jesus. Perhaps they had been successful in such efforts in the past. Jesus did not quail before them, but openly and boldly healed the afflicted one so that the demon was cast out, and "both spake and saw." This took place at Capernaum. [Cf. Boles].
2. Verse 23: "And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?"
 - a. The effect of this miraculous demonstration on the multitude was electric. They began to ask, "Is this the son of David?" They knew somewhat of the Old Testament picture of the promised Messiah, and concluded rightfully that he who wrought such things as did Jesus must be the son of David [the Messiah].
 - b. Notice the difference in the attitudes and conclusions of the multitude and the religious leaders. The common people were able to grasp the significance of the Lord's works and words; but the leaders knew their positions of power and influence would be destroyed if Jesus was successful.
 - c. Those who knew the Old Testament prophecies could see that Jesus was fulfilling those which pertained to the Messiah. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped" (Isa. 35:5).
 - d. Compare: "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples" (John 11:50-54).
3. Verse 24: "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."
 - a. The Lord's opponents could not deny the reality of the miracle. This they were often forced to admit (cf. Acts 4:13-17). They would have denied this miracle if they had been able to be convincing, but admitting the miracle, they tried to say its source was Satan. Beelzebub (or Beelzebub) was a corruption of Baalzebub (the god of the fly), a deity of the Ekronites (cf. 2 Kings 1:2). The term was used by the Jews as a reference to Satan. Some scholars say the meaning of the term is "the god of filth" or "the dung-hill god." It was the height of blasphemy to link the name of the Savior with Satan or some manmade god.
 - b. "In spite of those vile charges having been initiated in deceit and malice on the part of their progenitors, the widening river of sin carried those slanders far from their source; and thus it is found that Celsus repeated them, with embellishments of his own, more than a century later, in 170 A.D., as did also the later Jewish Talmudists" (Coffman, p.172).
 - c. "There are only two possible methods of evading the logical force of a miracle: one is to deny the reality of the miracle; and the other, to refer the effect to some other cause than the power of God. The Pharisees, being unable to deny the reality of the miracle, and knowing that demons are under the

- command of Satan, resorted to their only alternative by affirming that the power was satanic.
- 1) "They did not affirm this in regard to all of Christ's miracles; for it would have been absurd to represent Satan as a healer of diseases and a friend of man; but it was affirmed only of casting out demons....
 - 2) "It derived great plausibility from the consideration, that as there were at least two powers by which demons might be cast out, as both were invisible, it might appear impossible to decide whether it was the power of God or the power of Satan.
 - 3) "The Pharisees thought that they had advanced an explanation which, whether true or false, Jesus could not clearly disprove; and Jesus himself considered it worthy of the very thorough and exhaustive reply which follows" (McGarvey, p.107).
4. Verses 25-26: "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?"
- a. This is the first argument Jesus used in refuting the wild assertion of his enemies. The Pharisees' argument had Satan striving against himself, a totally impossible predicament. The greatest control that the devil ever could have over a man was when he had one of his demons possessing a man. "...To rob himself of so great a victory would be to fight against his own kingdom, and to involve it to that extent in the desolation common to all kingdoms divided against themselves. He argues, not that Satan could not do this, but that he would not, and that therefore the explanation which supposes him to do it is absurd" (McGarvey, p.108).
 - b. "Christ, in this argument, took full advantage of the fact that the Pharisees, in malice, had overreached themselves by making an argument that was fraudulent and illogical on the face of it" (Coffman, p.172).
 - c. Notice that Jesus knew their thoughts before their thoughts were expressed in words. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25). He could know man because he made man (Gen. 1:26-27; Col. 1:15-17; John 1:1-3). This act of reading their minds ought to have convinced them that this was no ordinary man, especially when combined with the miracle he had just wrought.
5. Verse 27: "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges."
- a. Some of the sons (disciples) of the Pharisees claimed to be able to cast out demons. The Pharisees accepted these exorcisms as genuine, and that the power to do so came from God. The Lord argues, therefore, that if these men cast out demons by the power of God (as the Pharisees believed), then how could they deny that God was the source of the power by which Jesus cast out demons!
 - b. "The truth of the charge that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan, depended on the assumption that he had access to no other power by which it could be done. But if this assumption were true, then it would affect the exorcists as well as himself. On the other hand, if they cast out demons by divine power, then the same might be true of him...[This argument] could be answered only by showing that the exorcists had some reason to claim favor with God, which Jesus had not; and this they dared not pretend" (McGarvey, p.108).
 - c. "Christ was not satisfied by showing them the intrinsic absurdity of their argument. He showed them that it might as well be applied to them as to him. Your disciples, taught by you and encouraged by you, pretend to cast out devils. If your argument be true that a man who casts out devils must be in league with the devil, then *your disciples* have made a covenant with him also. You must therefore either give up this argument, or admit that the working of miracles is proof of the assistance of God" (Barnes, p.131).
 - d. Some of the Jews claimed to have power to cast out demons (Acts 19:13-14; cf. Mark 9:36). Josephus thought that some did have that power, this power having been given to Solomon who passed down certain incantations by which this miraculous work was accomplished. He claimed that Solomon "left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return, and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian,
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and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: He put a ring that had a root of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon as he went out of the man to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man..." (Ant., Book 6, 2,5, p.173). This is the work of a charlatan using hocus-pocus to deceive the naive. Jesus is not to be understood as saying such men had the power to actually cast out demons.

- e. "Christ's argument was: You Pharisees accept so-called exorcisms by your disciples, in spite of all the 'mumbo-jumbo' and evident witchcraft connected with them, but you reject my miracles which are accomplished with only a word of authority. If the miracles of your disciples are acceptable, surely mine, the Christ's, should also be acceptable. Of course, Christ did not endorse the exorcisms of the Pharisees' disciples any more than he endorsed the Pharisees" (Coffman, p.175).
6. Verse 28: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."
 - a. The Lord had abundantly proved by the two foregoing arguments that it was not by satanic power that he cast out demons, and now "takes as granted the only alternative, that he did it by the Spirit of God; and from this established fact he draws the conclusion, 'then the kingdom of God is come to you'....If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, this proves the divine authority of all that I say..." (McGarvey, p.109).
 - b. Mark calls this source of divine power "the finger of God." Compare: "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This *is* the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said" (Ex. 8:19).
 7. Verse 29: "Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house."
 - a. In some real sense Satan was "bound." Though evil abounds, it could and has been much worse (cf. Gen. 6). Satan cannot tempt a saint more than is possible to bear, and could not enter swine without the Lord's permission, had to have special approval to harass Job, could sift Peter only with Lord's permission, had to sow his tares while men slept, his angels are bound in chains of darkness, and he snatches the gospel from men's hearts but only if they allow their hearts to become hardened (cf. Coffman, p.174). God does not share control of the universe with the devil. Whatever he may do, it is always under God's permissive will.
 - b. In the figure of the verse, Satan is the strong man; Christ is the invader; before he could spoil the strong man's goods he must first bind him. In casting out demons, Christ showed he had bound Satan. "Great must have been the surprise of the Pharisees when they heard the reply. An explanation by which they thought they had both refuted the argument drawn from his miracle, and turned the force of the miracle against him, has only furnished him with an occasion to show the absurdity of their explanation and their logical inconsistency in propounding it; to prove, more clearly than ever, that he acted by divine authority; and to demonstrate the fact that he was making successful warfare against the dominion of Satan" (McGarvey, p.109).
 - c. "A man could not break into the house of a strong man and take his property unless he had rendered the man himself helpless. If he had taken his goods, it would therefore be sufficient proof that he had bound the man. So I, says he, have taken this property—this possessed person—from the dominion of Satan. It is clear proof that I have subdued *Satan himself*..." (Barnes p.121). His mastery of Satan at this point was prospective in the main, for it was after his resurrection that the ultimate demolition of his evil power was assured (Heb. 2:14-15).
 - d. "They ought to have rejoiced in the signs of this conquest of good over evil; they should have prepared their hearts to receive a kingdom which had power to perform such works of mercy. But truly they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19)...If the kingdom of the Messiah has not come near them in the person of Jesus, how can this power be granted unto Jesus? Jesus now pushed them to extremity. They knew that no prophet had ever claimed such power; they knew that the prophets had foretold that this power would belong to the Messiah. (Isa. 49:25; 53:12.)

Therefore if Jesus is not the Messiah, this power to cast out demons, as he had done, would be impossible according to their own prophets; but if it was possible and the Messiah should have such power, it was manifested in him and they should accept him as the Messiah. He had entered the strong man's house and had cast out a demon, thus manifesting his power to bind the strong man. The argument was unanswerable; but their perverse hearts were invincible" (Boles, p.268).

- e. When the Lord entered the hadean realm at his death, Satan thought he had won the ultimate triumph. But on the third morning Christ burst the bonds of Hades and came forth; it was not possible that he should be held continually by it. His resurrection was the crowning blow to Satan, a defeat which cost the devil the war.
 - 1) Acts 2:23-24: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."
 - 2) Romans 1:4: "And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."
 - 3) Hebrews 2:14-15: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."
 - f. This verse contains the final argument in the series the Lord used. "Jesus had entered [the strong man's] house and robbed him of his goods; and this proves that, instead of being in league with Satan, he had overpowered him" (McGarvey, p.109).
8. Verse 30: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."
- a. There can be but one master over our lives: God or Satan (cf. Matt. 6:24). The individual must make the choice. "This remark was intended, I think, for bystanders. It was important for them to see that there was no middle ground—that those who were not with him and helping him to gather, were with the Pharisees, and helping them to scatter abroad. In the figure of gathering and scattering, the people are compared to a flock of sheep, which Jesus was endeavoring to gather into the fold, while his enemies were trying to scatter them abroad" (McGarvey, p.109).
 - b. "In the great conflict between life and darkness, good and evil, the kingdom of God and of Satan, there is no middle ground; there is no neutral position; there is no third power to which these miracles can be attributed. These Pharisees were obligated either to join with Christ or be against him; they had to become allies with God or coworkers with Satan; there was no other alternative....The teachings of Jesus with his unanswerable arguments forced the conclusion upon these Pharisees, and they must now take sides with Jesus or join issue with him; the choice is theirs; sufficient instruction, evidence, and light have been given them for the choice; hence the responsibility of the choice rests upon them" (Boles, pp.268f).
 - c. "Mark 9:40 reverses these words and says 'for he that is not against us is for us'; but his meaning is entirely different. Jesus here speaks of the war on Satan's kingdom, but in Mark he speaks of the charity which his disciples were to show to such as use his name while they were too timid to follow him. The maxim taught by Jesus here is true in every age; people must be for Christ or against him; they are scattering, opposing him, or they are gathering with him" (Boles, pp.268f). The Lord probably made both of these statements; Matthew cited one and Mark the other.

E. Matthew 12:31-32: Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit.

1. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come" (Matt. 12:31-32).
2. This passage contains the Lord's conclusion to the points he has just made. He states in effect that there is a limit to divine mercy. There are some things which are unforgivable.
 - a. Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing

- they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."
- b. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
 - c. 1 John 5:16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
3. The meaning of this passage has been debated for generations, and has been subjected to many differing interpretations. What does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? To blaspheme means to offer injurious speech against someone or some thing. "Rail at or revile" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.131). It is used of those who railed at Christ (Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 22:65); of those who speak contemptuously of God or of sacred things (Matt. 9:3; Mark 3:26; Rom. 2:24). To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is thus to speak evil against him, to offer contemptuous words toward him.
 - a. Why is it said to be more severe to blaspheme the Holy Spirit than against the Father or the Son? It is not because he is more important, more powerful, or more holy than they are. They are equal in all things except authority (John 10:30).
 - 1) Each member of the Godhead is referred to in the Scriptures as "God" (Acts 5:3-4; Heb. 1:8).
 - 2) In authority, the Father reigns supreme for he who sends is greater than he who is sent (cf. Jn. 13:16). The Father sent Christ (John 3:17-18); Christ sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26).
 - b. Christ plainly stated that the Father is greater than he (John 14:28). Since they are equal in all things (except authority), it is not more sinful to *speake* against the Spirit than against the Father or the Son. To *blaspheme* the Spirit must involve something else.
 4. Salvation was not limited to only a few, but was intended for all. Christ shed his blood for all men:
 - a. Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
 - b. 2 Corinthians 5:15: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."
 - c. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
 - d. 1 John 2:2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."
 - e. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
 - f. Acts 2:38: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - g. 1 Timothy 2:4-5: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
 5. Everyone has the privilege of being saved (cf. Acts 2:23, 36-47):
 - a. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."
 - b. Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - c. Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
 - d. Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
 - e. 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is
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- longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
- f. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”
 - g. Acts 26:9-11: “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”
 - h. 1 Timothy 1:13-15: “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”
6. But God's patience has a limit:
- a. 2 Peter 3:8-10: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”
 - b. Genesis 6:3: “And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”
 - c. Jeremiah 7:16: “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.”
 - d. Hosea 4:17: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”
 - e. Romans 1:28: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”
7. Man can grow so hard that God's truth, and thus his grace, will have no proper effect on him:
- a. Romans 5:21: “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - b. Acts 10:34-35: “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”
 - c. Psalm 119:172: “My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.”
 - d. 1 John 3:7: “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”
 - e. John 8:32: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - f. John 17:17: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
 - g. Ephesians 4:18-19: “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”
 - h. 1 Timothy 4:2: “Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”
8. We can determine what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is **not** and thereby, through a process of elimination, make it easier to identify what that sin is.
- a. It is not the sin unto death (1 John 5:16). That sin applies only to "brothers" (saints), members of the Lord's church; it does not apply to alien sinners: "If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16).
 - 1) 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Any sin which an erring Christian confesses will be forgiven (of course repentance is implied). A sin which an erring Christian will not confess (there being no repentance
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- in his heart), will not be forgiven.
- 2) In effect, the sin unto death and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit are the same (those guilty will be lost), but they are not identical since one apparently applies to an alien sinner and the one in 1 John 5:16 applies to an erring saint.
 - b. It is not murder, immorality, idolatry, and other such "common" sins, for Paul and many others in the New Testament were saved from such sins (1 Cor. 1:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:13-15; Acts 26:9-11). However, those who die while guilty of these sins will be lost (Gal. 5:19-21).
 - c. It is not negligence to obey, for as long as an opportunity exists, one can obey the gospel and be saved. Of course, if he dies in this state of disobedience, he will be lost (Matt. 7:21-27; Heb. 5:8-9).
 - d. It is not suicide, for one can be guilty of blaspheming the Spirit and still be alive. The guilt of this sin does not produce physical death.
 - e. It is not merely to speak certain words that will condemn without hope of pardon. If so, then one could innocently speak those words and eternally condemn his soul. Yet the gospel is extended to all, even to those Pharisees who were guilty of this sin.
 - f. It is not merely asserting that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub. Some allege that this was the sin, and that no one today can commit it since Christ is not casting out demons now. If this assertion is so, why did the Lord include references to this in the New Testament? Why confuse people with unnecessary information?
9. To blaspheme means to speak impiously, irreverently and reproachfully against; the Pharisees did this. "But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matt. 12:24). They were blaspheming Christ as much as they were the Spirit (cf. 12:28).
- a. They were primarily rejecting what Christ taught: his miracles proved his message, and they rejected this miracle as coming from God. When one rejects what Christ taught, he is rejecting Christ and the Father who sent him (Luke 10:16). The message Christ taught originated with God, and was conveyed without error to men beginning at Pentecost by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:9-14; 14:37). The Holy Spirit caused that same message to be recorded by inspiration as the New Testament.
 - 1) When one denies, rejects, treats with contempt, that Spirit-given message, he is blaspheming the Holy Spirit who gave that message.
 - 2) There will be no hope for such a one who remains in that condition of heart, for he has shunned the final offer of salvation available to mankind (Jude 3; Heb. 10:23-31; Acts 4:11-12). This is the only offer being extended today, and after it there will be no other.
 - b. Illustration: A man fell into a river which was rushing toward a great waterfall. Someone threw him a rope in order for him to grasp and be drawn to safety; he refused the offer. Farther downstream, another person cast him another rope which he likewise ignored. As he drew nearer the cataract, a third man threw him another rope, the last one to be offered. If he refuses this rope, there is no hope of escape.
 - 1) God, through the centuries pleaded with mankind by the prophets, a plea that was mostly ignored.
 - 2) During his personal ministry, Christ pleaded with the Jews; his pleas were shunned by the majority.
 - 3) Finally, the Holy Spirit revealed (by the edict and power of God) the gospel (John 16:12-14; 8:32; Acts 2:1ff; 1 Cor. 2:9-14; Jude 3). Those who accept the offer will be saved; those who reject it have forfeited their only hope. But can one, who at one time utterly shunned the message of the Spirit, later change his mind and receive salvation? Yes, if he is willing and able to meet the gospel conditions.
 - c. The sin of blaspheming the Spirit is not a single act but a sin of disposition. It is developed gradually. One grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) by not living right. One resists the Spirit (Acts 7:51) when he resists the word and refuses to believe it. One quenches the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19; cf. Heb. 10:29) when he disputes, denies, opposes, rejects, hates, perverts, and refuses to obey the word of God. The result is a hard heart on which the Spirit-given word has no effect since the individual has rejected that word.
 - 1) John 12:39-40: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with
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- their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."
- 2) Hebrews 6:4-6: "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame."
 - 3) Hebrews 10:26-29: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"
- d. One can get himself into such a state of hardheartedness that he will not and cannot accept the gospel; but if he can muster a change in his attitude of heart, he could receive salvation. Many get themselves into such a deep state of rebellion and hardness that they cannot or will not obey the gospel. This is the type of person the Lord describes as a blasphemer of the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Examples of blaspheming the Holy spirit are given in the New Testament:
 - 1) Acts 13:44-46: "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."
 - 2) Acts 28:24-28: "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it."
 - 3) Compare these verses with Proverbs 1:24-28: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."
 - f. We can know if we have committed this sin. If we hate the truth, reject it and refuse to believe and obey it, we are guilty. If we are concerned about whether we have committed this sin, that is a sure sign we have not!
10. "The statement that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, is not a declaration of universal pardon...The Hebrew language, having no potential mood, used the future indicative as a substitute for it; and Jews, in writing Greek, sometimes did the same through habit. but it is true, literally, that all manner of sin and blasphemy with the exception stated in the text, will be forgiven to men; that is, among the innumerable sins forgiven through Christ, some to one man and some to another, every conceivable sin will be forgiven except the one in question....Why is it more certainly fatal to speak against the Holy Spirit than against the Son of man, may be in part beyond our power of comprehension; but this much we know, that one who speaks against the latter may subsequently be convinced by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and become a believer. But if he reject the evidence given by the Holy Spirit and ascribe it to Satan, he rejects the only evidence on which faith can be based; and without faith there is no forgiveness. If it be answered that a man might do this at one period of his life, and subsequently be convinced and repent, we reply that this is precisely what the Saviour, in effect, says he can not do; and we therefore suppose that one who is so desperately wicked as to be guilty of this sin, is already beyond

the reach of redemption. Such was the condition of some of the Pharisees. (23:33; John 8:21.)

- a. "The term here rendered *world* (*aion*) is by most scholars rendered *age*. Whether 'this age' and 'the age to come' mean the Jewish age which then was, and the Christian age which was to come; or the age of time, and the coming age of eternity, is not clear. In either case, however, the sin remains forever unforgiven; the Christian age extends to the day of judgment, and beyond that there is no forgiveness.
- b. "To be guilty of sin that never shall be forgiven, whether it be the sin that is unpardonable, or merely sin that is not pardoned, is to be eternally miserable. This alone is sufficient proof of everlasting punishment" (McGarvey, pp.110f).

11. "Many did speak against Christ, but when the Spirit of God came on Pentecost, they obeyed the gospel message and were saved. Those who spoke against the Spirit, rejecting the gospel which he proclaimed through the apostles, were not saved. No other means of redemption was given. Those who rejected the Spirit received no forgiveness then, or ever. One should avoid reading into this passage any hope that some sins will be forgiven in the world to come which remain unforgiven now" (Coffman, pp.176f).

F. Matthew 12:33-37: The Power of Words.

1. Verse 33: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit."
 - a. "By this brief allegory, the application of which is indicated below, Jesus lays bare the cause of the evil speech of the Pharisees, and prepares the way for a general statement in reference to all evil speech. As a tree is known by its fruit, a man is known by his speech" (McGarvey, p.110).
 - b. The principle stated in the verse justifies Jesus as a good man, and condemns the Pharisees as corrupt men. A tree, any tree, is judged by the fruit it produces (cf. Matt. 7:15-20).
 - c. John 9:25,30,33: "He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see....The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes....If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."
2. Verse 34: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."
 - a. This statement shows that the Lord had reference to the fruit of the Pharisees in the preceding verse. They are styled a "generation [or offspring] of vipers." A viper is a poisonous snake whose bite can result in an agonizing death. They apparently were plentiful in Canaan. John used this expression to describe the Pharisees and Saducees (Matt. 3:7). They had rejected the counsel of God when they refused to be baptized by John (Luke 7:29-30).
 - b. "As teachable believers and pious persons are likened to doves and lambs, which are innocent and harmless animals, so the malicious and unbelieving are compared to goats, dogs, and vipers, according as they are sensual, foul, or malicious. These Pharisees had shown the hatred and venom of serpents and deserved the epithet....Their hearts were not right and the principles of their lives were wrong. Therefore the exhibitions of character were only such as could have been suspected" (Boles, pp.272f).
 - c. The evil works and words of these wicked men proceeded from their corrupted hearts. The true nature of a man is determined by the kind of heart he possesses, just as the true nature of a tree is observed by the kind of fruit it produces. An evil tree cannot produce good fruit; and the product of a good tree is good fruit. An evil man will do some good, but his common or predominate works and words are evil. A good person may occasionally do an evil deed or speak an evil word, but the common and predominate works and words are good.
 - d. What is in the heart manifests itself in what a man does and says. The real state of the heart cannot for long be concealed. The evil hearts of these Pharisees manifested themselves in the wild and untrue charges they made against the Lord and the Spirit. Their wicked disposition led them to reject Jesus and his message.
 - e. "The state of the heart, then, determines the speech and action of the man; and these, on the other hand, determine the state of the heart....When the heart is right, all the conduct is just such as it ought to be. Whenever there is an evil word spoken, an evil act performed, or a duty neglected, it is because the heart is not right at that point. Let us not deceive our own hearts (Jas. 1:26), nor be deceived as to their state. (Ps. 19:12)" (McGarvey, p.111).

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- f. Therefore the warning: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).
3. Verse 35: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."
- a. This is an elaboration of what the Lord had just taught. In the context, their principal sin was in speaking ugly and untrue words against Christ and his work. We can see just how important and powerful words can be; in this case, sufficient to bring eternal condemnation to the soul.
- b. "Evil and unbelieving words are not merely evil within themselves, but are like the escaping bubble to the surface of the lake, betraying the rotten carcass beneath. Evil words proceed out of evil hearts" (Coffman, p.178).
4. Verse 36: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."
- a. "'Idle words' does not mean here what is usually termed now as 'idle words'; it does not mean careless, innocent talk on subjects secular and social, and opposed to serious conversation. Rather it signifies wicked, malicious, injurious, slandering, ominous words....Our social, insignificant words among friends will not be sufficient to condemn us; only such words as manifest the real principle of our actions, whether we love God truly, or love the world and self, will serve to justify or condemn us.
- 1) "It is dangerous for Christians to be always engaged in foolish, unmeaning conversation, and more dangerous still, a profane and unseemly jesting, because such conduct manifests a state of heart which justifies condemnation. This does not mean that a Christians cannot engage in innocent jesting and levity. 'A cheerful heart is a good medicine; but a broken spirit drieth up the bones.' (Prov. 17:22.) A genial and pleasant gracefulness of conversation in social relations helps to adorn a Christian. A mother's prattling to her babe may be as innocent and as clearly prove a loving heart as her tears over its grave.
- 2) "So the term 'idle word' may mean not merely unimportant or insignificant, but implies that there is some positive evil in the word....Idle words and jesting mean those which are vulgar and coarse and corrupt the hearer. Idle words are evil words that excite the lusts and corrupt man.
- 3) "Idle words are compared with speaking against the Son of man and the Holy Spirit. In Eph. 5:4 jesting is classed with fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness, and in contrast with the giving of thanks. The corrupt communication is that which excites the lusts, corrupts and depraves the heart, and in contrast with that which ministers grace to the hearer" (Boles, pp.2273f).
- b. "This is a strong admonition to guard what is spoken. 'Idle' words are not necessarily those casual and insignificant sayings indulged in the course of social fellowship, nor such words as may be calculated to bring a smile to care-worn faces, but rather, they are the words that betray a bias of the soul against God and expose the evil heart of the sinner" (Coffman, p.178).
- c. The Lord brings up the subject of idle words in connection with the ungodly charge the Pharisees had hurled against Christ and the Holy Spirit, namely that Christ cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, not by the power of God. They were grasping about for some reply to the Lord and this idle (unfruitful, barren, vain) accusation was the natural product of their wicked hearts. Many "idle" charges have been thrown against faithful people of God in our own country in the restoration movement by men who are opposed to the plain presentation of the gospel. They know that if we are successful they stand to lose some of their following and prestige, notwithstanding the fact that their opposition to God's truth will result in the loss of their souls! Jesus said plainly that those who speak such idle words will have to face the same in the Judgment, and this they will do to their eternal hurt.
5. Verse 37: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
- a. This is a further elaboration on the point made in the preceding verse. Our eternal destiny is largely determined by the words we speak. Therefore, the exercise of great caution is demanded.
- b. "Speech is one of the greatest endowments of humanity; and the greater the gift, the greater the sin of perverting it to unworthy purposes. It would be impossible to sum up all the sins of mankind in the area of sinful speech....One's words can justify when they confess Christ, or teach the truth, or serve to make peace, bestow a blessing, or give encouragement; but on the other hand, when words condemn, cast a reflection, subvert the truth, utter profanity, vulgarity, hatred, or malice, or any one
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of a million other evil things—then such words bring the condemnation of those who speak them" (Coffman, pp.178f).

- c. James has some very clear and powerful statements on the subject of words: "For in many things we [he includes himself and all other saints] offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect [full-grown spiritually] man, and able also to bridle the whole body....But the tongue can no man tame [make it fully harmless]; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (Jas. 3:2,6).

G. Matthew 12:38-45: The Sign of Jonah.

1. Verse 38: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee."
 - a. According to Luke 11:16, they made this request for the purpose of tempting him. They doubted his ability to produce a miraculous sign, thus they were putting him to the test. They had no right to make such a demand of Christ in view of the fact that he had cast out a demon, a miracle which they could not and did not deny, but asserted he had used the devil's power in that miracle. The Lord had soundly refuted that base argument.
 - b. They had accused him of being in league with Satan, they had already seen more than enough signs to convince them of the Lord's identity and message if they could be convinced, and they now demanded a sign of their own choosing. Jesus pointed out in the next few verses that they did not deserve another sign and would be given none. They were wanting some spectacular miracle "without moral value but which would appeal sensationally to a man's curiosity. Christ always rejected that type of sign, as, for example, when he refused to jump from the pinnacle of the temple" (Mt. 4:6)" (Coffman, p.179).
 - c. False teachers misapply this passage when they use it as an excuse for not performing a genuine miracle. They claim the ability to perform miracles, but when we request them to do so ("as goes the proposition, so must be the demonstration"), they run to this passage. But the Lord had already performed at least one miracle in the presence of the Pharisees; it was rejected although they admitted it was genuine; thus another would have been useless. But these modern false teachers have not, and can not, perform even one real miracle!
 - d. "Christ always refused to perform wonders for his enemies like Herod or the Pharisees. He did work miracles for the benefit of John's disciples (Luke 7:18-22), and raised Lazarus that the people might believe (John 11:42)" (Coffman, p.179).
2. Verses 39-40: "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
 - a. "This remark shows that the very singular incident of being swallowed by a great fish and thrown up on dry land after three days, occurred to the prophet as a type of Christ. This was a sign from heaven because it was wrought by God without human instrumentality" (McGarvey, p.111).
 - b. "An evil and adulterous generation: he is not accusing them of physical immorality but spiritual unfaithfulness to God. "The relation of the Jews to God was often represented as a marriage contract—God as the husband, and the Jewish people as the wife. Hence, their apostasy and idolatry are often represented as adultery" (Barnes, p.134). The church is the Lord's bride (cf. Ephesians 5).
 - 1) Isaiah 57:3: "But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore."
 - 2) Ezekiel 16:15: "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was."
 - 3) Hosea 3:1: "Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine."
 - c. "As Jesus was buried late Friday afternoon, and arose before sunrise Sunday morning, he was in the tomb only an hour or two on Friday, all of Saturday, and between eleven and twelve hours of Sunday, counting the day, according to Jewish custom, as beginning at sunset.... We inquire how the statement of the text can be true, and, in order to an intelligent answer, we note the following facts and

considerations.

- 1) "The time between his death and his resurrection is expressed in three different forms. Most frequently it is said that he would rise again *on the third day* (16:21; 17:23.) Once it is said that he would rise *after three days* (Mark 8:31); and once, in our text, that he would be in the heart of the earth *three days and three nights*.
 - 2) "The Jews, in all periods of Bible history, used the expressions *after three days* and *on the third day*, as equivalents. Thus Moses says that Joseph put his brethren into prison *three days*; yet in the next sentence he represents him as releasing them 'on the third day.' (Gen. 42:17,18.) When the people petitioned Rehoboam to lighten their burden, he said, 'Depart ye for three days, then come again to me.' They departed, and 'came again the *third day*, as the king had appointed.' (1 Ki. 12:5,12.) When Esther was about to venture into the king's presence, she instructed the Jews in Shushan to fast *three days, night and day* yet she went in *on the third day*. (Es. 4:16; 5:1.) Still more in point, when the Pharisees petitioned Pilate for a guard, they said to him, 'This deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure *until the third day*.' (27:63,64.) Now with us, if he were going to rise after three days, it would be necessary to guard the sepulchre until within the *fourth day*....It is the peculiar and inaccurate usage of the Jews which makes the difference; and that the New Testament writers continued this established usage is proved by the fact, that when Matthew and Mark report the same words of Jesus, one of them uses the expression 'on the third day,' and the other, 'after three days.' (16:21; Mark 8:31.)
 - 3) "...Those enemies themselves, as we have seen, understood and employed the usage as he did, and it appears that all parties among the Jews understood these expressions as equivalents. There is no contradiction, then, between this and other passages on the subject, but the appearance of contradiction arises entirely from a peculiar Jewish usage.
 - 4) "It may be well to remark at this point, that the above mentioned facts refute the hypothesis of some, that Jesus was buried on the afternoon of Thursday. If he had been buried on Thursday, and had risen Sunday morning, he would have been in the grave three nights, but he would have also been there parts of *four days*, and the Jewish expression would have been, he will arise the *fourth day*, or, *after four days*. As proof of this, if we count the time from the appearance of the angel to Cornelius (Acts 10) till the arrival of Peter at the house of Cornelius, we find that it is precisely three days, according to our mode of counting; but it includes three nights and parts of four days, and hence Cornelius says to Peter, 'Four days ago I was fasting until this hour.' etc. (Acts 10:30.)" (McGarvey, pp.111-113). See Coffman for the opposing view (pp.180ff).
- d. "Whale" is from a Greek word meaning "huge fish or sea-monster" (Vine). Jonah 1:17 states that God had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. God also prepared a gourd (4:6), a worm (4:7), and an east wind (4:8). None of these was a new creation; each had predecessors from the beginning (Gen. 1).
 - e. The very fact that Jesus alluded to the story of Jonah as a historical fact places the divine stamp of authenticity on the whole story. As Jonah was three days and nights in the great fish, so Christ's body would be in the earth for three days and nights. This was the only "sign" the Lord intended to give these obstinate unbelievers. Later, after Christ's resurrection, they could look back to his statement here and see in it definite and undeniable proof of his identity.
3. Verse 41: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here."
 - a. The fact that the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah was a condemnation of the impenitent and unbelieving Jews who had the great honor of being in the presence of the Son of God! The Ninevites repented even though they had a lesser personage issuing a message which was inferior to the message of the Master Teacher who was now among them. Jonah's message had a greater effect on the Ninevites than the message of Christ had on these Jews; this was so because of the differences in the hearts of the audiences.
 - b. In debate, false teachers often appealed to this statement to counter the truth as stated in Acts 2:38 regarding the purpose of baptism. The Bible teaches that baptism is for (unto; into; in order to: Greek *eis*) the remission of sins. Baptist doctrine denies this truth, and asserts that "for" (*eis*) means "because

- of." Thus, they argue that "for the remission of sins" in Acts 2:38 means "because you have received the remission of sins." It forces an impossible interpretation on the verse by having Peter command them to repent because they had already been forgiven! But to try to justify their contention, they appeal to Matthew 12:41 where *eis* is translated "at." They argue here that the Ninevites repented "because of" the preaching of Jonah, thus (they assert) *eis* in Acts 2:38 means "because of."
- c. "The preposition here rendered 'at' is 'eis', which usually means 'into.' Some writers have contended that it here means 'because of,' or 'in consequence of,' a meaning quite foreign to the word. It is true, as a matter of fact, that the Ninevites repented in consequence of the preaching of Jonah; but if it had been the purpose of the writer to express this thought, he would have used the preposition 'dia' instead of 'eis.'
- 1) "The thought of the passage is quite distinct from this. They repented 'into' the preaching of Jonah. This is not idiomatic English, but it conveys the exact thought which a Greek would derive from the original. The term 'preaching' is put for the course of life required by the preaching, and it is asserted that they repented 'into' this. Their repentance, in other words, brought them into the course of life which the preaching required.
 - 2) "If Jesus had merely said that they repented 'in consequence of Jonah's preaching, he would have stopped short with the internal change which they underwent; but he chooses to go further, and indicate the terminus of their repentance, that it brought them into the condition which the preaching demanded. The rendering, 'at the preaching,' does not bring out the idea in full, but it would be difficult to translate the passage any more accurately without adopting an awkward circumlocution' (McGarvey, p.113).
4. Verse 42: "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here."
- a. The queen of the south (the queen of Sheba) traveled many miles to see the wisdom and riches of Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-13). That she made such a journey to see Solomon indites the Jews of Jesus' day since they would not heed the teachings of Jesus, who was vastly superior to Solomon.
 - b. "...Solomon offered at the dedication of the temple 'twenty-two thousand oxen, and a hundred twenty thousand sheep' (2 Chron. 7:5). Christ offered his own blood within the holiest place of all for the sins of all men (Heb. 9:14)" (Coffman, p.183).
5. Verses 43-45: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."
- a. "The demon, driven by divine power from the hearts of men, is pictured by Jesus as going about searching for a fit abode and restless because no human heart is found for residence" (Boles, p.279). The house was the man's body he was forced to leave.
 - b. "This parable of a wandering demon applies to the Jewish nation, which is 'the man'....*Waterless places* were supposed to be attractive to demons, who were thought to take advantage of people who borrowed water, and were said to take up residence in crumbs, or fragments of food. Christ flaunted all those popular notions by borrowing water from the woman at the well of Samaria (John 4), by commanding the disciples to gather up the fragments after the feeding of the five thousand, and the four thousand, and by himself frequenting desert places....No house can remain long empty, unused, swept, garnished, or idle.
- 1) "Alas, such a true description of the spiritual condition of many. They are 'good,' but 'good for nothing.' Their righteousness consists of emptiness, superficial decoration, and negative goodness. However, the life that is not constantly improved and dedicated, and pressed, and worn out in service to God, will finally revert to a condition worse than at the first....
 - 2) "These words [vs. 45] were doubtless spoken in sorrow. They were a firm, dogmatic prophecy of Israel's rejection of Christ, reminding one of 2 Peter 2:20. What state is worse than being unsaved? It is the apostasy from which it is impossible to be renewed (Heb. 6:4-6)" (Coffman, pp.183-185).
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- c. 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
- d. "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." "These words show Jesus' application of the parable; we can now say so it *was* with that generation. The account given by Josephus of the last years of Jerusalem present a picture of infatuation, demoniac madness and crime such as the world has never elsewhere beheld....This principle applies to men now. If we know the truth, and fail to practice and obey it, the heart is hardened. We are the worse for having known it. The gospel is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death" (Boles, pp.280f).

H. Matthew 12:46-50: The Spiritual Relatives of Christ.

1. Verses 46-47: "While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee."
 - a. The mother of Jesus here is his literal mother. Since this is so, then the brothers indicated must be his literal brothers (actually his half-brothers). Matthew 13:55-56 identifies by name his four brothers, and at least two sisters are implied. Again, there is no reason for us to think of these as other than his actual physical kinsmen.
 - b. "To send a message to him in the house (13:1) while he was speaking to the people, was an interruption; and the message itself, that they desired to speak with him, was an interference. It was assuming that the business which they had for him was more urgent than his business with the people, and that the latter should give way to the former" (McGarvey, pp.114f).
 - c. "There is no reference to Joseph, Mary's husband; in fact he does not appear in gospel history after the period of Jesus' childhood (Luke 2); it is likely that Joseph was dead; this is strengthened by the fact that 'the carpenter's son' (Matt. 13:55) is called in the parallel (Mark 6:3) 'the carpenter'...(Boles, p.281).
 2. Verses 48-50: "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."
 - a. "...He would allow no interference with his work on the score of earthly relationships; and it shows plainly to us that the supposed subserviency of Jesus to his mother, which is the ground of the worship of Mary, is most emphatically repudiated by Jesus himself" (McGarvey, p.115).
 - b. "Probably due to his foresight of the gross idolatry that would flourish around the name of his mother, Christ was careful to guard against it....Mary was never set forth as a female deity by Christ. If she had been, in any sense the 'Mother of God,' Christ's treatment of her on this occasion was improper" (Coffman, p.185).
 - c. "It is here taught with emphasis that Jesus holds all who do the will of God as his brothers, sisters, mother; that is, as sustaining a relation to him as intimate as that sustained by these relatives. This statement not only shows the extreme absurdity of the worship of Mary, but it teaches us that our duty to the church is never to be sacrificed to the caprices, prejudices, or preferences of our earthly relatives" (McGarvey, p.115).
 - d. Luke 11:27-28: "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed *is* the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed *are* they that hear the word of God, and keep it."
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MATTHEW 13

A. Matthew 13:1-2: The Setting for the Parables.

1. Verse 1: "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side."
 - a. That "same day" was the day in which the preceding events occurred, the episodes which occurred as recorded in the previous chapter. The ASV has "on that day."
 - b. The house he left may have belonged to Peter and Andrew at Capernaum. Jesus often sat while he taught (cf. 5:1). "The sitting posture which Jesus habitually assumed in his public addresses, rendered it impossible for him to be seen or heard at a great distance when the people thronged him" (McGarvey, p.116).
2. Verse 2: And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.
 - a. The crowd of people was so great that he boarded a boat at the lake's edge, and taught the people who were standing along the shore. They could not crowd too closely and he could be easily seen and heard.
 - b. Luke 5:1-3: "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship."

B. Matthew 13:3-9: The Parable of the Sower.

1. Verse 3: "And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow."
 - a. The Lord began using a new teaching method which enabled him both to instruct his sincere disciples and still not furnish his enemies any useful ammunition they could use against him. The word "parable" literally mean "to place alongside for comparison or measurement."
 - 1) "A parable is a species of allegory. An allegory is a discourse in which an object is described by describing another which resembles it, or which is analogous to it. Parables differ from other allegories in that they are taken from actual occurrences, while most others are taken from imaginary occurrences. Every parable contains an illustrating example, and indicated certain points of resemblance between it and the subject which it illustrates...."
 - 2) "In interpreting the parables of Jesus two fundamental rules must be observed: first, when Jesus himself gives an interpretation, it must be accepted as final and exhaustive; second, only those points of analogy which were certainly in the mind of the author should have a place in the interpretation."
 - 3) "The chief error to be guarded against is a violation of the latter rule; and in order successfully to guard against it, one must have a well balanced judgment and an accurate knowledge of the subjects which the parables illustrate" (McGarvey, p.116).
 - 4) A parable is different from a fable. A fable is purely imaginary and often contains impossibilities, such as animals talking. But the activities included in parables either could occur or did occur in the real world.
 - 5) Others besides Jesus used parables in their teaching, but the Lord's are far more memorable than the others, especially those which were uninspired.
 - b. Parables were used in the Bible for several excellent purposes:
 - 1) To *reveal* truth. "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:26-29).
 - 2) To *embalm* the truth (to fasten it tightly to the heart so that it would ever be remembered). The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates this facet of parables very well (Luke 10:30-37).
 - 3) To *conceal* the truth from those who would abuse it. This is the reason the Lord had to explain to the apostles why he spoke in parables: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy

of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*" (Matt. 13:13-17).

- 4) "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25).
- 5) To *cause men to acknowledge the truth* before they realized it applied to them (2 Sam. 12:1-14).
- c. This parable begins with, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." There were no farm houses in that ancient time and place; the people lived in cities and villages from which they literally went forth to work in the fields. The sowing was done by the broadcast method, in which the seed was carried in a bag, taken out by the handful, and spread from side to side as the farmer moved across the field. With practice, one can spread the seed evenly over the field, with scarcely a bare spot. When the seed comes forth, producing plants, the ground is virtually covered with life.
2. Verse 4: "And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up."
 - a. If the seed is broadcast evenly, it will fall upon all the various kinds of soil in the field. Some soils will be more productive than others.
 - b. The seed in the first instance in the story fell on the wayside soil. Footpaths often traversed the fields or ran along the side. The ground was hard-packed and unreceptive. The birds would naturally find the seed which fell upon such ground.
3. Verses 5-6: "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away."
 - a. The seed that fell on stony ground was an area where the soil was thin, overlying a layer of rock; there was "not much earth...no deepness of earth." Luke's account describes it as falling "upon a rock" (Lk. 8:6).
 - b. The soil present would be fertile, but its thinness would not allow moisture to be retained, so that when the sun grew hot on the earth, the plants would wither.
4. Verse 7: "And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them."
 - a. Some seed fell among the thorns. These unwanted plants had not yet sprung up, but were present in roots or seeds underneath the surface.
 - b. These thorns would spring up with the good plants, and choke out the intended crop. To a farmer, it seems that weeds and other unwanted plants will grow better without any care than good plants will grow with the best of care. The devil's spiritual work often progresses at a faster pace than the Lord's. His "blessings" are more greatly desired by worldly-minded people than the Lord's spiritual blessings.
5. Verse 8: "But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold."
 - a. Some seed also fell on good ground. This soil had been properly prepared, had sufficient moisture and fertility, and thus produced a good crop, in varying amounts.
 - b. Not all soil has the same richness, so different amounts are produced.
6. Verse 9: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."
 - a. "This warning, habitual with Jesus when he desired to direct especial attention to a speech or a remark, was necessary to prevent the people from regarding the parable as merely a beautiful and life-like description. It warns them of a meaning beneath the surface, and hidden as yet from their view" (McGarvey, p.117).
 - b. "This means that those who have faculties are responsible for their proper use; those who have powers of attention should exert them as very important lessons are about to be given" (Boles, p.287).
 - c. "This was Christ's invitation to study that innocent story for its hidden meaning. Even yet, the true and

full implications of this rich narrative come only to those with perceptive minds and hearts, attuned to the detection of spiritual truth” (Coffman, pp.188f).

C. Matthew 13:10-17: Jesus Explains Why He Taught by Parable.

1. Verse 10: “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”
 - a. The question they raised indicates that this was a radical change in the teaching methods of the Lord. They did not understand why he was now using parables or the meaning of this parable.
 - b. Liberals in the church today are pressing for a change in the teaching methods. It has become painfully obvious to the observant that the sophisticated and the worldly-minded people of modern America have little interest in the gospel. Seeing a decline in conversions, these liberal church leaders decry the “traditional” teaching methods, thinking that a new method will increase interest.
 - 1) What is happening in American society was foretold by inspiration. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:2-5).
 - 2) The problem is not with the method of teaching, but the rejection of the message itself. It is impossible for a doctor to cure a sick man who rejects the medicine that can effect his recovery. It is impossible for a man to be converted who refuses to learn and accept the gospel. Liberal preachers and others have failed to grasp this simple truth. Their shallow plan is faulty to the core; it can do little if any good, but has the potential for a great amount of evil—a replacement of the gospel with human methods, entertainment, and philosophy.
 - 3) We are told by these “change agents” in the church that modern men will not listen to a plain presentation of the gospel, through Bible classes, private studies, or sermons; that they will heed presentations which use role-playing, drama, antiphonal singing, etc. They assert that they are sure the Lord is not concerned with the method. But why did not the Lord, the apostles, and other inspired men use these modern methods? Why did they invariably teach the truth by a straightforward presentation of God’s word? In the face of the very problem we now see in our world, where the great majority has rejected the true gospel, why did the Lord require us to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2)?
 - 4) The Pharisees and others of the first century had developed a system of religion that placed emphasis on outward appearances. When they gave alms, they sought to use it as a means of calling attention to themselves (Matt. 6:1-4). When they prayed, they did so in prominent places and ways so as to obtain the praise of men for their own “spirituality” (Matt. 6:5-8). They used fasting as a means of getting praise from men (Matt. 6:16-18). The emphasis of their religion was on an outward show of spirituality. "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:5-12).
 - 5) A preacher who uses oratory, pulpit shenanigans, scholarly words, smooth speech, suave manners, etc., as the primary means of obtaining more converts or bigger audiences, has failed to use the only power God uses to save souls—the gospel of Christ.
 - a) Romans 1:16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
 - b) Mark 16:15-16: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

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- c) James 1:21: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
 - d) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - e) 1 Peter 1:18-25: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
- 6) The same is true with those who use stage productions, role playing, drama, etc. To what are people attracted when such tactics are employed? To the truth of God's word? To the people giving the performance? To the method which gained their attention?
 - 7) It is remarkable that the same people who decry gospel preaching and teaching will build great displays, depicting Biblical events, as a means of attracting attention. They have been known to place a man on a cross in order to "make the Bible come alive" to the observers. Again, the emphasis is on the outward demonstrations, rather than on the truth itself. The praise offered by the pleasure-seekers who come to view the displays is more apt to be directed toward the talent, work, and money used in their construction than in the truth of the event depicted.
- 2. Verse 11: "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."
 - a. The quick and simple answer was that it was for the disciples to know the true meaning of the kingdom at this time, but it was not profitable that those who had been indifferent to his message should be given this information.
 - b. "Jesus proceeds to give several reasons for speaking in parables, the first of which is that it was given to the disciples, but not to the unbelievers, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. This is merely an assertion of the fact that it was so ordered by God, without assigning a reason why he so ordered. By the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, are not meant things incomprehensible; for, in that case, the disciples could not know them; but the yet unrevealed truths of the kingdom, which were mysteries only because they were as yet unrevealed" (McGarvey, p.117).
 - c. "Mystery" is a term often used in the New Testament in reference to the unrevealed plan which God originated in eternity, and which was revealed fully only when the gospel was given.
 - 1) Romans 16:25-26: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:7-10: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."
 - 3) Ephesians 3:3-5: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."
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- d. "The parabolic form veils the truth from those who do not want it, but unveils the truth to those who are ready for it and will receive it" (Boles, p.287).
3. Verse 12: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."
- a. "This verse contains the reason why it was given to the disciples to know the mysteries of the kingdom, and not given to the unbelievers. It is a law of God's moral government, often repeated by the Savior, that to him who has, more shall be given, and from him who has not, even that he has shall be taken away....
- 1) "Now the unbelieving Jews had, in common with the believers, the heavenly privilege of hearing Jesus and seeing his miracles; but, unlike the believers, they had not the faith and the knowledge which they should have derived from these opportunities.
 - 2) "The opportunities were now to be taken away from them by a kind of teaching which they could not understand, and which would not be explained to them. But to the disciples, who had some profit from previous opportunities, more instruction was to be given by means of the parables.
 - 3) "In general terms, the law is, that to those who have made improvement by their opportunities, other opportunities will be given; but from him who has made no improvement, the opportunities themselves will be taken away" (McGarvey, pp.117f).
- b. Opportunities are not to be taken for granted. If we should ignore those we are given to improve ourselves in a spiritual sense, or serve the Lord more fully as a congregation or as an individual, but shun those privileges, the door is apt to be closed to us in the future to do those things which we did not then appreciate.
- 1) 1 Corinthians 16:9: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries."
 - 2) Colossians 4:2-3: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."
 - 3) 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you."
 - 4) Revelation 3:8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
- c. The people of northern Palestine where many of the Lord's activities were conducted, did not grasp the importance of their opportunities. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:20-24).
4. Verse 13: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."
- a. "The illative *therefore* (*dia touto*, on this account) refers not to the preceding, but to the statement which follows. Another reason for speaking in parables is given: because, when the people saw they saw not, and when they heard they heard not; that is, though they saw the miracles, they saw them not in their true light, and when they heard his words, they heard them not in their true meaning. This was a good reason for speaking to them in parables; for it showed that it was immaterial whether he spoke intelligibly or unintelligibly; and it left him free to speak as best suited the wants of his disciples alone. It may be observed, also, that he spoke more for future readers than for present hearers" (McGarvey, p.118).
- b. "How wonderfully were the parables designed to accomplish Christ's purpose! They were marvelous devices for the separation of his hearers and polarizing them with reference to the approaching kingdom. Those who desired and expected some worldly conqueror who would break the back of
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Roman tyranny and restore secular power to the Jews were repelled by the innocent and innocuous descriptions of such prosaic and commonplace things as those which formed the basis of the parables. On the other hand, spiritually minded disciples would read the deeper meaning and know the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Coffman, p.190).

- c. God gives light but if a man blinds himself, God does not force his eyes open!
5. Verses 14-15: “And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” “And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them” (ASV),
 - a. The statements cited here are from Isaiah 6:9-10, and are also used by Paul (Acts 28:23-29) to describe the rebellious Jews who rejected Christ and his word. The Lord acted in full accordance with the ancient predictions concerning his work.
 - b. “In these verses Jesus gives the fourth and final reason for speaking to the people in parables, and at the same time he points out the cause of those facts on which the preceding reasons were based.
 - 1) “As Isaiah had written concerning his own generation (Isa. 6:9,10), this people’s heart had ‘waxed gross;’ that is, it has become filled with earthly and sensual desires, and especially so with reference to the expected kingdom of the Messiah.
 - 2) “This state of heart made their ears dull of hearing; that is, it made them indisposed to hear with favor the words of Jesus. It led them also to close their eyes; that is, to refuse to see the evidences of his divinity. This closing of their eyes is treated (15) as the fatal act....
 - 3) “The evil state of the heart might have the result of having voluntarily closed their eyes against the light which had come into the world, causing parables and dark sayings to be as intelligible to them as the simplest lessons which Jesus taught; their ears were equally closed against both” (McGarvey, p.118).
 - c. The Jewish nation was usually characterized by this obstinate attitude. “The strong inference from the application that Jesus makes of it is that, no matter what he would do or say, they would not obey him or receive what he said. It was like casting the pearls of truth before swine to present his teachings to their sensual and prejudiced minds” (Boles, p.289).
 - d. Their heart was gross (fat: encased in fat); thus was insensitive to his words; his truth could not penetrate. Their ears were dull (deaf; unable to hear). They had closed their eyes (an individual, conscious action). This passage destroys the Calvinistic claims which assert that man came into this dreadful condition by inheriting it from his parents. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).
 - e. They needed to be converted. “This rendering is incorrect. The original word (*epistrephsin*) is in the active voice, and means ‘turn’Only in one passage, Matt. 18:3, is the passive rendering correct” (McGarvey, p.118).
6. Verses 16-17: “But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.”
 - a. “Here we have a cheering contrast between the spiritual condition of the disciples, and that of the unbelieving multitude. They were seeing with profit, and hearing with delight, not only that which the prophets and righteous men of many generations had desired to see and had not seen. The disciples, doubtless, failed to realize the full measure of their blessedness, so little do the men of any generation know their own privileges” (McGarvey, p.119).
 - b. The twelve disciples were blessed on account of their privileges which were far greater than any of the

earlier generations. Though Enoch walked with God and was translated directly into eternity, though Noah saw the awesome sights connected with the great flood, though Abraham was the friend of God and obtained many very special and wonderful blessings from Jehovah, yet none of these men had the privileges which the apostles received!

- c. Those Old Testament worthies did not live to see the unfolding and revealing of God's timeless plan; but these apostles saw it, and received it, and communicated it to the world. Today we have the great privilege of learning it, receiving its blessings, and seeing the manifold wisdom of God (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:1-11; 1 Peter 1:3-16).
- d. "Abraham saw the day of Christ (John 8:56), but only in the dim picture characteristic of the development of God's plan at that time; the gospel was preached to him (Gal. 3:8), but only in the obscure statement that in Abraham's seed would all nations be blessed.

D. Matthew 13:18-23: The Lord Explains the Parable of the Sower.

1. Verses 18-19: "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side."
 - a. "Christ named this parable....The parable of the Sower. The sower in this analogy stands for God, the Great Architect of redemption. The central place belongs to him. Men may or may not receive his word; but the seeds still fall, and the harvest is still produced, regardless of human failure, indifference, or opposition" (Coffman, p.192). The different places where the seed falls represent the various conditions of heart possessed by men.
 - b. The identity of the seed is plainly declared to be the word of God in Luke 8:11. Matthew describes this seed as "the word of the kingdom."
 - 1) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - 2) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."
 - c. "The peculiarity of him who is represented by the way-side consists in the two circumstances, that he does not 'understand' the word, and that the wicked one catches away that which was sown in his heart. The word reaches his heart, which fact implies some favorable impressions on him; but his not understanding it, implies a want of proper attention to it.
 - 1) "Failing of proper attention, he allows the devil, by taking it away, to deprive him of the little good which he had received, and of all that he might have received in the future. (Comp. Luke 8:12.) Satan catches the word away by means of all those worldly allurements through which men are led to be inattentive to the word of God.
 - 2) "The class of persons represented are those whose ideas of Scripture teaching are too crude for an intelligent faith, or who allow good impression made by the word to speedily pass away" (McGarvey, p.119).
 - d. Each individual is responsible for the condition his heart develops. Worldly concerns and attitudes can cause our hearts to be indifferent, or rebellious, or in some other way, unresponsive to the message of the gospel. The warning was given in the long ago to "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23; cf. Matt. 13:15). We can only blame ourselves if our hearts cannot accept the gospel!
 - e. The devil may steal the word from the hearts of men by various means: through their own hard attitudes; by the errors of false teachers; by the influence of family and friends; through the sins or thoughtless words and actions of the brethren.
2. Verses 20-21: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and

anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

- a. “The rocky ground hearers are the emotional type; they are touched by the gospel, but only superficially so. They do not understand what a commitment to Christ involves; and, having no root in themselves, they quickly fall away when difficult and unpleasant situations arise. Premature action will not ultimately succeed. High pressure methods in many modern revivals may cause people to accept religion gladly, but as soon as the meeting closes, the evangelist leaves, and they return to normal life, their religion vanishes” (ALC, 1959, p.137).
 - b. There are many hearers who are easily touched with the gospel story; there are many who sincerely desire to have God’s approval. But these often want an easy religion and are not willing to undergo the struggles and efforts necessary to develop genuine commitment to the Lord. They want to hold on to the Lord with one hand and cling to the world with the other. Christ said such was impossible (Matt. 6:24).
 - c. Neither a shallow emotional response nor a half-hearted commitment will suffice. Faith and repentance are key words in this connection. If one genuinely believes the gospel, it will change his life. If such a believer repents, he will be a changed person altogether. Repentance is produced only by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10).
 - 1) “When one learns the truth and believes it, he will see his true condition; that realization will cause him to be deeply sorrowful for how he has conducted himself. This godly sorrow will lead him to reach a major, life-changing decision (called repentance) in which he commits himself to changing his way of living; he can know he has repented if he carries out his decision in the way he lives, the things he does, in the motives by which he operates, in the thoughts he entertains, and in the way he speaks.
 - 2) “Repentance is a major undertaking: it cannot be lightly or easily done. Therefore, we ought to give the most earnest attention to our lives, for if we sin willfully, thinking we can quickly repent tomorrow, our hearts may become hardened, no godly sorrow is produced, and thus no repentance is possible—and we remain in a lost condition.
 - d. The Lord, in his interpretation of this part, says that this describes those who will fall away when hardship or persecution arises. They obey the gospel in fair weather, and remain faithful while the way is easy, but quickly show their weak faith when the going gets tough. Every great cause has its “summer soldiers” and its “sunshine patriots,” but the Lord requires men and women, young and old, who are committed to him regardless of outside circumstances.
 - 1) Matthew 10:22: "And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."
 - 2) Philippians 4:11-13: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
 - e. The term “offended” means “to be made to stumble.” “There is nothing in tribulations and persecutions to make one feel ‘offended’ at the word; but there is, to cause him to stumble, as when his foot is caught in a snare” (McGarvey, p.120).
 - f. “The shallow soil, overlaying rock, produced quick but impermanent results. The sun’s scorching heat in the analogy stands for tribulations and persecutions because of the word. The shallowness of the ground represents impressionable, easily influenced persons, who have little stability” (Coffman, p.192).
3. Verse 22: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”
 - a. This describes a case where an individual hears and obeys the gospel, but because of the cares of the world, he is overtaken again and becomes unfruitful. This plainly and undeniably teaches that one can become a Christian and then fall away and be lost. If it be said that nothing is said about being lost, it only needs to be noted that if this one described is not lost, then people who are filled with the cares
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of this world, deceived by riches, and who have the word choked from their hearts, are going to heaven!

- b. "This represents a class of hearers which may be described as capable of salvation, possessing many excellent qualities, but who subordinate the most important things to secondary considerations and are thus robbed of eternal life. Cares, riches, and pleasures are not, in and of themselves, evil; but a well may be as effectively choked and stopped with a load of flowers as by a load of rotten carcasses" (Coffman, pp.192f).
 - c. "Those represented by the thorny ground, do not, like the first class, allow Satan to catch away the word, nor do they, like the second, allow persecutions to cause them to stumble; but, while retaining the word, they allow 'care' about worldly matters, and the deceitfulness of riches—that is, the deception which love of riches causes men to practice on themselves—or both these combined, to render the word unfruitful....The great majority of the disciples of every age and country have been more or less chargeable with the sin of this class" (McGarvey, p.120).
 - 1) Mark 10:24: "And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
 - 2) Luke 21:34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 6:9-10: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
 - d. "The seed is good, the soil is good, the growth is genuine, internally everything is right; but while all is going well within there are difficulties without, which in time prove fatal" (Boles, p.294).
4. Verse 23: "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
- a. "The man represented by the good ground differs from the wayside man in that he 'understands' the word, and does not allow Satan to take it from him. His understanding it is the result, not of some natural superiority, but of the superior attention which he gives to it. He differs from the stony ground character, in that, though assailed by tribulation and persecution because of the word, and often more violently assailed than his vacillating neighbor, he overcomes them....He differs from the thorny ground character, in that he endures the cares of life so patiently, and resists the deceitful influences of riches so successfully, that the word of God in him triumphs over both. Finally, he differs from all, in that he alone 'beareth fruit' (McGarvey, p.120).
 - b. He had an honest heart which caused him to examine the message sincerely (cf. Lk. 8:15). "He is willing to be guided by the truth of God and is satisfied with that truth..." (Boles, p.295).

E. Matthew 13:24-30: The Parable of the Tares.

1. Verses 24-26: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also."
 - a. The kingdom is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field but during the night an enemy sowed tares among the good seed. This was both a vicious and cowardly act. It did the enemy no good, but did much harm to the victim.
 - b. Tares: "KJV term for grassy weeds resembling wheat, generally identified as darnel (genus *Lolium*). See Matthew 13:25-30, 36-40" (Holman PC Bible Dictionary).
2. Verses 27-30: "So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."
 - a. The servants came to the master of the house to report what had been done, but only after the two

diverse crops had sprung up. By the time the problem had been discovered, it was too late.

- b. The counsel of the master was to allow both to grow until the harvest, at which time they could safely be separated without causing undue damage to the good crop. Then the wheat could be gathered into the barn and the tares placed together and burned.
3. The Lord gave explanations to only two of his parables: this one and the parable of the sower. The explanation of this one is presented in verses 36-43. The other parables are so simple that their meaning is easily discerned by the careful student of the Bible. It is interesting to note that the parables which have met with the most contradictory interpretations are the two which Christ explained!

F. Matthew 13:31-35: Two Other Parables.

1. Verses 31-32: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."
 - a. The kingdom is likened to the tiny mustard seed which grows into a large plant. Among the seeds commonly sowed by the ancient Jews, the mustard seed was the least. It is not the least of all seeds in the world. This limitation is to be understood also in the Lord's description of the size of the mustard plant: it was the largest of the herbs which the Jews cultivated.
 - b. "As the emphasis, in this parable, is placed on the smallness of the seed and the greatness of its subsequent growth, we must take these as the points of significance and resemblance. The kingdom of heaven, like the seed, was very small in its beginning on the day of Pentecost, but afterward it became a very great kingdom. The parable is prophetic, and is still in process of fulfillment" (McGarvey, p.121).
 - c. The birds lighting in the branches may suggest the indirect benefits which those outside the kingdom derive from it. Some think that since birds are used to represent evil men, then it may have that meaning here, representing evil men who seek to do harm to the church; but this is uncertain.
2. Verse 33: "Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."
 - a. The kingdom is likened to a woman who put three measures of leaven in a lump of bread dough. There appears to be no special significance to the fact that three measures of leaven were used; probably that was the amount commonly used.
 - b. "It is the property of leaven that it quietly but certainly diffuses itself through the mass in which it is placed. The kingdom of heaven is like it, in that it spreads itself in like manner through human society. This parable is also prophetic, and its fulfillment is constantly going on" (McGarvey, pp.121f).
 - c. This parable illustrates the internal spread of the kingdom within one of its citizens. Its natural progression is to enhance the whole person in all phases of his life. The kingdom is within us (Luke 17:21). As the seed of the kingdom germinates in our hearts, we are transformed (Luke 8:12; Rom. 12:1-2; Jas. 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18).
 - 1) Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 - 2) James 1:21 "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."
3. Verses 34-35: "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."
 - a. An explanation is given as to why Jesus spoke in parables on this occasion. Mark 4:22 adds this thought: "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it." He fulfilled completely the statement in Psalm 78:2: "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old."

- b. Matthew gives the sense of the passage and does not quote it verbatim. The dark sayings were the mysteries of the unrevealed gospel (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:1-11). The Lord chose parables as the means of beginning to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom.
- c. He had previously been preaching that the kingdom was at hand; he now says that the coming kingdom would be like the various descriptions given in the parables. Before and after this series of parables the Lord taught in plain words, but on this occasion, he chose parables exclusively in teaching the multitudes.

G. Matthew 13:36-43: The Lord Explains the Parable of the Tares.

1. Verses 36-40: "Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world."
 - a. They did not ask for him to explain the two preceding parables, but this one excited their interest and they asked for its meaning.
 - b. He simply and clearly stated that the one who sowed the good seed was the Son of man (Jesus), the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, the tares are the followers of the devil, the enemy is the devil, the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.
 - c. With the Lord's explanation we can understand the parable. As tares are gathered by the workers in the harvest and burned, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Lord will then cast off those who are unprepared. Matthew 7:21-27; 25:31-46; 25:1ff; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 20:12-15.
2. Verses 41-43: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."
 - a. "In brief, the final separation of the wicked from the righteous, and the destruction of the [former] in fire, is the burden of the parable" (McGarvey, p.123).
 - b. "Whether reference is made to all the wicked in the world, or only to those in the Church, has been a matter of dispute. In favor of the latter supposition is the fact that the wicked are to be gathered by the angels 'out of his kingdom,' the term kingdom being usually limited to the Church. But inasmuch as 'all authority in heaven and on earth' is given to Christ (28:18), his kingdom in reality includes the whole earth, and in at least one of the parables, that of the pounds (Luke 19:14,15,27), the term is used to include both his willing subjects, and those who 'will not have this man to rule over them'" (McGarvey, p.123).
 - c. The context shows how the term kingdom is used. That the kingdom in this parable is used in reference to the world is clear for two reasons:
 - 1) The field in which both the good and bad seeds were sown is plainly said to be the world; obviously, the harvest of these two crops would be made from the same field.
 - 2) The good seed represents the children of the kingdom (Christians) and the bad seed represents the followers of the wicked one (these are the lost ones of the world).
 - d. "If it be objected to this, that the enemy sowed after the good seed had been sown, and therefore the wicked represented by the tares must be the wicked who sprang up among the disciples after the kingdom was established: we answer, that this point of comparison is not found in the Savior's interpretation, and this is sufficient proof that it was not in his mind" (McGarvey, p.123). All those represented by the wheat and tares are in the kingdom, and the kingdom (in this context) is the world.
 - e. The story carried the injunction against the workers pulling up the tares right away since this operation would prematurely uproot also the wheat. Growing out of this is the common interpretation that we are not permitted to exercise withdrawal of fellowship (church discipline) in the church today. This is based on the supposition that the kingdom in the parable is the church (but this is refuted above).
 - 1) "Some understand the parable as prohibiting all exclusions from the Church, and others, with less consistency, understand it to prohibit exclusions only in doubtful cases....The latter view is

condemned by the very premises on which it is based: for it was not until the tares were unmistakably known as such, that the question about plucking them up was raised. If the exclusion of any from the Church is prohibited, it must be those who are known to be children of the wicked one, and the conclusion comes into direct conflict with the teaching both of Jesus and the apostles on the subject of withdrawing from the disorderly. (See 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:11,13; 2 Thess. 3:6)” (McGarvey, pp.123f).

- 2) McGarvey points out two additional objections to the common interpretation cited. The first is in the fact that angels are those who are to do the pulling up, not certain individuals in the church. In other words, the separation under consideration is a function which mere mortals cannot do. But in church discipline, church members are the ones to do that operation of separation (2 Thess. 2:6). Secondly, “the interpretation ignores the fundamental rule, that when Jesus himself expounds a parable, his exposition must be accepted without modification. Now, in his exposition he passes by this prohibition and gives it no part whatever in the significance of the parable. It is true, that gathering out the tares at the end of the world implies that they will be allowed to grow until that time, but it implies nothing at all as to whether such of them as can be shall be excluded from the Church” (p.124).
- f. An additional thought is given in verse 42: those represented by the tares will be cast into the furnace of fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. If the torment of hell is not real, or if hell itself is not real, then the Lord misled us in explaining the parable.
- g. The final results will be that after the Lord’s return (verse 43), the wicked will all be consigned to hell, and the righteous will be gathered into the paradise of heaven. In glory the righteous will “shine forth as the sun” in the kingdom. This term kingdom refers to the eternal phase of the kingdom, heaven itself.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:24: "Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."
 - 2) Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."
 - 3) 2 Peter 1:11: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
- h. “The parable of the tares teaches that no angel or superhuman being will interfere in the affairs of earth till the end. God created the world, sowed good seed in it, and entrusted it to men to keep and rule” (Boles, p.301).

H. Matthew 13:44-52: Three More Parables.

1. Verse 44: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”
 - a. The parable of the “Hidden Treasure” is given in this verse. “In the absence of the iron safes and vaults of modern times, the ancients frequently buried articles of value in the ground. The case supposed is one in which, by the death of the original owner of the field and the treasure, all knowledge of the treasure has perished; otherwise the present owner would not sell the field without an equivalent for the treasure” (McGarvey, p.124).
 - b. The story relates that a man found a treasure in a field belonging to someone else. After hiding the treasure more securely, he sold all he possessed in order to buy the field. The Lord is not condoning the actions of this man in taking advantage of the owner’s ignorance of the hidden treasure, for those actions were dishonest. He no more commended this man’s underhandedness than he did the unjust steward’s plan to insure his future (Luke 16:1-9). In the unjust steward’s case, Christ was commending his wisdom in providing for his future needs; he did not commend the fraudulent means he used. In the case of the man of the current story, Christ commended his earnestness in securing the desired piece of property.
 - c. “The kingdom is not like the treasure in being hid, for although its provisions are unknown to many, they have always been known to some. But the man’s joy at discovering the treasure, and the eagerness

- with which he sold his other possessions in order to obtain the treasure, are the points of significance. Similar joy is experienced by every one who discovers the blessedness of the kingdom, and all such make every sacrifice necessary to gain possession of its privileges” (McGarvey, pp.124f).
- d. The story depicts the man who finds the treasures of the kingdom though he was not looking for it. The woman of Samaria (John 4) and the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16) are illustrations of the parable.
2. Verses 45-46: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”
 - a. This is the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price. “The thought of this parable, though similar to that in the preceding, is distinct from it. The merchant is represented as seeking goodly pearls, and as already in possession of a number, while the man of the hid treasure had nothing which he especially prized before he found the treasure. There is a comparison in this parable between things of great value already sought and obtained, and a new prize which excels them all. It teaches that whatever a man have sought for and obtained before becoming acquainted with the kingdom of God, whether it be wealth, or fame, or a system of religion, the kingdom of God will be cheaply obtained by the loss of all” (McGarvey, p.125).
 - b. Both of these parables show the wisdom of placing the value of the kingdom far above all other possessions and honors. In searching for goodly pearls, the merchant was willing to sacrifice all his possessions in order to purchase this special prize.
 - c. This merchant is held up for our approval and emulation because:
 - 1) He did not waste time admiring the pearl.
 - 2) He did not try to bargain for a lower price.
 - 3) He did not delay or postpone the purchase.
 - 4) He did not reject it as too expensive. He simply raised the necessary price and purchased it forthwith.
 3. Verses 47-50: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”
 - a. The Parable of the Drag Net is given next. In this story a drag net (weighted at the bottom and having corks at the top) is drawn through a body of water where fish are concentrated. When it is pulled out, the fish are separated: the undesirable are cast away, the desirable are kept.
 - b. No formal announcement is made about an explanation being given, but the Lord in effect gives an explanation. He simply says that the separation will be made at the end of time by the angels. Other aspects of the parable are left for us to explain.
 - c. The likeness is between the net and the kingdom. As the net collected various sorts of fish as it was drawn through the water, so the kingdom attracts various kinds of people as it passes through the great sea of humanity. We are not able to know the hearts of men when they obey the gospel or as they serve in the kingdom. We must give them the benefit of the doubt; however God knows their hearts whether they are sincere. As far as man is concerned, unless we learn otherwise, they are in the kingdom; they remain at our sides through life, but if they are known to the Lord as insincere, at the end of time, they will be severed from their apparent ties with the kingdom, and cast from the Lord and from the faithful.
 - d. “The furnace of fire mentioned here and at the close of the parable of the tares (42), can be no other than the final abode of the wicked; for the casting of the wicked into it is to take place ‘at the end of the world.’ The term rendered world (*aion*) can not here mean the Jewish age; for no such separation of the wicked from the righteous took place at the end of the Jewish age, nor has it taken place since then. It means the Christian age, which terminates with time itself” (McGarvey, p.125).
 - e. “This is a picture of the church at work; the “gospel drag-net,’ so to speak, is cast into the sea of men, and gathers every kind. This does not mean that such is the will of God, but the work is done by fallible human beings, and they do not always know what is in the heart of professed disciples. The apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Philippi, said, ‘For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition,
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whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.’ (Phil. 3:18,19.) The New Testament authorizes Christians to exercise discipline (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6-15), but fallible men can never rid the church of all evil. See 1 Cor. 4:3-5. That work is reserved for the angels....Church leaders who fail to exercise discipline to the best of their ability, may find themselves on the side of the wicked in the last day” (ALC, 1959, p.143).

4. Verses 51-52: “Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.”
 - a. Jesus asked the disciples whether they understood all these things. “By the help of his explanation of the two parables, the disciples were able to answer that they understood all of them; but while this was true in a limited sense, they doubtless failed to gather the full import of some of whose meaning needed the light of experience in order to be clearly seen” (McGarvey, p.125). The reference to “these things” refers to the parables he told. When God speaks to men, he means for man to understand what he says, and he speaks in such a way and uses a language which man can understand.
 - b. In verse 52, “scribe” refers to every disciple who has the information and understanding that puts him on a par with the ancient Jewish scribes. A scribe originally was one whose job it was to make handwritten copies of the law. These became so knowledgeable of the law that they were later instructors of the law. A scribe in the Lord’s terminology here is any disciple who has a proper knowledge of his word.
 - c. Such a “scribe” would be like the householder who has at his disposal a great storehouse from which to withdraw whatever is needed for the job at hand, things which are old and things which are new. “They did not have banks then as we have now, but did have treasure houses in which moneys, clothes, and other useful things were stored. ‘A householder’ was one who had charge of a family, whose duty it was to clothe, feed, and govern them. From his storehouse he brought out ‘things new and old’ as any members of the household needed things” (Boles, pp.304f).
 - d. The mature disciple in the kingdom has his mind filled with the knowledge of the truth is this spiritual householder. He has a store of previous truth from which he can draw.
 - e. “The allusion [to things new and old] is to the fact that a good householder, in entertaining his guests, brings forth from his treasure of provisions and drinks, both old articles long laid away for special occasions, and new ones recently provided. So the Christian scribe or teacher brings forth for the instruction of his hearers both the old lessons with which he has long been familiar, and new ones which he has but recently acquired. While teaching others, he is himself a learner, and he is able, out of the new or the old, to find something suitable to every class of hearers” (McGarvey, p.126). Some of the old truths would be the ancient things God had revealed to the Jews and the new truths would be those recent declarations of Christ.

I. Matthew 13:53-58: Jesus Visits His Former Hometown of Nazareth.

1. Verses 53-56: “And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?”
 - a. Mark’s record of this is in chapter 6:1-6; he shows this took place on the Sabbath. Having taught them in their synagogue, they were astonished at his wisdom and mighty works. They held him in contempt (cf. Luke 4:29); they were offended at his claims. They knew his father, mother, brothers, and sisters; they had known him from childhood, and until lately, he had not exhibited such powers.
 - b. “They were filled with envy that he should suddenly be lifted so high above themselves and above his humble origin. Their extreme familiarity with his humanity made them blind to the evidences of his divinity, while their unwillingness to admit his divinity made them incapable of answering their own question; and so from that day to this, the words and miracles of Jesus have proved an unsolved mystery to all who deny that he was literally the Son of God” (McGarvey, p.127).
 - c. Catholic theologians assert that Mary remained a perpetual virgin, that she never had any more children. That this is a faulty conclusion is shown by the plain statement of the text. Mary had four

- other sons and at least two daughters. Jesus was her *firstborn* (Matt. 1:25); her husband Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first son. "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS" (Matt. 1:25).
2. Verses 57-58: "And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."
 - a. He did not do **many** miracles there due to their unbelief. Mark 6:5 shows that he healed a few sick people. It would have been fruitless to perform many miracles there because of their extreme prejudice.
 - b. The parable of verse 57 is general in nature. His power to work miracles was not limited by their unbelief but their unbelief made it fruitless for him to do so. They had already rejected the truth the miracles were designed to prove.
 3. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." "This implies that he performed *some* miracles. Mark tells what they were: 'He laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them.' (Mar. 6:5)...It would have been useless to the great purposes of his mission to have worked miracles there. We are not to suppose that his *power* was limited by the belief or unbelief of men; but they were so *prejudiced*, so set against him, that they were not in a condition to *judge of evidence* and be convinced. They would have charged it to derangement, or sorcery, or the agency of the devil....He gave *sufficient* proof of his mission, and left them in their chosen unbelief without excuse" (Barnes, p.150).
 4. "This was the first council of unbelief ever held against Jesus the Son of God. It occurred not in some ivory tower of learning, nor in some gathering of wise and learned men, ah, no! It occurred in the wretched and miserable village of Nazareth; and the protagonists of this dark drama of rejection were not intellectuals, nor educated and cultured men, but were prejudiced gossips, vulgar, and ignorant buffoons, but still entitled to one marvelous distinction: *They were the spiritual ancestors of all the unbelievers who ever lived!*"
 - a. "Satan has long sponsored the lie that unbelief is sophistication, intellectuality, erudition, and 'smartness'! But in this original pilot-project for the rejection of the Christ, the truth is evident. Unbelief is not a courageous rejection of ancient dogma; it is not a brilliant conclusion of philosophical intelligence, and could lay claim to no particular power, culture, or worth of any kind that could have endowed their rejection with any semblance of justification or honesty.
 - b. "Those who fancy that the rejection of Christ is the result of comparing all religions let them know that at Nazareth there was no study, no comparison, no investigation, precious little information, and a dreadful suspicion of intellectual mediocrity, if not indeed downright stupidity.
 - c. "It is clear as the sun at perihelion that the blighting unbelief of Nazareth which blinded their eyes against the only Person who saved that town from oblivion—their unbelief was not intellectual superiority, nor moral courage, nor logic, nor philosophy, nor honest doubt. What was it? (1) It was unworthiness...(2) It was egotism...(3) It was mental laziness...(4) It was illogical...(5) It was moral cowardice...(6) It was the opiate of the people...(7) It was unbelief....The epic falsehood of the devil that unbelief is any form of intellectual activity is surely and certainly destroyed by a careful analysis of this classic example of it at Nazareth!
 - d. "...Helvidius, the most ancient commentator on this passage, said that they [the brothers and sisters of Jesus] were all the children of Mary and Joseph, born after Jesus was born. It was only in ages after men had invented religious doctrines incompatible with the obvious truth of Matthew's words, that ingenious interpretations were devised to relieve the embarrassment. All such efforts fail in the light of the simple, obvious, and necessary meaning of Matthew 13:55,56. The truth was built into the passage by the Holy Spirit and is incapable of destruction. As the noted Dr. Adam Clarke so ably expressed it, 'Why should the children of another family be brought in here to share the reproach which it is evident was designed for Joseph the carpenter, Mary his wife, and their son Jesus?' Cousins or lodge brothers simply do not fit into the picture here at all, nor would their being pulled in have aided the reproach in any way. No, the reproach was directed at Jesus and his immediate family; those others named were his literal brothers and sisters...."
 - e. "This rejection at Nazareth occurred on the second visit of Jesus, the first being described in Luke 4:16ff. This second rejection, recorded also by Mark (6:1-6), was final and determinative. Mark's
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words, 'He marveled at their unbelief,' show the shock and amazement which attended the conduct of the people of Nazareth. Christ himself was made to marvel at it.

- f. "Christ quoted this same proverb [verses 57-58] on his other visit to Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff). The human side of Christ's dual nature was foretold by Isaiah who noted that the Messiah would be 'despised and rejected of men.' (Isa.53:3). Nazareth provided the first in a series of rejections; but it should be remembered that this was precisely what was prophesied, the very unbelief of the people becoming, therefore, a further testimony of his divinity" (Coffman, pp.209-212).
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MATTHEW 14

A. Matthew 14:1-12: The Death of John the Baptizer.

1. Background of the principal characters in the narrative.
 - a. “The Herod of this lesson was known as Herod Antipas. He was the son of Herod the great and Malthace, a Samaritan, which means that he was not a Jew by blood. Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee (Lk. 3:1) and Peraea. The name of this Herod is mentioned in the New Testament more often than any other. Antipas was the Herod which Jesus referred to as “that fox” (Luke 13:32), because of his skulking treachery. This Herod was incestuously married to his niece, the former wife of his half-brother Herod Philip. Her father was Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great, thus making her the granddaughter of that wicked king. Heriodas deserted Philip for Antipas, and the latter, in turn, divorced his wife to marry Herodias. This evil, permeating influence of Herod Antipas was characterized by Jesus as ‘the leaven of Herod’ (Mark 8:15.) He was deposed as tetrarch by the emperor Caligula in A.D. 39” (ALC, 1959, pp.146f).
 - b. “John the Baptist was one of the most unique characters of the New Testament. His was a strange combination of gentleness and fire. The same man who could and did conduct himself with utmost self-effacement in the presence of Jesus, could stand before the multitude and shout, ‘Ye offspring of vipers...’ (Luke 3:7-9.)...He leveled his attack upon the tetrarch, and denounced Herod for living with Herodias....There were three basic reasons why the marriage of Antipas and Herodias was unlawful, and John therefore was on solid ground when he warned the tetrarch of his sin. The reasons were: (1) Herod himself was legally married to another woman; (2) Herodias was the legal wife of Philip; and (3) the law of Moses forbade the marriage of people who were close of kin. See Lev. 18:6-18. Thus the marriage of Antipas and Herodias was both adulterous and incestuous, and John therefore had correctly said, ‘It is not lawful for thee to have her’” (ALC, 1959, p.147).
 - c. “The forsaken wife of Antipas was a daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia who resented the insult to his family and throne, and marched upon Herod Antipas shortly after this murder of John the Baptist, and routed him with great slaughter” (Boles, p.309).
2. Verses 1-2: "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him."
 - a. The word *tetrarch* is a Greek word meaning “ruler of a fourth.” Herod the Great left a will by which his kingdom was divided into four unequal parts over which four of his sons were given rule.
 - 1) Judaea was given to Archelaus, but he was deposed and a Roman governor was appointed over this province (cf. Matt. 2:22). This explains why Pontius Pilate is shown to be the ruler over Judaea in Luke 3:1-3.
 - 2) “The Philip mentioned (Luke 3:1-2) is not the former husband of Herodias, but another brother” (ALC, p.148). The Philip who was the legal husband of Herodias was living at Rome at the time. Josephus says that Antipas stayed with Philip and Herodias while on a trip to Rome, and brought her back with him when he returned to Palestine (*Antiquities*, 18,5, p.382).
 - b. The Galilean ministry of Christ was at its height; John had been dead for some time. Antipas heard of the great miracles of Jesus and thought, as did some Jews, that this was John raised from the dead (cf. Luke 9:7-9; Matt. 16:14). “So tragic an end as had befallen John, in early manhood and in the midst of so brilliant a career, was well-calculated to startle the imagination, and the guilty conscience of Herod was ready to second any suggestions which might spring from the superstition of the people. His conception was not, as some have supposed, that John’s spirit, according to the doctrine of transmigration of souls, had been born again in the person of Jesus; for John had but recently died, and Jesus was nearly as old as he; but it was the conception, as expressed in the text, that Jesus was John risen from the dead. There was a prevalent idea among the ancients that departed spirits were endowed with superhuman powers; hence Herod’s conclusion that the supposed resurrection of John would account for the mighty works in question” (McGarvey, p.128).
 - c. John worked no miracle (John 10:41), but Herod accepted the common superstition noted above, and thus concluded that Jesus must be John whom he had killed. He is an example of one who has been

- made a coward by a guilty conscience.
3. Verses 3-5: “For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.”
 - a. Matthew now goes back to fill in the details of John’s imprisonment and persecution by Herod Antipas. We are not told how much time had elapsed between John’s murder and the time of the present events of Matthew 14.
 - 1) “Herod had put John in prison where he remained probably a year. John was imprisoned soon after Jesus began his public ministry; John’s ministry and Jesus’ ministry overlapped about six months” (Boles, p.310).
 - 2) Josephus says the imprisonment was in the castle Macherus, located a few miles east of the Dead Sea. Matthew had previously alluded to John’s imprisonment (4:12).
 - b. John was impartial and fearless in exposing sin: he rebuked the common people, the religious leaders, and even the king. No man is worthy of being called a gospel preacher who will condemn sin only in safe settings or before those who can do him no harm, and wink at sin on the part of those in high places. Herod claimed to be a believer in the law of Moses; the law forbade the marital situation he was in; but he would not repent of his evil. When John plainly said, “It is not lawful for you to have her,” the king bound him and threw him into prison, “for Herodias’ sake.”
 - c. Antipas was minded to kill John; the fear of a popular uprising prevented it. The purpose was already in his heart, even though he respected John highly.
 - 1) Mark 6:19-20: "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."
 - 2) “He was restrained not only by his own respect for John, but by fear of a violent insurrection of the people—a result which would have occurred but for the refusal of Jesus to head the movement” (McGarvey, p.129).
 - 3) The people are said to have been outraged over the conduct of Herod in his marital affairs. Public opinion is powerful; the Jewish leaders were anxious to get it turned against Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:20).
 - d. Both Herod and Herodias knew John told them the truth, but when truth condemns the soul, it often arouses resentment, anger and hatred for him who speaks the truth. Paul encountered this on many occasions, even from some who were Christians (Gal. 4:16). When men are unwilling to accept the truth as pertaining to the way they live or in the tenets they believe and practice, the gospel proclaimer is in for trouble!
 4. Verses 6-8: “But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.”
 - a. Mark 6:19-20 adds some significant information. Josephus says that Herodias was a woman full of ambition and envy, having a mighty influence on Herod, and able to persuade him to do things he was not at all inclined to do (*Antiquities*, 18,7,1, p.388). She bided her time in the case of John until the occasion of the present narrative.
 - b. Birthdays were highly esteemed and celebrated by many in the ancient world. On Herod’s birthday, a feast was given in his honor in which his lords, high captains, and chief men of Galilee participated (Mark 6:21). The world’s great men celebrate their birthdays, but our King has demanded that we celebrate his death!
 - c. At this feast, the daughter of Herodias danced before the revelers; Herod was greatly pleased. It is likely that her dance was highly suggestive or even vulgar, in keeping with common practices of the time. Secular records give her name as Salome.
 - d. “Salome lived in the 1st century AD and was the daughter of Herodias and of Herod, a son of Herod the Great. Herodias herself was a granddaughter of Herod the Great and sister of Herod Agrippa I. Salome's dancing at the birthday banquet of her stepfather, Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, so pleased the tetrarch that it induced him to offer her whatever she wished, up to half his domain. At the behest of Herodias, who desired the death of John the Baptist because he had
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denounced her marriage to her first husband's half brother, Salome demanded John's head. It was brought to her. Salome was later married to her father's half-brother, Herod Philip the Tetrarch, ruler of areas in what is now Syria, and then to Aristobulus, ruler of Lesser Armenia. The story of Salome (whose name does not appear in the New Testament) and of the death of John the Baptist is related in both Matthew 14:6-11 and Mark 6:21-28. Salome is also mentioned in the Jewish Antiquities of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus" (Encarta).

- e. So impressed was Herod over her dancing, he rashly (he was probably under the influence of strong drink at the time) promised her anything, unto half his kingdom. Mark tells us that she consulted with her mother and then made request for John's head on a charger. A charger is a platter, a deep plate or basin; the Greek word signifies a "flat board" used for any purpose, such as a writing table; it may mean a large dish in which meat or some other food is served (Boles, p.312). This foolish young girl could have had many valuable things but listened to her hate-filled mother. Secular records indicate that Salome herself was later beheaded.
5. Verses 9-12: "And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *her*. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought *it* to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus."
 - a. The king was trapped; he was sorry over this macabre request; he still feared the people, but he feared that he would lose face before his guests since he had given his word about the proffered gift. "It was a present of pecuniary value which he had promised, and not the commission of a crime. In his case, as in that of many other wicked men, the great sin of his life was committed in prosecution of a course of evil previously begun, and at the instigation of evil companions" (McGarvey, p.129).
 - b. "Josephus tells us that Herod's former wife had fled to her father Aretas, the king of Arabia Petraea, and the latter, seeking to avenge his outraged daughter proclaimed war against Herod. This probably accounts for the fact that Herod honored the military and state leaders, as set forth" in the gospel accounts (ALC, 1959, p.149).
 - c. The terrible request was granted; John was beheaded; his body was buried by his disciples. No information is given regarding the disposition of John's head.
 - d. But men, then and now, reap what they sow, oftentimes even in this life. "Countless times, Satan has maneuvered some cowardly soul into a situation where some terrible deed is committed for fear of turning back. Satan surely is a master at setting a stage like that booby trap into which Herod fell. John lost his head; Herod lost his throne as a result of that shameful deed. Aretas, father of Herod's first wife, invaded Herod's tetrarchy; Herod fled to Rome, where Caligula banished both him and Herodias to Lyons in Gaul on a charge of misgovernment. That birthday party was loaded with consequences. Things of the kind related in this passage probably account for the Jewish detestation of birthday parties which were long held by the orthodox to be a part of idolatrous worship" (Coffman, pp.215f).
 - e. "Herodias had thirsted for revenge, and sought it persistently ever since John administered the fatal rebuke; but when the gory head was laid in her lap, instead of the pleasure which she anticipated, there must have been kindled within her heart the flames of a remorse, which, like the fires of hell, never shall be quenched. The crime stamped the names of the guilty couple with greater infamy than that for which John had rebuked them; and who can depict the scene when they shall meet John in the day of judgment? Such is revenge. Let all who allow themselves to thirst for it take warning" (McGarvey, pp.129f).
 - f. After his disciples buried the headless body of John, they went and gave Jesus a report of the event, and perhaps to find in him a new leader.
 6. John Wesley made the following observation regarding the event just described: "How mysterious is the providence which left the life of so holy a man in such infamous hands! which permitted it to be sacrificed to the malice of an abandoned harlot, the petulance of a vain girl, and the rashness of a foolish, perhaps drunken, prince, who made a prophet's head the reward of a dance! But we are sure the Almighty will repay his servants in another world, for whatever they suffer in this" (ALC, 1959, p.150).
 7. There are similarities between the experiences of John and those of Elijah. Elijah had to contend with a wicked ruler (Ahab) and his even more wicked wife (Jezebel); John dealt with people of similar traits.
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B. Matthew 14:13-21: The Feeding of the Five Thousand Men.

1. Verses 13-14: “When Jesus heard *of it*, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard *thereof*, they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”
 - a. When the Lord learned of John’s fate, he decided to depart to an uninhabited area on the north edge of the sea. The multitude heard of his departure and traveled around the north edge of Galilee to meet the Lord on the other side. Jesus was deeply moved by John’s death. “The cruelty of the deed, the love which he bore to the victim, the thought of his own fate which it brought to mind, and the excitement of the people, all combined to stir within him a variety of emotions. These feelings must be held in abeyance, and the excitement of the people must be allowed to subside. To promote both of these ends, he sought the privacy of the desert, where, as the sequel shows (22), he intended to spend a long time in prayer” (McGarvey, p.130).
 - b. The desert place was not a waterless place, but an uninhabited place. Matthew calls it a desert but says there was grass there (verse 19); Mark reports that “green grass” was there (6:39); John speaks of “much grass” (6:10). Luke locates the place as being near Bethsaida (9:10). Wide, level grassy places may still be seen there, but they were so far from the city as to make it impractical for the people to return there for food. (See Coffman, p.216).
 - c. The disciples returned to him at this time; apparently they were just now getting back from the limited commission (Lk. 9:10; Mk. 6:30ff). He, the apostles, and the people gathered at the desert place described. Once again, Christ was moved with compassion, and healed the sick among them. In their excitement to be with Jesus immediately after the news of John’s martyrdom broke, they still had presence of mind enough to bring sick ones along for healing.
 - d. John’s account includes a plain declaration that some among the multitude sought to take the Lord by force and make him king. This knowledge led him to go into the mountain alone where he prayed: “When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world. Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone” (John 6:14-15).
 2. Verses 15-17: “And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.”
 - a. When the evening was nearing, the disciples requested that Jesus send the people away so they could obtain food from the villages in the area. But the Lord, in a statement designed to be a test for the disciples, told them to give food to the multitude. “Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do” (John 6:5-6).
 - b. They had nothing to feed them, and said it would take an enormous sum to buy sufficient bread to feed such a number (Mark 6:7). Two hundred pennyworth is said to represent about \$30 in our money—a veritable fortune for the time.
 3. Verses 18-21: “He said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.”
 - a. Christ then asked the apostles to bring the crowd to him; he arranged them in companies of fifty and one hundred (Lk. 9:14; Mark 6:39-40). A lad was present who had five barley loaves and two fish: cheap bread and possibly very small fish. These Jesus took, and blessed (gave thanks—John 6:11), and gave food to the people. The Lord was the chef and the apostles were the waiters (Mt. 14:19).
 - b. “‘Barley loaves’ was a common cheap food among the Jews; their leavened bread was usually about a half an inch thick; the unleavened bread thinner, and was broken by the hands and not cut with a knife, as we cut a loaf. The loaves were like large, thin biscuits” (Boles, p.316).
 - c. The same power that created the universe, which increased the widow’s cruse of oil (1 Kings 17:16),
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at the word of prophet, is here shown in increasing the substance of the bread and fish far beyond all natural powers (cf. Boles, p.317).

- d. "These [fragments] were gathered up not merely 'that anything be lost' (John 6:12), but also to exhibit more strikingly the extent of the miracle: for the quantity of fragments left after five thousand persons and more had been fed was much greater than the entire quantity at the beginning. The increase had occurred by the instantaneous restoration of the size of the loaf, as each man broke off a piece more than sufficient for himself. Thus the miracle was witnessed by each one of the five thousand, and it was really resolved into five thousand repetitions of the same miracle. On this account it was the most surprising miracle which the people had yet witnessed" (McGarvey, p.131).
- e. "It was another link in the evidence that made Jesus 'that Prophet' like unto Moses who fed the people with bread from heaven. Indeed, this was precisely the deduction which that audience drew from those remarkable events (John 6:14). Saving fragments and gathering them into baskets suggests a number of things. The super-abundance of Jesus' power is noted in the fact that they had twelve times as much left over as they had at the start. Also, since there was a popular superstition to the effect that demons lurked in crumbs, Christ flaunted it by saving the crumbs. Another thing concerns the ownership of the twelve baskets of fragments. Trench and other commentators pointed out that there was one basketful for each of the Twelve; however, by any fair reckoning, there was a prior claimant on at least one of these baskets, and that was the lad who had provided the original! It seems only fair to conclude that he was the only legitimate owner of all that was left, baskets and all. This is a parable to the effect that no man ever gave anything to Christ but that he got it back, compounded and multiplied' (Coffman, p.218).
- f. Luke 6:38: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."
- g. The number of the great multitude included 5,000 men, not counting the women and children. We naturally would expect that their number would at least equal the number of men, and maybe double that number. The entire crowd would likely be between 10,000 and 20,000 people!

C. Matthew 14:22-33: Jesus Walks on the Sea of Galilee.

1. Verses 22-23: "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone."
 - a. The Lord had started for the seclusion of the deserted place earlier in the day; his aim was interrupted by the multitude; following the miraculous feeding of the great crowd, the Lord now "constrained" the apostles to enter the ship and return to the other shore.
 - 1) "Constrain" is a strong word and implies that they were reluctant to leave him. If they had just returned from their limited commission, as it appears, then it is clear why they were hesitant about leaving him so soon. They longed for his company.
 - 2) But also they may have thought he was about to do something vastly important. Some in the crowd had just attempted to take him by force and make him king in Israel. John the Baptizer had been murdered. His followers looked to Jesus as a literal deliverer. The concept of Israel and the apostles was that the Messiah would be a ruler in the same sense as were David and Solomon. Perhaps Jesus could take control of the government and miraculously drive away the oppressive Romans! This possibility lurks in the background of the scene.
 - b. "Following so closely upon the rejection at Nazareth, this enthusiastic desire of a vast concourse of people to make Jesus king by force must have been a genuine temptation to Christ" (Coffman, p.219).
 - c. Having dismissed the multitude and constrained the disciples to depart in the boat, the Lord now goes into the mountain to pray.
2. Verses 24-25: "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."
 - a. The Sea of Galilee is only about six miles in width, and no more than ten miles at its greatest length. The disciples, after many hours of rowing against the wind, were only about halfway across, struggling against the stormy winds. Jesus saw their distress (Mk. 6:48), and came to them during the fourth

watch, walking on the boisterous waves. The Roman watch-system was divided into four parts: 6-9 p.m. (1st); 9-12 p.m. (2nd); 12-3 a.m. (3rd); 3-6 a.m. (4th).

- b. Woods offers this information: They had rowed about 25-30 furlongs into the sea which was about 3-3½ miles out, and were in the midst of the lake.
 - 1) “The strong winds greatly agitated the waters of the sea of Galilee and the waves were becoming higher and higher. It was evidently a sudden storm, not uncommon for that lake; cold air from the highlands often moved down the valleys and collided with the warm air above the lake, thus producing stormy winds and tempestuous seas where shortly before the waters were quiet and tranquil. Though they had now been on the bosom of the lake for some hours, they had covered no more than twenty-five or thirty ‘furlongs,’ approximately three or three and a half miles.
 - 2) “Mark says Jesus saw them, perhaps from the mountain where he prayed, though it was no less a miracle if he were on shore, because they were in darkness and too far from land to have been normally in view.
 - 3) “How we should rejoice in this wonderfully consoling and reassuring fact! Alone, or with others; troubled or in peace; ill or in good health; in darkness of the night or the brilliant light of a beautiful day, he sees us and is wholly aware of us and ready to come to our aid. It is comforting to know that we are never out of his sight nor beyond the scope of his care” (Guy N. Woods, *John*, p.121).
- c. “Suddenly, Jesus appeared near the boat, walking on the water. It was in the fourth watch of the night (Matt. 14:25), shortly after 3 a.m. The effect of this remarkable event on the disciples was immeasurable. They see one approaching the boat, walking on the water as on a paved street, whom they have not yet recognized and their amazement gives way to terror and they become exceedingly afraid, having concluded that a phantom, a strange apparition, was drawing near out of the eerie darkness of the stormy night to confront them” (Woods, p.121).
3. Verses 26-33: “And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.”
 - a. They saw him as he neared the boat and cried out in fear; to calm their fears, he identified himself. Peter wanted to walk out to meet him; Jesus assented. Peter’s faith turned to fear and he started to sink, before reaching the Lord. The Savior lifted him up. The wind ceased immediately on their entering the boat. This so impressed them they confessed his divinity.
 - b. “The incident shows that fear is a source of doubt and an enemy of faith; and it illustrates the fact that those who possessed miraculous gifts could only succeed in working miracles when their faith was in lively exercise” (McGarvey pp.132f).
 - c. They quickly recognized his voice though his form was indistinct at first. By simply saying, “It is I; be not afraid,” he dispelled their fear. “From this warm and encouraging message to them the disciples lost their fear and rejoiced again to be in the presence of their Saviour” (Woods, p.121).
 - d. John 6:21 says, “Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” “Though the boat was in the midst of the sea and about three and a half miles from shore, no sooner was Jesus in it until the vessel and its occupants were in Capernaum—immediately transported there by miracle” (Woods, p.122).

D. Matthew 14:34-36: Miraculous Healings in Gennesaret.

1. Verse 34: “And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.”
 - a. “The land of Gennesaret was a [plain] at the northwest curve of the lake of Galilee, which Josephus describes as about thirty furlongs in length by about twenty in average width, and bounded on the west by a semicircular line of hills. It was exceedingly fertile, and was thickly set with cities and villages. Capernaum was near its northern extremity, and near the southern was the city of Magdala. The lake itself was sometimes called, from the name of this [plain], the sea of Gennesaret” (McGarvey, p.133).

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- b. This sea is also called “The Sea of Tiberias” (John 6:1), “Sea of Chinnereth” or “Chinneroth” (Num. 34:11; Josh. 12:3).
 - c. “It is probable that the disciples left the eastern coast of the sea to go to Capernaum on the western coast, but the storm had driven them out of their course and they landed south of Capernaum” (Boles, p.322). The Lord had sent them off in the boat to go to a place near Bethsaida and Capernaum (Mark 6:45; John 6:17).
2. Verses 35-36: “And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.”
- a. John 6:22ff gives some details about the people seeking out Jesus. Matthew tells about the gathering of many who were sick.
 - b. “The prompt action of the people in sending out into every part of the [plain] for the sick, was the result of their previous acquaintance with Jesus, and their faith in his power and goodness. That the touch of the hem of his garment made many perfectly whole, was the surprising reward of their implicit faith” (McGarvey, p.133).
 - c. “Those who touched were not merely helped; they were made perfectly whole. No efficacy in his garment is implied; not the garment, but Christ healed. He needed no staff, as did Moses; he needed no mantle, as Elijah; he required no instrument except himself. His word alone cast out demons, stilled the tempest, changed the water into wine, and raised the dead!” (Coffman, p.223). There was no exception; he healed all who touched his garment; he never met with failure in healing!
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MATTHEW 15

A. Matthew 15:1-9: Jesus Contends With Scribes and Pharisees Over Washing Hands.

1. Verses 1-2: “Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”
 - a. Certain scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem came to Jesus. “In this passage is the first raindrop in a gathering storm of opposition from the heads of the Jewish nation. This opposition by the powerful party of the scribes and Pharisees was launched against Jesus by the raising of what seems to be a very small and petty quibble about washing hands; but this opposition, so mildly stated here, was vicious and unrelenting and would never cease for an instant till these men would shout in a frenzy of hatred, ‘His blood be on us and our children’” (Coffman, p.225).
 - b. “The career of Jesus in Galilee, together with the two visits which he had made to Jerusalem (John 2:13; 5:1), had arrested the attention of the leading minds in that city. The scribes and Pharisees here mentioned were in all probability sent up by their associates in Jerusalem to counteract his influence. They expected to put him to a severer test than had been applied by the less cultivated scribes and Pharisees of Galilee, and they entered the contest with confident hope of success” (McGarvey, p.133). There were two classes of scribes: civil and ecclesiastical. They are also called lawyers or doctors (Mt. 22:35; Lk. 5:17). Jesus was probably in Capernaum when this company came to him from Jerusalem.
 - c. The reference to eating with unwashed hands is not to eating with dirty hands, but to a ceremonial washing which the traditionalists of the time thought was mandatory to remain spiritually pure. The objection the investigators raised with Jesus was over the fact that his disciples had violated the traditions of the elders by eating with unwashed hands. If the disciples were following Jesus’ word, it could be supposed that the Lord had permitted this violation, hence the charge was also directed toward him. This was the best means at their disposal to attack Jesus.
 - d. “The tradition that a man should not eat without first washing his hands, was an extension by human authority of the Mosaic law of uncleanness. Other traditions belonging to the same category are mentioned in Mark 7:3,4. It could not be denied that the disciples transgressed this tradition, and as the accusers held the traditions to be equal in authority to the written word, they thought they had certainly convicted Jesus of allowing this transgression” (McGarvey, p.134).
 - e. The elders were the men of learning of the past who had passed down their interpretations of the law. “The Pharisees taught that when Moses received the ‘written law’ he was instructed also in another law, which he was not to write down, but to deliver to the elders of the congregation. This oral law, they maintained, was the only authorized interpretation of the written law, so that a Jew could never be certain of the meaning of the written law, until he had inquired of the Pharisees the explanation of the former. These traditions or interpretations of this oral law were enforced on the common people, and punishment for violation of them was as severe as the punishment for the violation of the ‘written law’ Their traditions said, ‘He who eats bread with unwashed hands is as bad as if he were to commit fornication.’ Jesus drew a distinction between ‘the law of Moses’ and ‘the tradition of the elders’” (Boles, p.324).
 2. Verse 3: “But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”
 - a. The Lord tacitly admitted that his disciples had violated the tradition on washing hands. He justified them by attacking the rightness of tradition—this tradition and all others. He charged these errorists of having transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition. Thus he showed that the tradition itself was sinful; and since the tradition was wrong, the violation of the tradition was not wrong.
 - b. “The genius of Christ is that he always referred issues to their highest level. Not their tradition, but the word of God, that was the truly important obligation; and Christ ignored their tradition and challenged them for their own disregard of God’s commandments. Nor did he stop with a theoretical charge; he named cases and gave examples of their lapse” (Coffman, p.226).
 3. Verses 4-6: “For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*.”
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Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

- a. To sustain his charge against them, he brings up their tradition involving the support of indigent, aged parents. God commanded that father and mother were to be honored; he specified capital punishment against one who cursed father or mother. In this regard, notice that Christ says God is the author of the Old Testament law containing this ordinance. Jesus also placed his stamp of approval on capital punishment. Compare: “Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” (John 10:34-36)
- b. God said one thing in his law while the Jews had developed a tradition which violated it. “The commandment, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ requires a son to support his parents when they become dependent. And the statute, ‘He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death,’ required the death of any son who would practically curse his aged parents by casting them off into beggary or starvation. But they had taught that a son could say of that part of the estate by which his parent might be profited, it is a gift; that is, a gift to God (*Corban*, Mark 7:11), and thereby free himself from the obligation. Thus the commandment was made of no effect by freeing from it every ungrateful son who was mean enough to desire such freedom. This example did not touch the question of uncleanness, but it proved that tradition was an unauthoritative and mischievous guide, and as the objection of the scribes was based on the authority of tradition, it destroyed the force of the objection” (McGarvey, p.134).
- c. “‘Corban’ means a thing solemnly set apart by a formal vow to the sacred use of the service of God, hence it could not be used by or for any other person....From that time he could not apply any of his property to the support of his parents because, said the Pharisees, he broke a vow to God; but he was not bound nor expected actually to devote it to God he was only bound by it *not to support his parents. He might use it freely upon himself*” (Boles, p.325).
- d. “The Pharisees were making a secondary duty the excuse for denying a primary one, a device observed continually in all ages. By dedicating his properties to the temple, the selfish man, by reserving a life estate in his possession, could legally deny any aid or support to needy parents, thus thwarting completely God’s will relative to honoring father and mother” (Coffman, p.227).
- e. “What’s wrong with tradition? Only one thing: it vitiates God’s word. Any harm in it? Well, take the case presented here, relative to washing hands ceremonially, which was the basis of the Pharisees’ assault on Christ. That ceremony was harmless in a sense, perhaps even helpful as cleanliness or hygiene; but it had been forced into the worship of God, solely by human authority, and eventually blinded the eyes of men so completely that they could not even see the Son of Righteousness!....God accepts only those things as worship which he himself has authorized and commanded. Furthermore, given a choice between the word of God and the human tradition, the universal experience of the human race is to the effect that the tradition wins acceptance and the word of God is violated. Mark’s account of this place has the words, ‘Full well do you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition (Mark 7:8,9)....Behold the life-cycle of tradition:
 - 1) “First appears the innovation, something new, clothed with specious plausibility, riding the crest of some unusual occasion, some exceptional circumstance, or emergency.
 - 2) “It is repeated and moves into a place of acceptance as something *allowed*, occasionally at first, invariably afterwards.
 - 3) “It becomes appreciated as an ‘aid’ to the worship, something helpful.
 - 4) “Eventually, it is stressed and emphasized to the detriment of what is supposed to ‘aid.’
 - 5) “It achieves, through long usage, a status of equality with God’s word.
 - 6) “It is finally performed, occasionally, but later, always, *instead* of God’s commandment.
 - 7) “Finally, it blooms as a presumptuous, rebellious contradiction of God’s word, and is constantly honored in place of it” (Coffman, pp.227f).
- f. In the light of the foregoing statements, consider the substitution of affusion for baptism, instrumental music in worship, the use of missionary societies to do the work God gave the church to do, Christmas pageants and operettas in place of scriptural worship, the use of choirs, and other such innovations.

Some congregations are putting on drama presentations in place of scriptural worship.

4. Verses 7-9: “*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*”
 - a. In what way were these scribes and Pharisees hypocrites? “There was hypocrisy in the device of the traditionists, because in proposing to honor God by vowing to him what should go to the poor parent, there was the false pretense of doing for his honor what was really done to gratify avarice. All similar substitutions of human expedients in the place of God’s appointments are prompted by some improper desire, and are therefore liable to the same charge” (McGarvey, p.134).
 - b. They claimed to believe the prophets, but Isaiah, one of their most beloved, condemned what they were doing by their traditions. The passage cited is from Isaiah 29:13. By substituting the precepts of men for the word of God, they had made their worship vain and unacceptable to God. “In vain” means void, empty, without purpose. Acceptable worship is based on revelation. After all, God is the object of our worship and has reserved the right to dictate what is to be offered to him in worship. When men insist on following their own precepts instead of what God has said in their various religious activities, their worship is also made vain and unacceptable. So says this passage.
 - c. “Fear toward God, if pure and rightly inspired, springs from the word of God, and not from the commandments of man. So far as it induces any worship at all, induces vain worship, and there is probably not one such addition which does not, to a greater or less degree, make some commandment void. Thus the tradition of infant baptism, to the extent that it is adopted, makes of no effect the commandment concerning the baptism of believers, by baptizing persons in their infancy; and if it should become universally prevalent, by the baptism of all persons in their infancy it would bring to an end forever the only baptism commanded of God” (McGarvey, p.135).
 - d. Washing hands, of itself, is harmless and commendable. But in binding it as a religious requirement presumed on the authority of the Almighty. To infringe on the legislative prerogatives of God is sinful in the first magnitude. Thus, many warnings and admonitions are given in the Bible against such intrusion (Gal. 1:6-12; 1 Cor. 4:6 (ASV); Rev. 22:18-19; 2 John 9-11; 2 Cor. 2:14-17).

B. Matthew 15:10-20: Things That Defile the Soul.

1. Verses 10-11: “And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.”
 - a. The scribes and Pharisees had come from Jerusalem to disrupt the influence of Jesus. They thought they could do this by creating prejudice in the people toward the Lord. In this they failed miserably! Having been exposed so emphatically, they shrink into the background and are heard from no more in this meeting.
 - b. In addressing them the Lord “did not touch the question of uncleanness raised by the Pharisees, but performed the more important task of showing the want of authority and the mischievous effects of all tradition; in this, he defends the conduct of his disciples by stating that a man is defiled, not by that which goes into his mouth, but by that which comes out. He gives this explanation, not to the Pharisees, who were captious objectors not willing to hear any defense, but to the more teachable multitude; and he makes the statement on the naked authority of his own word, relying on their good sense for its acceptance” (McGarvey, p.135).
 - c. ““This he said, making all meats clean” (Mark 7:19). Strangely, men are still trying to get to heaven on some kind of diet! Some won’t eat pork; some eat only fish on certain days; and some are actually vegetarians! Novation said, ‘God is not worshiped by the belly nor by meats....He who worships the Lord by meats, is merely as one who has his belly for the Lord’” (Coffman, p.229). Cf. 1 Timothy 4:1 ff.
 - d. Food does not defile the soul. Certain meats were forbidden in the law to school the Jewish mind and prepare them for the higher and nobler law of Christ. But they had so grossly perverted the teachings of the law that they thought that there was something innately sinful about the flesh of certain animals.
 - e. The Lord gives a broad principle that sin does not lie in food. Sin is the transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Jesus placed in contrast to each other that which goes into a man’s digestive system and that which comes out of a man’s heart. A man’s moral actions, words, and motives are expressions of his

- will and intent; this is what defiles a man's soul, if it is not governed by the will of God.
2. Verses 12-14: "Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."
 - a. After the scribes and Pharisees and the multitude were gone, the disciples asked him a question: "Did you know that the Pharisees were offended at what you said to them?" "They seem to be taking the Pharisees' part, ever so mildly, in this gentle remonstrance. Christ's magnificent reply showed that the Pharisees were not merely wrong, but totally so, that they would be plucked up, and that they were blind leaders of the blind, destined for the ditch" (Coffman, p.230).
 - b. "The disciples were pained at the offense given to these highly respectable strangers from Jerusalem; for, like many Christians of the present day, their respect for the feelings of men was greater than their zeal for the truth. The 'sayings' (*logon*) which had given offense was the entire speech. He had proved that by their tradition they were nullifying the word of God; he had charged them with hypocrisy; he had declared that all of their worship based on the authority of tradition was vain worship; and he had swept away the entire fabric of their traditionary law of uncleanness, by declaring that a man is not defiled by that which goes into his mouth. He had not only defended himself, but he had turned their own weapons with irresistible effect against them, and it is not surprising that they were offended" (McGarvey, pp.135f).
 - c. The Lord's statement concerning every plant being rooted up except those which God had planted has a broad application. God will root up every evil, every rebellious thought, every institution, every doctrine and every practice which run contrary to his will. The Lord here compares the Pharisees and their human dogmas as plants in a garden; they had not been planted there by God, and thus would be pulled up, roots and all, as a gardener would uproot all the unwanted weeds that cumber the ground. A similar thought is expressed in Psalm 127:1: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."
 - d. "The traditions of the elders were plants which God had not planted; they were the doctrines of men, and such can never stand before the word of God. Jesus assured his apostles that the truth would ultimately and finally be victorious and that all doctrines of men must fail" (Boles, p.329).
 - e. In verse 14, the Lord told his disciples to let such men alone. "That is the admonition of Christ with reference to the worldly wise, socially prominent, sophisticated, unscrupulous, hypocritical religious leaders. The apostles would have been able to do the Pharisees no good, and there was a grave possibility the Pharisees would do the apostles harm by damaging their faith....Spiritual darkness and sin are set forth in this place under the figure of blindness, a symbol often so used in the Bible (2 Peter 1:9, etc.) (Coffman, p.230). The disciples were told to let such men alone, but not in the sense of ceasing to expose their error. They were to pay them no mind; they would be unable to convert such hard people; they were not to allow their opposition to hinder them. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Christians today need to beware of modern false teachers.
 - f. Both the false teacher and his dupe will fall into the ditch. "It is sometimes thought that if a man is led by his teacher he will be excused for going astray; but Jesus here teaches that the blind man who is led will fall into the ditch with his blind leader. This is clear enough in reference to the literally blind, and Jesus asserts it in reference to the spiritually blind. If a man, knowing himself to be blind, allows another blind man to lead him, he deserves to fall into the ditch. He should choose a leader who can see, and as there is no leader who can see all the way that we have to travel except Jesus, let us take his word as our only guide, going only as it leads us. The word of God must be our pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night; we move when it moves, and stop where it stops" (McGarvey, p.136). "And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke 6:39). Only the blind will follow the blind!
 3. Verses 15-16: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?"
 - a. When they had entered the house (Mark 7:17), Peter asked the Lord to explain this "parable." Strictly
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speaking, it was a proverb, a short pithy statement filled with spiritual truth.

- b. In response to the request, Christ mildly rebuked them by his question.
4. Verses 17-21: "Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man."
 - a. "Here the Christian idea of uncleanness is fully stated, and the disciples were the better prepared for it by the gradual manner in which it was approached. In this entire paragraph Jesus treats of that which the uncleanness of the law typified, and not of legal uncleanness itself. Although, according to the law of Moses, eating with unwashed hands did not defile a man, yet some things entering into the mouth did have this effect. (See Lev. 11:40.) But the Pharisees, confounding the type with the antitype, taught that the *soul* was defiled by that which caused only legal uncleanness. Jesus corrects this mistake, and in giving the true significance of the type, gives the true conception of uncleanness under the Christian dispensation" (McGarvey, pp,136f).
 - b. The mouth is the body's instrument for food and talk; that which enters the mouth proceeds through the digestive system. But that which comes from the mouth (words) has its origin in the heart. Food does not defile the soul, but evil motives, thoughts, words and actions do defile the soul. The Lord specifies evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.
 - c. The heart is the inner man, the soul, the spirit.
 - 1) Mark 7:21: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders."
 - 2) Luke 11:39: "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness."
 - 3) Romans 2:29: "But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God."
 - 4) Romans 7:22: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."
 - 5) 2 Corinthians 4:16: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day."
 - 6) 1 Peter 3:4: "But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."
 - d. "A slight problem occurs in that Peter inquired about one thing, the blind leading the blind; and Jesus answered with emphasis on another thing, the things that defile a man. This was often done by Christ as for example in Luke 13:23....In this case, Christ replied by giving Peter the information he needed, rather than by replying in the same vein as the question" (Coffman, pp.231f). [See Coffman, p.231 for comments refuting transubstantiation].
 - e. Since that which enters the mouth can defile the soul, then nothing entering the mouth can sanctify and bless the soul. Of course, alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs must not be taken into the body; these have definite harmful effects and are sinful. To this we have this prohibition in Acts 15:20: "But that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood."
 - 1) Forbidden also was the eating of things which had been strangled, and the eating of blood. Eating animals that had been strangled violated the precept of eating blood, since strangling did not usually lead to the removal of blood from the animal.
 - 2) This restriction predates the Law of Moses, going back to at least Genesis 9. When Noah and his family left the ark, God emphasized the preciousness of blood and forbade the eating of blood (Gen. 9:1-6). Blood transfusions do not violate this precept since it is not eating blood.

C. Matthew 15:21-31: The Syro-Pheonician Woman and Others.

1. Verse 21: "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon."
 - a. The coasts of Tyre and Sidon are the regions in which those cities were situated. Jesus was now in the Gentile land northwest of Galilee known as Phoenicia. The events of this passage took place during the Lord's third year of ministry (ALC, 1959, p.151).

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- b. To avoid the interference of, and untimely controversy with, the Pharisees, the Lord withdrew to these border areas. Mark 7:24 indicates the Lord was seeking refuge where he could have some solitude for a while. He was unable to find it. "And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid" (Mark 7:24).
 2. Verse 22: "And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."
 - a. A woman of that place came to the Lord with a request for help. She is called a "woman of Canaan" by Matthew; Mark describes her as a Greek (Gentile), a "Syrophenician by nation." "That country was taken by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and those cities, in the time of Christ, were Greek cities. This woman was therefore a Gentile....She was by birth a Syro-Phoenician, born in that country, and descended, therefore, from the ancient Canaanites" (Barnes, p.163).
 - b. This woman approached the Lord with a tender request: Have mercy on me. The request was actually in behalf of her daughter who was grievously vexed with an unclean spirit. Mark indicates that the daughter was quite young. The fame of the Lord had spread even to this area, and possibly far beyond. She knew of his healing powers and besought him for her daughter.
 - c. Notice that she called him "son of David," a term indicating that he was the Messiah. She was not ignorant of his identity. "These words in the mouth of a Gentile woman on Gentile soil are remarkable. They show that she was acquainted with the Jewish idea of the Messiah, and they indicate the spread of Jewish ideas and hopes among surrounding nations" (McGarvey, p.138). Matthew 4:24 shows that his fame had spread this far. "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" (Matt. 4:24).
 - d. Her request plainly indicates a degree of faith and humility. More of the same is shown as the story unfolds.
 3. Verse 23: "But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us."
 - a. The Lord's response was "the silence of love." He said nothing at all; he was giving her the opportunity to strengthen and demonstrate her faith more fully. Perhaps also, as asserted by Coffman, he was putting the apostles to the test to see whether they would be kindly disposed to this Gentile woman. His public mission was primarily for the Jews; he was sent to them, was born as one of them, lived and worked among them, and died at their insistence. But his earthly work was in preparation for the establishment of his universal kingdom which was intended for all people.
 - 1) Isaiah 2:2-3: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
 - 2) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 3) Daniel 7:13-14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."
 - 4) Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
 - 5) Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.
 - b. The disciples besought Jesus to send her away. It is not clear whether they wanted her to be sent away with or without receiving her request. They were annoyed at her pleas.
 - c. "Christ answered not a word, perhaps hoping that the disciples might, through human love and kindness, say a word on her behalf. It was a vain hope. Christ's first reply not only confirmed the
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- Twelve in their attitude but served the double purpose of giving the woman a chance to demonstrate her faith and prompting the disciples to express their feelings openly” (Coffman, p.233). But McGarvey says they did not mean that he should send her away by granting it (p.138).
4. Verse 24: “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
 - a. Again it is not clear whether this statement was addressed to the woman or the disciples. Perhaps it was meant for both. His ministry was aimed toward the Jews (John 1:11-12), but there were cases where he extended it to include people of other nations. The events of verses 21-39 in this chapter and the noble centurion of chapter eight are notable exceptions to the rule.
 - b. His statement is that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was especially directed to the woman, it appears, and was an obstacle which her faith must surmount.
 5. Verse 25: “Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.”
 - a. She persisted in her request. This shows the deep devotion toward her little daughter and her belief that Christ could offer help.
 - b. She simply pleaded with him; no argument was offered. There must have been tears on her face and her voice was likely choked with overpowering emotion. Mark says she fell at his feet.
 6. Verse 26: “But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast *it* to dogs.”
 - a. His next response was to state that it was not proper to take the bread which belonged to the children and cast it to the dogs. On the surface in our English translations this seems to be overly severe and harsh; he likens this woman and other Gentiles to dogs! But this is a case where the Greek text is extremely helpful: the term he used for “dogs” is *kunariois*, literally meaning “little dogs.” It is a diminutive term. The picture the Lord presents in the statement is of a family eating at the table; it would not be seemly for the children’s food to be taken from them and given to the puppies playing under the table.
 - b. “The idea is not the uncleanness of the dogs, but rather their dependence and subordinate position. There was nothing degrading about the Lord’s metaphor; he was simply emphasizing the relative positions of the Jews and Gentiles. The children first, and then their pets” (ALC, 1959, p.153).
 - c. “But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it unto the dogs” (Mark 7:27).
 - d. This put the woman’s faith to a very stiff test; most people would have given up in despair and anger over being thus rebuffed. Too many of us wear our feelings on our sleeves, and are vulnerable to all kinds of heartaches and disappointments.
 7. Verse 27: “And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”
 - a. The woman quickly agreed with the Lord’s statement, but then turned it to her own advantage. “In her inimitable reply, ‘Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table,’ we know not which to admire more—the readiness of her wit, or the depth of her humility” (McGarvey, p.139).
 - b. “Jesus had suggested the order in the home by which the pets are required to wait until the meal is over before receiving their portion; but with a wit made keen by her desperate plight, the mother replies by adding to the well known fact that dogs under the table are permitted to eat the crumbs which fall to the floor even while the meal is in progress; thereby intimating her hope to receive aid even before the needs of the Jews had been entirely satisfied” (ALC, 1959, pp.153f).
 - c. “The use of the diminutive throughout this exchange between Jesus and the woman is very interesting and suggestive. First, Jesus says that it is not meet to feed the ‘little dogs,’ that is, household pets, before the children have their portion; and then the woman replies, Yea, Lord, even the ‘little dogs’ eat of the ‘little crumbs’ which fall from their masters’ (‘little children’s’) table. Thus, with ready wit, deep humility, and abundant faith, this woman skillfully turned the Lord’s figure to her own advantage. She accepted the Lord’s evaluation of the situation, and plead only to fare as the household pets which are fed without loss to the household” (ALC, *ibid*, p.154).
 - d. She was willing for Jesus to give the Jews what he would but she desired to obtain what little “crumb” might be left over. They would not be any poorer, and she would be immensely enriched. “Jesus never did, and could not from his nature, deny any good thing asked for with such faith, with such humility, with such perseverance” (Boles, p.334).
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8. Verse 28: "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."
- We can now see why Jesus did not immediately grant the woman's request. He knew the strength of her faith, and for the purpose of having her demonstrate it for her own sake, for the disciples' sake, and for our sake, he placed these strong obstacles before her. Being Divine, he could know her heart and thus determine the degree of faith she possessed, as well as her sincerity. Jesus had met with much unbelief, even in the face of the strongest possible evidence, on the part of many of his own nation. But with this woman he found a refreshing and bountiful supply of faith and humility.
 - "It has been noted that the hindrances which were thrown in this woman's way tended only to increase her faith. The faith which was hers may be compared to a river, which becomes enlarged by dams which have been placed across it, until at last they are all swept away by the mighty stream which they helped to create" (ALC, *ibid*, p.154).
 - "The earnest perseverance of the faithful woman gains its point, and her mother's heart is made to rejoice. Less love for her child, or less faith in Jesus, would have caused a failure. The entire scene is often repeated in pious households. How often a pious mother, with a child grievously vexed with the demon of sin, cries piteously and long to the blessed Savior, saying, 'Lord, help me.' And how often does Jesus appear, for a while, to give no heed to the cry, until even a cold world begins to pity the wretched petitioner. But finally, when a mighty faith has been developed out of sorrow and weeping, the unheard answer comes, 'Be it unto thee as thou wilt.' The story of the Canaanite woman is a type, and it is written for our admonition on whom the ends of the world have come. It is another illustration of the Savior's doctrine, that 'men ought always to pray, and not to faint' (Luke 18:1-8)" (McGarvey, p.139).
 - "When her attitude is contrasted with some in later generations who become offended, puffed up, and repelled by the slightest suspicion of indifference in God's ministers, it is perfectly clear that many nominal seekers simply do not have the faith ever to be saved, or having it, are so full of egotism and pride that it can never do them any good" (Coffman, p.235).
 - The New Testament only records two occasions where the Lord commended anyone's faith with such words, and both cases involved Gentile people (this woman and the centurion in Matthew 8). Among the Jews, it would appear, such faith was not often found, perhaps never found by the Lord. Among those who had been prepared for many centuries for the coming of the Messiah, surprising little faith was manifested by them. They had many benefits and advantages not owned by the Gentiles of those ancient times. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2).
 - The Lord granted her request; her daughter was made whole from that very hour; when she returned home she found her daughter well and lying on a bed. "And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed" (Mark 7:30).
9. Verses 29-31: "And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel."
- Matthew gives a summary of events which must have covered several days' journey and many hours of work and detail which are only casually covered by the text.
 - They departed from the area of Phoenicia near Tyre and Sidon, and made their way to a place near the Sea of Galilee. Mark's record shows that they passed through the province of Decapolis which lies to the east and southeast of the Sea. They may have passed to the north of the Sea of Galilee, on south into Decapolis. "The last paragraph located him north-west of Galilee, and the present locates him on the opposite side of Galilee, without noting the route by which he had made the transit" (McGarvey, p.139).
 - He sat down in a certain mountain, reminiscent of when he presented the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mt. 5:1ff). Again, great multitudes gathered before him. "The people on the east side of the Jordan were Jews, but they had fallen into great errors with respect to the law" (Boles, p.335).
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- d. "Only once before, when he cured the man with the legion of demons, had Jesus been in this district; and then the people had requested him to go away. (8:34.) But now, influenced partly by their own reflections, and partly by the preaching of the demoniac (Mark 5:19-20), they flock around him with their 'lame, blind, dumb, and maimed'" (McGarvey, pp.139f). However, these would not likely be the same people; the former episode occurred at Gadara; we are not told exactly where this latter event took place. The two places were in the same area, however. "Though there were also Jews in the area, this was predominately Gentile territory, and it would seem that Gentiles may have predominated in the crowds that resorted to Jesus at this time" (ALC, 1973, p.160).
- e. Matthew gives more details than does Mark. The former identifies several maladies which were healed by the Lord, while the latter names only one, but places a greater degree of emphasis on it (see Mark 7:31-37). This is characteristic of Mark's account. For example, in the case of the demoniac the Lord healed when the unclean spirits were permitted to enter into a herd of swine, Matthew says there were two individuals from whom demons were expelled; Mark mentions only one (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1 ff).
- f. The result of these miracles was that the people glorified the God of Israel. Mark says they were astonished beyond measure.

D. Matthew 15:32-39: The Feeding of the Four Thousand.

1. Verses 32-38: "Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children."
 - a. Most of the details between this event and that of 14:15-21 are similar. In this case, the people had been with the Lord three days; their food had run out. Jesus would not dismiss them lest they should faint in the way. The disciples had forgotten about the former case or did not think it would be repeated.
 - b. Seven loaves and a few fish were found among the multitude with which he fed the four thousand men, plus the women and children. Seven baskets of food were left over. This basket is from the same word as that basket used by Paul in his escape from Damascus (Acts 9:25).
 2. Verse 39: "And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala."
 - a. He departed for Magdala, the hometown of Mary Magdalene. Mark says they went to Dalmanutha, which was evidently in the vicinity of Magdala. Matthew simply calls the area to which they went as "the coasts of Magdala."
 - b. Magdala: "Place name perhaps meaning, 'tower.' City on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and center of a prosperous fishing operation. The town was located on a main highway coming from Tiberias. See Magadan. A certain Mary, who had been healed of demon possession by Jesus, was from Magdala"(Holman).
 - c. Dalmanutha: "Place to which Jesus and His disciples came following the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:10). Its location is not known. The parallel reference in Matthew 15:39 suggests it was in the area of Magdala" (Holman).
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MATTHEW 16

A. Matthew 16:1-12: Jesus Rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees.

1. Verse 1: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven."
 - a. It was highly unusual for these two warring sects to act in accord, but in opposing their common enemy (Jesus), they were willing to set aside their considerable differences. There was hardly anything they agreed on: The Sadducees rejected the resurrection, angels, and spirits; the Pharisees believed in all of these (Acts 23:6-9). The Sadducees were the materialists of the day; the Pharisees were the presumptuous tradition-binders.
 - 1) Acts 23:6-9: "But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."
 - 2) He perceived that the group was made up of Sadducees and Pharisees. He cried out loudly that he had a background as a Pharisee, and that it was over the subject of the resurrection of the dead that had caused him to be called into question. These two religious sects had been long divided over this very issue, plus belief in angels and spirits; the Pharisees believed all three doctrines and the Sadducees denied them all. The multitude was divided along the lines of the two groups represented. They began to bicker over the time-worn issues.
 - b. "This is the first and only time that the Pharisees and Sadducees are mentioned as acting in concert against Jesus. Their extreme jealousy toward each other, and the very different grounds on which they were opposed to Jesus, rendered concert of action almost impossible. The chief cause for which the Pharisees opposed, was his disregard of their traditions; and in this the Sadducees sympathized with Jesus, because they also denied the authority of tradition. In regard to his miracles they occupied common ground and hence their agreement in asking for a sign from heaven" (McGarvey, p.141).
 - c. Enemies have often become friends after uniting in a common opposition of a mutual foe. Herod and Pilate found friendship in disposing of the case of Christ (Luke 23:12; cf. 2 Kings 19). The warring sects of the modern era have found common cause when they joined forces in opposition to our preaching of the truth. The Baptists have gladly accepted the assistance of the Methodists in opposing us on the purpose of baptism, although these two groups have fought many battles between themselves over the action of baptism.
 - d. These evil men came tempting the Lord by asking him for a sign from heaven. Back in chapter twelve, he had been asked for a sign which he properly refused to give. In that case, he had just performed a notable miracle which they had ignored; it would have been fruitless to do another. In the present case, they had discounted the value of the various miracles he had already done, some in their presence, so what good would another sign be?
 - 1) "They did not really wish to see a sign from heaven, that they might believe in him, or that others might believe in him; but either they wished him to fail to show a sign, or they hoped to prove to the multitude that, by his not producing a sign, he was not the Messiah, and if not the Messiah, he was an impostor and should be put to death" (Boles, p.338).
 - 2) Old Testament prophets had produced certain signs "from heaven"—manna (Ex. 16:4; Jn. 6:31); thunder (1 Sam. 12:16-18); change in the sundial (Isa. 38:8). The Lord had more than equaled these signs.
 - e. False teachers will try to avoid exposure by appealing to this passage and Matthew 12:38 when they are asked for proof of their assertions. Their situation is very different from the Lord's, thus they misuse the argument. They have not and cannot produce even one miraculous sign! If they could, a second would not be necessary—but there must be a first!

2. Verses 2-4: “ He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”
- a. “This was not an endorsement of the Pharisees’ method of predicting the weather, but was a glaring contrast, pointed out by Jesus, between their supposed sagacity in material things and their blindness to far more important spiritual things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven” (Coffman, p.240).
 - b. “What are ‘the signs of the times’? (1) The prophetic weeks of Daniel were about to expire. (2) The great herald of the new age, John the Baptist, had appeared according to prophecy, ‘in the spirit and power of Elijah.’ (3) The scepter had departed from Judah and the lawgiver from beneath his feet (Gen. 49:10). (4) Even a ‘sign from heaven’ had already been given at the baptism of Christ when God spoke out of heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Matt. 3:17). (5) It had been revealed to Simeon that he should not die till he had seen the Lord’s Christ; and it must be presumed that Simeon, by that time, was long since dead and buried. (6) All the world was expecting the coming of some Great One. (7) The Christ himself, ‘that Prophet like unto Moses,’ had appeared upon the banks of the Jordan and had been identified by John the Baptist as ‘the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world’! And John was the only authentic prophet Israel had had in half a millennium. Yes, it must be admitted that the Pharisees missed the signs of the times, however skilled they might have appeared as weather prophets!” (Coffman, p.240).
 - c. “The times of the Messiah, the miraculous evidences which he had given that they were at hand. These were as plainly to be seen as the clouds at sunrise and at sunset, but the Pharisees and Sadducees failed to see them in their real significance” (McGarvey, p.141).
 - d. “Whether their interpretations were correct and a true forecast of weather conditions is not affirmed nor denied by Jesus; he simply takes them on their own claims and shows their inconsistency. The Jews even at that time published almanacs, prognosticating the rains of the coming year; they did not have the scientific knowledge that ‘weather forecasters’ have today; yet they claimed with equal positiveness to give correct interpretations” (Boles, p.339).
 - e. These people were classed as wicked (evil) and adulterous. They were wicked because they sought to destroy Christ and thus were opposing God; they were adulterous especially in the spiritual sense in that they had become unfaithful to God (and no doubt some of them were guilty also of the literal sin). “The relation between God and Israel had long been described as a marriage contract in which God was the husband and Israel the bride, hence a charge of adultery was a reflection upon Israel’s fidelity to God. That unequal marriage God would shortly dissolve through his own death, in the person of Christ...” (Rom. 7:4)” (Coffman, p.241).
 - f. Such people are interested in signs but will not accept the genuine proof offered. It is foolish to waste one’s time with this type of people once their character has been ascertained. Jesus was not about to “cast his pearls before swine.” They were dishonest and their hearts were impervious to the truth. Hence, no sign was given them but the sign of Jonah.
 - 1) “The one cosmic exception to the ‘no sign’ policy would be the resurrection of Christ, which would more than meet even their specifications as a ‘sign from heaven.’ To be sure, even that was of no avail because, instead of accepting it, they bribed witnesses to deny it! Christ fully knew the character of those evil men; and the sad words concluding verse 4 show the finality of Christ’s judgment upon them. He never more worked any miracle or taught in that place again” (Coffman, p.241).
 - 2) Mark’s account shows that the Lord was grieved over the attitude of these people. "And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8:11-12).
 - g. “The reference to Jonah was an enigma to both the friends and the foes of Jesus; for neither party as yet anticipated his death, burial, and resurrection. It is one of a number of remarks which Jesus let fall, the very obscurity of which caused them to be remembered and talked about until subsequent
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- developments made them intelligible, and then they furnished very surprising proofs of his foreknowledge” (McGarvey, pp.141f).
3. Verses 5-7: “And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread.”
 - a. Following the episode just concluded, the Lord and his disciples boarded a boat to return to the far side of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 8:11-13). The disciples had forgotten to procure bread for their journey (which implies they customarily brought such provisions along). When Christ gave them warning against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought he was rebuking them for forgetting the bread. But the Lord was speaking of the false doctrines and practices which pertained to these people. Their “leaven” was their false beliefs and practices.
 - b. “The Sadducees were materialists, denying any spiritual life, any possibility of a resurrection, and the existence of angels (Matt. 22:30). The Pharisees were hypocrites, dealing in falsehood. Both were secular, dominated by earthly considerations exclusively. They were full of snobbery and pride and made every possible appeal to selfishness, prejudice, and bias. They even tortured the scriptures to invent arguments against him, and finally, they relied upon force to achieve their ends” (Coffman, p.242).
 - c. Among their arguments against Christ are the following (see Coffman, p.242):
 - 1) That Jesus could not be the Messiah, because Elijah had not yet come (17:10ff).
 - 2) That his signs were not “from heaven,” but from earth (cf. 16:1).
 - 3) That the demons he cast out were actually cast out by the power of Satan (Matt. 12).
 - 4) That Jesus was a violator of the sacred traditions (Matt. 15).
 - 5) That he profaned the Sabbath (Matt. 12).
 - 6) That the scriptures said the Messiah could not come from Galilee (John 7:41).
 - 7) That none of the rulers of the people believed on him (John 7:48; cf. 12:42-43).
 - 8) That they knew he was a sinner (John 9:24), a glutton and winebibber (Matt. 11:19).
 - 9) That he was a Samaritan, which was intended to be an insult (John 8:48).
 - 10) That he was a friend of publicans and sinners (Matt. 9:10-12; Luke 15:2).
 - 11) That he was a deceiver (Matt. 27:63).
 - 12) That he had a demon (John 7:20).
 4. Verses 8-10: “*Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?”
 - a. Jesus rebuked the disciples for misunderstanding his meaning and for the attendant lack of faith. “Their mistake implies weakness of faith, because Jesus had given abundant evidence of his ability to feed them whether they had with them much bread or little. If they had remembered the feeding of the five thousand and of the four thousand, they would not have been much concerned about bread” (McGarvey, p.142).
 - b. The fact that Christ specifically mentions both of the miraculous feedings shows beyond successful denial that these were two separate incidents, and not an error by the New Testament writers.
 5. Verses 11-12: “How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”
 - a. The misunderstanding of the disciples illustrates how important it is that we take note of the exact words which are used in divine instructions. If the Lord had meant “bread” he would have used that word; instead of bread, he used “leaven.”
 - b. Many today misapprehend plain Bible statements because they do not look carefully at the exact wording of the text, or read into the text a meaning that was not intended. Since the destiny of our souls is at stake, it behooves us to exert the greatest possible effort, and to do so intelligently, to understand the meaning of the Bible.
 - c. “As soon as they learned that he was using the term leaven in a metaphorical sense, they understood
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the remark, for the metaphor was simple and familiar” (McGarvey, p.142).

B. Matthew 16:13-20: The Lord Promises to Establish his Church.

1. Verse 13: “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”
 - a. They had crossed the sea to the northeastern shore (cf. 16:5; Mark 9:10-27). When they arrived in the area of Caesarea Philippi, he raised an important question which introduced this most important exchange.
 - 1) This city was “built by Philip the Tetrarch, situated at the sources of the Jordan, near the foot of Mount Hermon (9000’), in the midst of magnificent scenery. It was a Gentile city, often called Paneas (Not Baniyas), because the god Pan was worshiped there. The other Caesarea on the sea coast, was called, for distinction, Caesarea Palestina” (Coffman, p.244).
 - 2) “It was built on a limestone terrace, and was strongly fortified. It was a very ancient city, and had been known by the name of Panium; but it had been recently improved by Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, and called by him Caesarea Philippi, in honor of himself and the reigning Caesar. It is the most northern point mentioned in the travels of Jesus” (McGarvey, p.143).
 - b. Jesus chose this setting in which to introduce the subject of his identity and to give utterance to the promise to build his church. Thus, the question: “Who do men say that I the son of man am?” We may be sure that he was not asking for information.
2. Verse 14: “And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”
 - a. The disciples had only recently returned from their limited commission, and were in a position to give the Lord a fair statement of current thought concerning himself.
 - b. “The world’s greatest question is the one here propounded, Who is Jesus? In answer to it the Nazarenes had said that he was only the son of the carpenter; yet they acknowledged that on this hypothesis they could not account for his wisdom and his mighty works. Throughout the other parts of Galilee it was admitted that he was something more, but what he was more than this was a matter of dispute then, and it has been ever since. Concerning Jesus alone, of all the men of history, has such a question existed” (McGarvey, p.143).
 - c. The different views that the people of the time had of him are accounted for by the circumstances of the individuals involved and the different aspects shown in his activities. “The opinion that he was John the Baptist raised from the dead, as we have already seen (14:2), arose from the superstition of the people, and was adopted by Herod, as a natural result of his guilty fears. Some thought that he was the prophet Elijah returned again to earth, because of the boldness with which he denounced the sins of the age; while this characteristic, combined with the sorrowful tone of his speech, suggested to others that he was Jeremiah. Others, unable to decide which prophet he most resembled, thought that he was ‘one of the prophets.’ None regarded him as less than a prophet, and therefore all were inexcusable for not accepting the account which he gave of himself” (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
 - d. “The Jews cherished a tradition that this Elijah would come back to earth; they thought that when he did come back he would do mighty wonders; they also misunderstood the prophecies which referred to John the Baptist and Jesus as Elijah” (Boles, pp.342f).
 - e. It is amazing that none of the popular beliefs at the time identified Jesus as the Messiah; they thought he might be any of the great prophets but did not think of him as the Promised One. “Many at first recognized him as the Messiah (John 1:41; 4:30); but Satan, in the manner of the parable, had come and stolen the truth out of their hearts....This belief (that he was the Messiah) no longer existed” (Coffman, p.245).
 - f. The people nevertheless held Jesus in high esteem, identifying him with some of the greatest men of their heritage. While Elijah, Jeremiah, and other prophets were truly great men, Jesus was much their superior.
3. Verse 15: “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?”
 - a. The Lord had reserved this question to the most timely moment. They had repeated the views of the multitudes; the time had come to elicit from them their views of him.
 - b. “Who do you say that I am?” This is a question which every one must answer, and do so correctly, if

he is to have hope of glory. This is the real question of that discussion.

4. Verse 16: “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
 - a. Peter, who was usually the spokesman for the twelve, gave answer to the question with boldness and accuracy. His response was not on the same basis as those reported from the multitudes: he did not say he **thought** Jesus was the Christ, but “Thou art!” Did he fully comprehend the implications of this confession? It is clear from his statements in the latter part of this chapter that he did not properly grasp the nature of the Lord’s coming kingdom, and from the upcoming transfiguration episode it appears that he did not grasp how all-encompassing was the authority of Jesus.
 - b. Peter affirmed that Jesus is the Christ. The term “Christ” means “the anointed one.” Prophets, priests, and kings received an anointing when they were installed into office. Christ is all of these at once, thus is the Anointed One of God. “Messiah” is the Hebrew term for the Greek “Christos” (Christ).
 - c. Peter affirmed that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. “The term ‘Son of God’ truly denotes the deity of Christ. It implies a unity of being and nature with the Father which none other has ever possessed. When the Hebrews writer argued for the superiority of Christ, he based one of his argument on the fact that Christ was/is superior to the angels. He sustained this fact by the following: ‘Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, **Thou are my Son**, and this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?...But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever’ (Heb. 1:4,5,8a)” (*Spiritual Sword*, July, 1987), p.29). The name (Son of God) identifies Jesus with the Father. He is equal with God in all respects save that of authority (John 13:16; 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).
 - d. The term “Living God” speaks volumes regarding the unlimited, timeless, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent nature of the Almighty Father. He has ever been and will always be; he had no beginning and will have no end: “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14).
 - e. This is the Good Confession. It is more than the acknowledgment that Jesus is the Messiah of the Hebrews. It also affirms that Jesus sustains to the Father the relationship of Son. This confession forms the solid ground upon which Christianity is based.
 - f. “His answer contains two propositions: first, that Jesus was the Christ; second, that Jesus was the Son of the living God. The former identified him as the long-expected deliverer of whom the prophets had written; and the latter declared him, what the Jews had not expected their Messiah to be, the Son of God. This was an intelligent confession of the whole truth concerning the personality of Jesus” (McGarvey, p.144).
5. Verse 17: “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”
 - a. The expression *Bar-Jonah* means “son of Jonah.” *Bar* is the Syriac for the Hebrew *Ben*, each of which means “son of.” Thus, Peter’s father was named Jonah. Peter had affirmed that Jesus was the Son of God; Jesus says that Peter is the son of Jonah.
 - b. The Lord states that Peter enjoys a state of blessing because of the confession he had made. “Fortunate (blessed) indeed are those individuals who have, with the confidence and conviction of Peter, acknowledged this great truth. (Phil. 2:5-11)” (ALC, 1984, p.46).
 - c. “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” The term “flesh and blood” refers to mankind. Peter did not learn the great truth of his confession from human sources, but from God.
 - 1) Galatians 1:16: “To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”
 - 2) Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”
 - 3) Hebrews 2:14: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”
 - d. But how had the Father shown this to Peter? Jesus did not specifically say how. “The great truth that

Jesus is God's Son is not taught by human wisdom but in that wisdom which is from above. To the contrary, human wisdom is ever active and diligent to blur and erase that truth from men's minds and hearts" (ALC, 1984, p.247). God had revealed it through the words and works of Jesus, as well as by his own voice from heaven in Matthew 3:17: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." The proposition of his Divine Sonship is declared by what Jesus did in his public ministry: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31). Peter and the other apostles, having been with the Lord for perhaps three years, witnessing his works and hearing his words, could properly draw the conclusion expressed in Peter's confession.

- e. How is Christ the "son" of God, since he is Deity, an eternal being? (Micah 5:2; Heb. 1:1-8). The Second Person of the Godhead (Christ) is spoken of as the "Son of God," but this does not imply that there was a time when Christ did not exist. If that were the case, he could not be deity; a divine person has no beginning or end. In what sense is Christ the "Son" of God?
 - 1) In the sense that the Father has greater authority, as is also the case between an earthly father and his son. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16). God sent Christ into the world (John 6:44); Christ sent the Holy Spirit (John 15:26). The only distinction between the members of the Godhead is in the realm of authority.
 - 2) In the sense that he brought him forth into the world as a member of the human family. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, **this day have I begotten thee?** And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" (Heb. 1:5). God audibly declared him to be his beloved Son on two great occasions: at his baptism (Matt. 3:15-17) and as the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5).
 - 3) In the sense that he raised him up from the dead.
 - a) Psalms 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; **this day have I begotten thee.**"
 - b) Acts 13:33: "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, **this day have I begotten thee.**"
6. Verse 18: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (ASV).
 - a. "The point of comparison in 'I also' is this, Peter made a certain declaration with reference to Jesus, and now Jesus in his turn, does the same with reference to Peter. The emphasis is not on 'Thou are Peter' over against 'Thou are the Christ,' but on 'I also.' The Father has revealed to you one truth, and **I also** will tell you another" (ALC, 1959, p.158).
 - b. **Thou are Peter.** The word translated "Peter" is the Greek word "*Petros*." It is in the masculine gender, and is used as an appellation for Simon. It means "stone." It was given to Simon by Jesus (John 1:42) who anticipated correctly that Simon would go on to become a firm, rock-like force in the church of Christ. *Petros* means "a single stone."
 - c. **And upon this rock I will build my church.** The word "rock" here is from a different Greek word, *Petra* which is feminine gender. *Petros* and *petra* do not refer to the same person or thing. W.E. Vine (p.302) defines *petra* as a mass of rock, as distinct from *petros* (a detached stone or boulder, a stone that might be thrown or easily moved). To see how *petra* is used in the New Testament indicates the difference between the two Greek words.
 - 1) Matthew 7:24-25: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a **rock**: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a **rock**."
 - 2) Matthew 27:51,60: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the **rocks** rent....And laid it in his own new tomb, which he

- had hewn out in the **rock**: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."
- 3) Luke 6:48: "He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a **rock**: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a **rock**."
 - 4) Luke 8:6: "And some fell upon a **rock**; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture."
 - 5) Romans 9:33: "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and **rock** of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."
 - 6) 1 Corinthians 10:4: "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that **Rock** was Christ."
 - 7) Revelation 6:15-16: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the **rocks** of the mountains; And said to the mountains and **rocks**, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."
- d. Having seen the distinction the Bible makes between *petros* and *petra*, it is thus very obvious that Jesus did not say that he would build his church upon Peter (*petros*), but upon *petra*, something far more substantial and reliable than a stone.
- 1) "Yes, the words are similar, but what of it? Similarity of words does not even imply similarity of meaning, much less identical meaning. An old rancher requested his son to take one of his favorite horses and have him *shod*. A little while later he heard gunfire back of the corral and learned to his dismay that his son had *shot* the horse! The son said, 'I'm sorry, Dad, I thought you said to have him *shot*, and I thought I could do it as well as anyone else!'" (Coffman, p.248).
 - 2) "To what the term **rock** refers, whether to Peter, to Christ, or to the truth which Peter confessed concerning Jesus, has been a matter of much disputation. In a highly figurative passage like this, it is important that we take into view all of the imagery employed; otherwise we are likely to overlook the significance of some parts, and to form distorted conceptions of others....
 - a) "Observe, then, that the leading image of this and following verse is that of two opposing cities, one representing the kingdom of heaven, and the other representing the kingdom of hades. The former is represented as about to be built on a rock, its builder, its gatekeeper, and its keys are mentioned, and the assurance is given that the gates of the latter city shall not prevail against it. Of the former city Jesus is the builder; Peter is the gate-keeper, for to him the keys are given; and the foundation on which its walls were to be erected, like that of Caesarea Philippi, which was close at hand and in all probability supplied the imagery, is a solid rock.
 - b) "Now, it is impossible, without throwing this imagery into confusion, to make either Jesus or Peter the rock; for Jesus assigns to himself the position of the builder, or chief architect, and he assigns to Peter that of gate-keeper, or holder of the keys....
 - c) "The rock, then, must represent some other object of thought in the context, and this can be no other than the truth which Peter had just confessed concerning Jesus. This truth, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the most fundamental truth in the Christian system—it is that on which the whole superstructure depends; and it is therefore most appropriately represented by the rock in the Savior's picture" (McGarvey, pp.144f).
 - 3) The words of the text are inscribed in four-foot-high gold letters inside the so-called St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The claim of this apostate religious organization is that Christ founded the church upon Peter, and that Peter became the first pope, and that papal office has passed down through the centuries to the present pope in an unbroken stream. However, none of this assertion is true; and biblical evidence uproots the whole scheme.
 - a) "The well known truth that the Greek text does not allow, and indeed refutes, their contention gives rise to all kinds of speculations and appeals to the so-called Aramaic Original....
 - b) "However, it must be allowed by all that the Greek text of the New Testament is all that has come down from antiquity. Therefore, all arguments from the Aramaic should be rejected till it can be produced and authenticated. Certainly, it is evil to make an argument, upon so vital a point as this, from a version that does not exist except in theory, which has never been seen, and
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- which, in all probability, if it were to appear, would doubtless confirm rather than deny the difference in those two words.
- c) “All appeals to the Aramaic are, by implication, a repudiation of *this* text; and why repudiate it if, as some say, it makes Peter the rock on which Jesus built the church? He that has eyes to see, let him see!” (Coffman, p.249).
 - 4) “If it be asked, why did Jesus say ‘Thou art Peter,’ unless he intended to make him the rock, we answer, that, like the expression Bar-jona, it was a very natural re-echoing of Peter’s own mode of address. Peter had said, ‘Thou art the Christ,’ giving Jesus his official title, and ‘the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answers, ‘Simon, son of Jonah,’ ‘Thou art Peter’—the symbolical name which had long since been given him (John 1:42), and which referred to the solidity of character he was yet to acquire though he showed very little promise at present.
 - a) “As for the supposition that Jesus is himself the rock, there is nothing in the context to even suggest it. It is suggested by other passages in which he is called a stone or a foundation. But in those passages it will be found that the imagery is entirely different. When Paul says, ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor. 3:11), the image is not that of a city built on a natural rock, but that of a single building (verse 9), and of its artificial foundation which Paul had laid....
 - b) “When Paul says that the Gentiles are ‘built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,’ the image is that of a temple with the apostles and prophets for the layer of stones at the foundation, and Jesus for the chief corner-stone on which the two walls, Jewish and Gentile, meet, and by which they are held together.
 - c) “Again, when Jesus is represented as a stone rejected by the builders, but made by God the chief stone of the corner, the image is that of a company of men trying to build a house, but rejecting the only stone which had been cut for the chief corner, and therefore unable to go on with the work. (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:4-7.)
 - d) “As the imagery in all these passages is entirely different from that of the text, the former can not be allowed to control in the interpretation of the latter” (McGarvey, pp.145f).
 - 5) The foundation of the church, therefore, is the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. If he is not that which Peter confessed him to be, and which he himself claimed to be, and which God Almighty affirmed that he indeed was, then there is nothing else upon which the kingdom of God could rest. Catholic theologians allege that Matthew wrote in Aramaic, and that the distinction between the words *petros* and *petra* is not made in that language. There is no proof that Matthew wrote in Aramaic.
 - e. **I will build my church.** Christ is the only one with the authority to do so. Notice that the church he planned to build was his, not John’s, or someone else’s. He paid the purchase price (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). He has all authority in the church (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).
 - 1) The future tense is used which shows that the church did not begin during the days of Abraham, during the time of John the Baptist, or even during the personal ministry of Christ.
 - 2) The church is spoken of in the future tense prior to Acts 2, and in the present tense following Acts 2. All the evidence points undeniably to the Pentecost day of Acts 2 as the beginning date of the Lord’s church.
 - f. Another key word in the passage is **church**. It is translated from the Greek word, *ekklesia*. This is a compound word composed of *ek* (out or out of) and *kaleo* (to call). “The old Greeks had a pure democracy at one time, and when there were public meetings to be attended a herald was sent out to announce the occasion and call the citizens together. When they had assembled they were referred to as an *ekklesia*. Jesus selected that word as descriptive of his followers, called out of the world and into fellowship with himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit” (ALC, 1980, pp.163f). “
 - 1) The first time the word “church” occurs in the New Testament is in the passage now before us. The term was not coined by Christ or the apostles, but was in general use by the Greek-speaking people of that time. The word *ekklesia* (church) never had any religious significance among the Greeks; it literally meant the *called out ones* or an *assembly*, and it was applied to any body of people, called out and gathered together for any purpose. There is nothing about the original word itself which

indicates the character of the assembly. It might have been religious, political, or an unorganized mob” (ALC, 1959, p.159).

- 2) The context must be considered in order to determine the sense in which the word is used, for the New Testament uses the word in the several different ways:
 - a) In a general sense, to embrace all the followers of Christ (Matt. 16:18). In a more restricted sense, to describe his disciples in a certain area such as Judea and Galilee (Acts 9:31; ASV).
 - b) To the disciples in a given community such as Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1).
 - c) To an assembly of Christians gathered for worship (1 Cor. 14:19,35).
 - d) The word *ekklesia* is used in reference to the Israelites in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).
 - e) It is used to describe the mob which gathered and demonstrated in Acts 19:32-41.
 - f) The context must be considered to determine the sense in which the word is used.
- g. **The gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it.** Following are some views held by faithful brethren.
 - 1) “Many believe that this statement refers to the perpetuity of the church, but not so. If the Lord meant that the devil would never prevail against the church there would never have been an apostasy, which is too evident to argue here. Some say a clause cannot be the antecedent of a pronoun, hence, the Lord does not have reference to building the church. Wrong again. Example: ‘The little boy ran away from home and went to town and his mother did not like it.’ Like what? The little boy, or what he did? Thus, Christ is speaking of the building of the church, and is simply saying, ‘I am going to be crucified, my body is going into the tomb, by spirit is going into the spirit world, but I shall break asunder the bars of hades, be raised from the dead, and build my church in spite of it’” (Roy Hearn, class notes).
 - 2) “As we have remarked above, hades is contemplated as a walled city waging war against the church. Its gates are made the symbols of its power, because the military forces of an ancient city always issued forth from its gates, and the gates may be considered as sending them out. All the powers by which hades, the place of disembodied spirits, assails the Church, are included in the figure, the powers of demons, of Satan, and of death. The text is a pledge that the Church would never be tempted into total apostasy, nor be depopulated by the death of all its members” (McGarvey, p.146).
 - 3) “Hades is the place of the dead between death and the resurrection; and the practical meaning of the passage is that death would never be able to destroy all the members of the church at any one time. Other scriptures which teach the perpetuity of the church or kingdom of Christ are Dan. 2:44 and Heb. 12:28. Meyer, in commenting on this statement by Jesus, says, ‘So securely will I build my church upon this rock, *that the gates of Hades will not be able to resist it*, will not prove stronger than it; indicating by means of a comparison, the great strength and stability of the edifice of the church, even when confronted with so powerful a structure as that of Hades, the gates of which, strong as they are, will not prove to be stronger than the building of the church’” (ALC, 1959, p.159).
 - 4) “Jesus simply meant that though he would be crucified, buried, yet he would arise from the dead and build his church; the powers of death or the unseen world, or ‘the gates of Hades,’ would not be able to hold him in the unseen realm and prevent his coming out and building his church” (Boles, p.346). “Jesus was yet to die, but the ‘gates of Hades’ could not keep his spirit confined to Hades, whither it went at death (see Acts 2:27,31), and thus prevent his building the church; and Hades (or death) could not keep its members confined and thus destroy the church, for Jesus had the ‘keys of death and of Hades (the place of departed spirits between death and the resurrection)’ (Rev. 1:18), which meant he would be able to raise the dead, and would do so (John 5:28,29)” (ALC, 1980, p.167).
 - 5) It appears that the most logical, consistent view is that the Lord is promising that nothing, not even the hadean realm into which he would enter at death, would preclude his building the church. The subject being discussed in the verse is the establishment of the church. As brother Hearn noted, the church has indeed been prevailed against in that it disappeared from historical view during the long years of the Dark Ages.
 - a) Even Jesus raised the question, “Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the]

faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). The word of God will never be destroyed; as long as the Bible remains (since it is the seed of the kingdom—Luke 8:11), the church (kingdom) will exist at least in seed form. But that does not say that there will be members of the church alive and faithful on the earth during all the years from Acts 2 till the end of time.

- b) Most likely there will be, but the promise of our text does not seem to make that point. One point that appears to be against this view: the word *it* is in the feminine gender. However, it is likely this gender is necessary grammatically to modify a previous feminine word (so it has been asserted).
7. Verse 19: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
- a. The promise herein contained was vouchsafed to Peter. The latter promise was given also to the other apostles (cf. Matt. 18:18). But to Peter were given the “keys.” One who possesses keys has certain prerogatives; he has access to the secured area beyond the lock (cf. Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1; Isa. 22:22). The promise of the keys to be given to Peter made him the porter and gave him the right to open the door of the kingdom to those who were entitled to enter it.
 - 1) He used the keys to open the kingdom to those Jews in Acts 2 who were minded to obey the gospel; he opened the kingdom to the first Gentiles (Acts 10, 11) who entered; he was also the one who revealed to Simon what he must do to be restored after having fallen from grace (Acts 8:20-22).
 - 2) These “keys” are to be understood as a figure of speech describing the inspired messages Peter was to deliver by which access into the kingdom was gained by those indicated above. Since these gates were first opened, they have never been closed, thus the keys have been used no more.
 - 3) There is no special significance to the plural (keys). The same keys used to open the door for the Jews was also used to open the door for the Gentiles. There is only one gospel, and it is for all (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13ff). All must submit to the same terms to be admitted into the kingdom.
 - b. “Kingdom of heaven” is used interchangeably with “my church” of the preceding verse. These are simply two different descriptions of that special group of people who belong to Christ. “Church” describes their relationship to the world (they have been called out of the world); “kingdom” is a type of government (presided over by a king who has all authority), thus describes the method by which the Lord directs his people. The use of these terms interchangeably shows that the same organization is being described.
 - c. Many modern religious groups (the majority of Protestant groups) deny that the kingdom has been established. This denial rejects the plain implications of the text. That the kingdom of Christ and the church of Christ are identical is further demonstrated by the following:
 - 1) Christ said that the Lord’s supper would be eaten in the kingdom (Luke 22:29-30); but 1 Corinthians 11:23-30 shows that it is eaten in the church (i.e., by the church); if the kingdom has not come, there is no authority for anyone to eat the Supper today.
 - 2) Peter used the “keys” to “open” the church (Acts 2); but the keys pertained to the kingdom; therefore, the church and the kingdom are the same institution.
 - 3) The following chart lists additional comparisons between the kingdom and the church:
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KINGDOM	CHURCH
Col. 1:13-14	Acts 2:47
John 3:5 (water)	Eph. 5:26 (water)
1 Cor. 15:24 (to glory)	Eph. 5:26-27 (to glory)
Heb. 12:28-29 (glorifies God)	Eph. 3:20-21 (glorifies God)
Col. 1:13-14 (saved in)	Eph. 5:23 (saved in)
Luke 22:29-30 (Lord's Supper)	1 Cor. 11:23ff (Lord's Supper)
Christ is King (Rev. 19:16; Col. 1:13)	Christ is Head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23)
Unending (Dan. 2:44; Heb. 12:28)	Unending (Eph. 3:21)
Same Apostles (Matt. 19:28)	Same Apostles (Eph. 2:20)
Same Message (Matt. 16:18-19)	Same Message (Rom. 10:8)
Parables (Matt. 13)	Parables (Matt. 13)
Mystery (Rom. 16:25; Mt. 13:11; Eph 3:8ff)	Mystery (Rom. 16:25; Mt. 13:11; Eph 3:8ff)
Israel of God (Matt. 19:28)	Israel of God (Gal. 6:16)
Washing (Mt. 19:28; John 3:5)	Washing (Tit. 3:5)

- d. Whatsoever thou shalt bind (or loose) shall be bound (or loosed) in heaven. The idea of binding and loosing was a rabbinic expression for requiring or forbidding or permitting. What is said to Peter in this statement is extended to all the apostles in Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23. The Lord never intended and Peter never became an infallible dictator over the church as the Catholic hierarchy claims (cf. Gal. 2:11-14; 2 Cor. 12:11-12).
- 1) Peter and the other apostles did not bind and loose according to their own designs; rather they were supernaturally guided in receiving and revealing the law of Christ (Mark 13:11; John 16:12-14; 15:26; Acts 2; Gal. 1:6-12; Rev. 22:18-19).
 - 2) The literal meaning of the Greek text is, "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." "And I will give to thee the keys of the reign of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens" (Young's Literal Translation).
 - 3) From these considerations it is seen that the apostles did not arbitrarily bind and loose, but God did the binding and loosing through them by directing their words. The inspired message did the binding and loosing.

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- a. Jesus cautions them not to tell men that he is the Christ. The people were not ready yet to receive this truth and the apostles themselves were not sufficiently taught to be qualified to speak on the subject. It was necessary for Jesus to die and be raised from the dead to establish for all time proof of his identity. "And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).
 - b. "Though the disciples believed Jesus to be the Christ, they had as yet but a very inadequate conception of what it was to be the Christ, and were not yet qualified to proclaim it aright. It was important that no misconception should now go abroad from their lips which would have to be repealed at a future day; hence the restriction..." (McGarvey, p.147).
- C. Matthew 16:21-23: Jesus Foretells His Coming Passion.
1. Verse 21: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."
 - a. This is the Lord's first plain statement to his apostles about his coming death; scholars say this was about six months before his crucifixion. He had begun early in his ministry to make obscure references to it but they did not apprehend his meaning (cf. John 2:19-22; 3:14; Matt. 12:38-40). "He had wisely postponed a plain declaration on the subject until the faith of the disciples had taken the definite shape just indicated by Peter's confession (verse 16), and had acquired sufficient strength to endure the shock which this announcement gave" (McGarvey, p.147).
 - 1) John 2:19-22: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."
 - 2) Matthew 12:38-40: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
 - b. His "ministry of sorrow" began after Peter's good confession and his promise to build his church. He knew full well what he was to encounter and be called on to endure in the near future. Following this passage is the account of the transfiguration scene in which Moses and Elijah appeared. Luke 9:31 shows that the subject of their conversation was "his decease...at Jerusalem."
 - c. Who but the Lord could have known what was to befall him and thus predict his death in such detail? "This marvelous prophecy of his own death and resurrection is without parallel in human history...For Christ did not merely say, 'I will rise from the dead.' His graphic description of what would occur included these points: His death would occur at Jerusalem. The scribes, chief priests, and elders would have a part in it. He would suffer 'many things' at their hands. He would not merely die, but 'be killed,' a far different thing. The resurrection would occur 'the third day.' Proof that this prophecy of Christ was known throughout Palestine before the events took place is manifest in the sealed tomb and posted watch to guard his body and prevent any rumors that such a glorious thing actually occurred" (Coffman, p.255f).
 2. Verse 22: "Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."
 - a. Peter did not understand the Lord's mission or the nature of his kingdom. His notion was the common view among the Jews: the Messiah will rule over a material kingdom just as did David and Solomon. The Lord's pronouncement of his death at the hands of his enemies shocked Peter who realized that if that occurred, then the kingdom would not be coming as they had believed and preached; their prayers and labors would have been in vain. He would not have been in such a state of dismay, and would not have made the blunder this verse reports, if he had only grasped the true nature of the kingdom and of the Lord's rule.
 - b. "The conduct of Peter in taking Jesus aside and rebuking him, shows how severe the shock which the
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disciples received from this announcement. Peter seems to have dreaded its effect on the other disciples, as well as on the world; for he thought that such a termination of the career of Jesus would prove that he was not the Christ. In this Peter exemplified the common weakness of human judgment in spiritual matters, and the proneness of men, through a misguided judgment, to fight against their own best interests" (McGarvey, p.147).

- c. His intention in what he did is praiseworthy, but misguided. His ignorance made him a tool of Satan in that he was pressing the Lord not to permit what was his duty to do. The devil desired the Lord to either commit sin or fail to do what God sent him to accomplish. Of course, the devil at this time did not know that God intended for Christ to die on the cross. No doubt Satan thought that the very best thing he could do for his own cause was to bring about the death of Christ, since he had failed to get him to succumb to sin (Mt. 4). Peter presumed to instruct the Lord in this case, and even to rebuke him (Coffman).
 - d. "We are astonished at the boldness of Peter so soon after his confession that Jesus is the 'Son of the living God,' yet he does not hesitate to 'rebuke him.' 'Peter took him' means that he either took him to one side from the other apostles or that he took him by the hand and expostulated with him" (Boles, p.349).
3. Verse 23: "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."
- a. Coffman points out that the Lord was not as stern with Peter as he was with Satan in Matthew 4. To Satan he said, "Get thee hence," but to Peter he said, "Get thee behind me." In his statement to the devil, the Lord was driving him from his presence; to Peter he was telling him to forsake his role as instructor and be a follower again.
 - b. "Peter received a severer rebuke than he administered. It was impossible to serve Satan more effectually than by dissuading Jesus from the death of which he had spoken; hence the metaphorical application of Satan's name to Peter. The vehemence with which Jesus spoke is also accounted for by the fact that he instinctively shrank from the dreaded sacrifice, and needed encouragement in regard to it instead of dissuasion" (McGarvey, p.147).
 - c. "Savorest thou" is an old expression meaning "thinkest thou." "Peter was tempting Jesus not to go to the cross as Satan did in the wilderness; and in his ignorance he had placed himself as a stumbling-block across the pathway of Jesus. Bruce notes that none are more formidable instruments of temptation than well-meaning friends, who care more for our comfort than for our character. Peter had a worldly conception of the kingdom which Christ came to establish" (ALC, 1959, p.160). Peter did not see the "things of God" clearly then—he would see them clearly later.
 - d. Jesus did not say that Peter was a devil or an evil tempter, but simply rebuked him for his misguided effort. Instead of a help, he was a hindrance.

D. Matthew 16:24-28: Willingness to Sacrifice Required of the Disciple Also.

1. Verse 24: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
 - a. In serving God, a willingness to endure hardship and even death is required. This is not because God is one who delights in human suffering; rather, such is needed in order for us to be shaped and prepared to stand in his presence. Sin is so awful that God cannot countenance it (Isa. 59:1-2; Rev. 21:25; 1 Per. 1:15-16; Matt. 5:9; Heb. 12:14). Tribulations and hardships are designed to purify us as the furnace is intended to purify the gold ore by burning off the dross. "But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).
 - b. "To deny oneself is to avoid ease or indulgence; to take up the cross is to endure reproach or dishonor in the eyes of the world. The latter expression came into use from the fact that criminals who were to be crucified carried their own crosses to the place of execution. Peter had objected, as recorded in the preceding paragraph, to the contemplated death of Jesus, and now he and his fellows are taught that not only must this be endured, but they must themselves take up the cross and follow his example; and so must all who would be his followers" (McGarvey, p.148).
 - c. Mark 8:24-38 and Luke 9:23-27 also record this information. If the disciple follows the Master he must go where the leader goes and endure what he endures. The cost of discipleship is self-denial

- which may require forfeiting what we might otherwise be able to enjoy, going where we might not otherwise go, doing what we might not have done.
- d. "Cross-bearing is widely misunderstood. It is not old age, poverty, taxes, illness, or bad weather, or any other discomfiture of life that comes unavoidably into the lives of men. It is the acceptance, for the sake of the will of God, of some burdens, otherwise avoidable, but which are undertaken out of a pure desire to fulfill the Master's purpose. The centrality of the cross in Christ's religion was here affirmed by Christ at the very moment when one of his most beloved apostles had spoken against it" (Coffman, p.258).
2. Verse 25: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."
 - a. "These words are taken from the period of bitter persecution, when Christians were brought before cruel pagan governors or mobs, not knowing what fate would befall them. If one, under such circumstances, should deny Jesus, or [renounce] the faith of a Christian, in order to save his life, that one was not worthy of Jesus; he might save his temporal life by so doing, but he would lose his spiritual life and life eternal; but the one who in steadfastness of faith remained loyal to Jesus might lose his physical life, but would gain spiritual and eternal life" (Boles, p.351).
 - b. "In this verse there is a play on the two meanings of the word life, temporal and eternal. Whoever, by failing to follow Jesus, would save life in the one sense, would lost it in the other, and *vice versa*" (McGarvey, p.148).
 - c. One must give himself fully to do the Lord's will and be the Lord's person if he expects to be a citizen in heaven.
 3. Verse 26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
 - a. "The true meaning of this appears clearer in the AV which uses 'soul' instead of 'life.' Man possesses a body, but he is a soul. A soul is of more value than the whole world, as Jesus said. The truth of this appears through the application of any of the common criteria for determining value: Cost: It cost the blood of Christ to redeem one soul. Permanence: A soul will exist till the worlds have passed away. Affection: God loved the soul enough to reclaim it. Uniqueness: No two souls are identical." (Coffman, p.259).
 - b. "The solemn truth here declared was most appropriate in this connection, because Peter's opposition to his Lord's death was inspired chiefly by his expectation that the latter would establish an earthly kingdom and conquer the whole world. He is taught that something far more valuable than the whole world is to be gained by following Christ, even though it should involve the loss of life" (McGarvey, p.148).
 - c. "In John 11:25,26 Jesus teaches a similar truth with respect to living and dying. The loss of the present life is temporal death; the loss of the future life is death eternal" (Boles, p.351).
 - d. Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away." What Matthew calls "his soul" Luke calls "himself." The soul is the real individual; one does not have a soul, rather he is a soul.
 4. Verse 27: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."
 - a. "The fact here declared furnishes proof of the preceding remarks concerning the loss and gain of life. If men are to be finally rewarded according to their works, all the preceding remarks must be true. That the final coming of Christ is the coming here mentioned is evident from the three facts, that it is a coming 'in the glory of his Father;' it is to be 'with his holy angels;' and he is then to 'reward every man according to his works'" (McGarvey, p.148).
 - b. No mere man could have accurately made the statement of the text. This is a prophecy encompassing his coming, the general resurrection of the dead, and the final Judgment.
 - c. The basis of the Judgment will be the word of Christ (John 12:48) and the works of men. Our lives will be measured by the inspired word of the Lord (Rev. 20:12).
 - d. We are not told how many angels will accompany him when he comes again, but Jude says he will come with "ten thousands of his saints" (holy ones—ASV), apparently referring to angels, not men.
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This number could be a "perfect number" signifying an infinitely greater number (Coffman). Matthew 25:31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory..." The "glory of his Father" is called Christ's glory in Matthew 25:31. See also John 17:5.

- e. "Jesus sought to turn their eyes from the earth to heaven, and gave them glimpses, as they could bear it, of the glorious doctrine which is now so familiar to us. He is coming again and at that time 'shall render unto every man according to his deeds' (Boles, p.352).
5. Verse 28: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."
- a. Mark's account of this statement is: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."
 - b. "The coming to judge the world naturally suggested the mention of another coming which was nearer at hand, and which also had an important connection with the preceding conversation. If he were destined to die at the hands of his enemies, as stated in the preceding paragraph, it would appear to his disciples that he must fail to establish the expected kingdom; but he assures them that notwithstanding his contemplated death, some of the present company would not taste of death till they would see him coming in his kingdom. The expression 'coming in his kingdom' means entering formally upon his reign as a king, which occurred when his exaltation to the right hand of God was proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, and which they then saw by the eye of faith. (See Acts 2:33-36; also my Commentary on Acts 1:6.) None but himself and Judas were to die previous to that time; but he intended to be indefinite about the time, and hence the very vague expression..." (McGarvey, pp.148f).
 - c. John, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy had all announced that the kingdom was "at hand." To reassure the disciples that this promise was still valid, the Lord made this promise that some of those present would still be alive when the kingdom indeed came. Even though he would suffer and die, he would be raised up from the dead and most assuredly establish his kingdom as promised. Remember that in the same setting he promised that the "gates of hades shall not prevail against it," the setting up of the church which is the kingdom.
 - d. Some passages that speak of the kingdom include these:
 - 1) Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
 - 2) Matthew 3:1: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea."
 - 3) Matthew 4:7: "Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."
 - 4) Matthew 10:7: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - 5) Mark 9:1: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."
 - 6) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins."
 - 7) Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."
 - 8) Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."
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Matthew 17

A. Matthew 17:1-13: The Transfiguration.

1. "The transfiguration of Christ is not to be regarded as a detached and isolated event in his earthly experience, but rather as a specific part of those demonstrations which were designed to show the divine plan in sending him to the earth" (ALC, 1959, p.162).
 - a. Peter had made the confession of Jesus' identity; the Lord had revealed plainly to the apostles that he was destined to die at Jerusalem; he showed them that they must be willing to suffer for him; he spoke of the final judgment, and restated the promise that he was going to establish his kingdom during the lifetime of that generation.
 - b. About a week later this tremendous event in the Lord's ministry occurred which made a profound and lasting impression on the minds and hearts of the apostles.
2. Verse 1: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart."
 - a. Matthew states that the following event took place about six days after the preceding episode. Luke says it was about eight days later. The Jews' method of counting included the first and last days. According to Matthew, this occasion was after the former. Thus, no friction exists between the two accounts. Today, we would say, "six or eight days."
 - b. He took with him the "inner circle" of the disciples: Peter, James and John. These three were with him at the raising of Jairus' daughter and when he prayed in the garden (Mark 5:37; Mt. 26:37). "Matthew was omitted from that inner circle of three disciples who witnessed the marvel here related, and one can find only amazement at the complete detachment and objectivity of his narrative....Peter would take the lead in establishing the church; James would be the first martyr; and John would receive the final revelation. The experience on the mount of transfiguration would better equip them for future duties and responsibilities. The Saviour's prophecy of his approaching death and humiliation had doubtless imparted some measure of shock and disappointment to the Twelve, and that event was possibly designed to lift their spirits, strengthen their faith, and lead them into an acceptance of the approaching passion of our Lord" (Coffman, p.261).
 - c. We are not told the location of the impending event, only that it was "up into an high mountain apart." "The scene of the transfiguration was formerly supposed to be Mt. Tabor, a very beautiful conical mountain west of the lake of Galilee; but as Jesus was on his tour to Caesarea Philippi, which town was situated at the base of Mt. Hermon, it is now generally believed that the latter is the mountain mentioned in the text" (McGarvey, p.149). When the accounts take up the story following this episode, the setting is in the vicinity of Hermon.
3. Verse 2: "And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."
 - a. Luke reports that the fashion of his countenance was altered. "*Transfigured* means *changed in form*, yet the description indicates only a change in the appearance of his person. Though 'his face did shine as the sun,' we suppose that the features maintained their natural form; and though 'his raiment was white as light'— that is, light reflected from some polished surface—we suppose it was unchanged in other particulars. It is impossible for us to realize his appearance until we shall be like him and see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)" (McGarvey, p.150). The same word is used in Romans 12:2 to describe the change which is effected in Christians as they imbibe the principles of the gospel.
 - b. Mark 9:3 says, "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." "This glorious manifestation would serve to impress the disciples with the unmistakable divinity of his nature; with the illustrious majesty of the celestial world; and would give some idea of the change which will be wrought in the saved in the resurrection. See Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2" (ALC, 1959, p.163).
 - c. "Jesus made this change of his human body visible to these three disciples; this was done to teach them the mystery of his nature (John 1:14), which he should assume after his suffering; again it would show these disciples the cessation of the authority of the law and the prophets. Such earthly splendor and glory as they beheld him suggested the supernal and eternal glory with which he was clothed before

- the world was, and which should be his habilaments after his ascension to the Father" (Boles, p.354).
4. Verse 3: "And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."
 - a. Moses and Elijah appeared with him. The three discussed the "decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). We are not told how the disciples were able to recognize these two Old Testament worthies, but some commentators suppose that it was by virtue of the ensuing conversation. "It is noticeable that there had been for many centuries a mystery connected with the end of Moses and Elijah. Moses in the full vigor of his strength, was summoned to the top of Mount Nebo, where he died; no human hands buried him or knew where he was buried. (Deut. 34:6.) The Jews had a tradition that his body was buried by angels, and that evil spirits contended for it. (See Jude 9.) He was the great prophet of the law; a type of the Mediator, the one on whose name and authority the Jews especially depended. Elijah 'went up by a whirlwind into heaven.' (2 Kings 2:11-16.) The Jews supposed that he was translated to paradise. He is a representative of the prophets. These two, Moses and Elijah, the representative of the law, and the representative of the prophets, appeared with Jesus and yielded their positions to him" (Boles, p.355).
 - b. Deuteronomy 34:6: "And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."
 - c. 2 Kings 2:11-12: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces."
 5. Verse 4: "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."
 - a. Luke 9:32 suggests that this event took place at night for the disciples were heavy with sleep, and verse 37 says that it was the next day when they came down from the mountain. Here, Peter makes the ill-advised suggestion that three tabernacles be built for these three in the scene. Both Mark and Luke say that Peter blurted this out for he did not know what else to say. The tabernacles (or tents) were booths such as the Jews dwelled in during the feast of tabernacles. (See Lev. 23:34). "He was proposing some kind of equality for Jesus to share with Moses and Elijah. Christ did not rebuke Peter, but what followed exposed his error in the most astonishing manner" (Coffman, p.264). He may have been suggesting the tents as a place where these three could be honored and worshiped as glorified beings.
 - b. "There was a divine attraction in the scene, a foretaste of heaven's own glory, and no wonder that Peter exclaimed, 'It is good for us to be here'....It shows that men in the flesh are not prepared to judge of the fitness of things in the spiritual world. In all probability many of our most cherished conceptions of that world are as incongruous as that of the frightened Peter" (McGarvey, p.150).
 6. Verse 5: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."
 - a. "The brightness described in verse two belongs to Jesus alone, but this brightness of the cloud overshadowed all of them" (Boles, p.356). In verse 8 the two other individuals are gone. Their disappearance and the proclamation of the Father show that God, who spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets and Moses, now speaks to mankind only through his Son (cf. Heb. 1:1-2). The message of the Transfiguration is the same as that of the book of Hebrews: the passing away of the old order and the bringing in of the new.
 - b. There are three clauses in God's statement: (1) This (Jesus) is my beloved Son; (2) In him I am well pleased; and (3) He is to be heard.
 - c. "This entire transaction, as we may safely infer from Luke's narrative, occurred in the night. (Notice, that Jesus had been praying until the disciples here 'heavy with sleep;' and that they came down from the mountain 'on the next day.' (Luke 9:28,32,37.) Out of the womb of darkness had suddenly appeared the three glowing forms of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, and now, while the disciples were trembling at that sight, there floats near to them out of the same darkness a cloud all radiant with light like that which shone from the face of Jesus, and as it begins to overhang them, they hear that voice
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- which has never yet been heard by mortals except with fear and trembling. It came just as Peter's incongruous proposal had escaped his lips, and it is no wonder that the three fishermen 'fell on their faces and were sore afraid'" (McGarvey, p.150).
- d. "'Hear him.' This command contains the chief significance of the entire scene. Uttered in the presence of Moses the lawgiver, and of Elijah the prophet, it meant that Jesus should be heard in preference to the law and the prophets. In the exalted pre-eminence thus bestowed on Jesus, accompanied by a change of his appearance harmonious with the glory of his position, his divine majesty was displayed in a manner never witnessed on earth before or since" (McGarvey, p.151). "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16-18).
7. Verses 6-7: "And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid."
 - a. "The disciples were dismayed by the Majestic Voice, and were dazzled by the glory of the cloud. Their reaction to these miraculous events and visions reminds us of the similar experiences of Daniel and Saul of Tarsus. See Dan. 8:17; Acts 9:1-4" (ALC, 1959, p.164). In the Lord's personal ministry, this was but the second time God had spoken directly—Matthew 3:15-17 was the first. John 12:28-30 reports the third occasion.
 - b. Put yourself in the place of the disciples: you had heard the Lord say he must suffer many things at the hands of his enemies at Jerusalem, be put to death and be raised the third day; you had heard him speak with Moses and Elijah about this same death; then this marvelous scene unfolds before your eyes, followed closely by the awesome voice of the Almighty. This was sure to send one to his knees in the deepest kind of dread and fear. Cf. Revelation 1:17: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last."
 - c. Then came the reassuring touch and voice of the gentle Master. We cannot today hear the Lord's voice with out physical ears, nor feel his touch in that same direct way in which he comforted the disciples, but through his inspired word he gives comfort and assurance (1 John 5:3; 4:17-17; Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).
 - 1) Hebrews 13:5-6: "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*"
 - 2) 1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 - 3) 1 John 4:17-18: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
 - 4) 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 8. Verses 8-9: "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."
 - a. "'Jesus only' is the great lesson of the transfiguration; he is God's only spokesman to the human race today. Only that which he has authorized is binding on men today. Cf. Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22,23; Heb. 1:1-3" (ALC, 1959, p.165).
 - b. "Jesus only! This is the message humanity needs. He is the only Saviour, the only Mediator, the only Authority in heaven or upon earth. He is the only means of access to God (John 14:6), the only hope of the world, the only Judge of the world, and the only Atonement for man's sins" (Coffman, p.265).
 - c. "Any preaching which does not exalt Christ and point the people to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world is bad. The preacher who seeks to attract the people to himself rather than to Christ is not a faithful servant of God. His work will be for evil rather than for good to the world, in
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so far as he succeeds in calling after himself a partisan following of personal admirers" (Boles, p.357).

- d. "They might have seen *no one* after the cloud lifted. How unhappy would have been their lot if all the glory had departed, leaving no one. In such a case, no salvation, no hope would have been indicated. They might have seen *Moses only*. This would have indicated the Law as still supreme, and forgiveness would yet have remained impossible. They might have seen *Elijah only*. What a catastrophe that would have been. James and John could have called down fire upon the villages; Herod would have been slain like Ahab; the Pharisees would have met their match; Herodias would have fared like Jezebel. They might have seen *all three*, as suggested by Peter's rash proposal. His statement, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here,' seems to indicated that he thought it was better to be there with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, than to be there with Jesus only. At first glance, this may appear to have been an attractive possibility. It certainly was so for Peter; but such could not possibly be true. Some things bespeak better conditions by their absence than by their presence. If one were able to see the sun, moon, and stars at once, it would be a dreadfully dark day!" (Coffman, p.365).
 - e. Jesus charged the three when they descended the mountain to tell no man about what they had seen and heard. More harm than good would have been done if they had broadcast this information for they were poorly equipped to preach it since their faith in Christ was not yet perfected; and the people would not have been as receptive as they would later be. "But to lock up the secret in the breasts of these three was to cause them to reflect on it much and to converse with one another about it often. Furthermore, the more intensely and the longer it burned within them as a secret, the more joyously would they speak of it when the proper time arrived, and their own miraculous powers rendered credible all that they said of it. That they told it then is evident not only from Peter's words above quoted, but from its being recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, none of whom were witnesses of the event, and all of whom wrote before the publication of Peter's epistle" (McGarvey, p.151).
9. Verses 10-13: "And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."
- a. The Jews understood Malachi 4:5-6 as a literal return of Elijah to the earth. The disciples' question grew out of the Lord's previous statement (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14). John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come. They had done to him what they pleased; they would treat Jesus likewise. John was the Elijah (Luke 1:17), but the Jews had without reason rejected John's testimony and baptism (Luke 7:30).
 - b. "Just as John had been put to death, so 'the Son of man' must suffer many things and be set at naught. (Mark 9:12.)" (Boles, p.358). By saying that "Elijah is come already" the Lord plainly taught that John was the promised Elijah; the disciples properly understood that this was what the Lord meant (verse 13). No comfort is given here for the millennial notions that Elijah will precede Christ's second coming.

B. Matthew 17:14-21: Healing of the Lunatic.

1. Verses 14-16: "And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him."
- a. Parallel accounts are found in Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-43. Mark's record gives additional significant details, for example, that the scribes had been questioning with the nine disciples while Jesus and the other three were on the mountain. When he came down, he found a multitude of people who ran to him in amazement (Mark 9:15). Out of the multitude was a certain man who pleaded with the Lord to cure his only son (Luke 9:38) who was lunatic, which means "moonstruck." This term developed from the superstitious notion that the moon caused such maladies. Jesus did not lend credence to this idea, but knew that the cause was a demon which possessed the lad.
- b. The disciples (the nine who remained behind) had been unable to cast out the demon. "The scribes, taking advantage of the absence of Jesus and the three chief disciples, were present and were

- questioning the nine disciples. They had tried to cast out a demon, but were unable to do so. The exulting scribes, the embarrassed and confused disciples, the amazed people, and the despairing father and afflicted son presented a very pathetic scene. When Jesus came into their midst, all eyes turned to him. The miracle that he is about to work becomes a test of his power....While the disciples of Jesus were under a fire of questions and taunting by the scribes, this man came to Jesus and saluted him with joyful reverence....The scribes rejoiced at the failure of the disciples in healing the son" (Boles, p.359).
- c. It appears that the scribes had created doubt in the hearts of these disciples. The reason for their failure was the deficiency of faith on their part. These same men would later be able to perform mighty wonders (Mark 16:20), but here their faith was deficient.
 - d. Mark adds that the demon seized the boy in a grievous fit as he was presented to the Lord. The boy "fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming" (vs. 20). Jesus asked how long the boy had had this affliction; the father said since his son was a child. The Lord then told the father, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."(verses 21-24). After the multitude had gathered before him, he cleansed the lad. The demon came out, and the boy fell down, so that the people thought he was dead; but Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, fully recovered from the affliction.
2. Verse 17: "Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me."
 - a. "This lamentation, showing that Jesus had become wearied and saddened by the constant manifestations of insufficient faith among his disciples, was not addressed to the father of the youth, but to the disciples and the multitude. Some infidel writers have represented this speech as a manifestation of impatience and irritation inconsistent with a perfect human character. The rebuke itself was certainly just, and, under the circumstances, altogether proper; then why should the feeling which naturally accompanies such a rebuke, be improper? The perfection of human character consists not in the impassiveness of a statue, but in the just and harmonious exercise of all the emotions which belong to our nature" (McGarvey, p.152).
 - b. "This was not so much an expression of impatience or complaint as a reproof for their being so slow to believe that he was the Messiah, notwithstanding his miracles" (Barnes, p.179).
 3. Verse 18: "And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour."
 - a. Matthew uses few words and gives scant detail of the miracle, nevertheless his account is impressive to the thoughtful heart. As pointed out by Mark, the demon was not evicted without a struggle. The power of Jesus had been brought into question by virtue of the failure of his disciples. And after the demon had seized the boy in a final fit of torment, and the boy fell down as if dead, the multitude thought Jesus had also met with failure. But Christ lifted the boy up, alive and well.
 - b. Luke 9:43 shows the effect this had on the multitude: "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God." One can surmise that the scribes must have felt the severity of this blow to their efforts.
 4. Verses 19-21: "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."
 - a. Following this miracle, the disciples asked Jesus privately, after they had entered the house (Mk. 9:28), why they had failed. The Lord's answer indicates that it was traceable to a lack of faith on their part. Modern "healers" claim that the faith necessary to heal lies with the "patient." In some Bible cases, that was so, but in some cases there was no faith at all in the heart of the one being helped; in others, the faith of a third party was required (as here), and in the case of the disciples, their faith was insufficient.
 - b. Boles surmises, "During the absence of Jesus, his disciples had attempted for their own personal honor and glory to exercise power over demons, but it failed for lack of faith. The powers and blessings of God are not to be used for selfish gain or honor; when so used, they put us to shame and become a curse to us." (p. 361).
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- c. "In order to work a miracle it was necessary not only to have a miraculous endowment, but also to exercise faith. This is declared in the Savior's answer, and it had already been indicated to the disciples at the time of Peter's attempt to walk on the water. (14:31.) The faith in question was the belief that what was commanded would be done—faith in the power with which they were endued. When they spoke doubtingly to the demon he had power to resist them" (McGarvey, p.153).
- d. A mustard seed was the tiniest of seeds found commonly in Palestine, yet it produced a sizeable plant. "Faith comparable to a mustard seed is very weak faith; and if this would enable them to remove 'this mountain' (the lofty Mt. Hermon), how weak must be the faith they had exercised! This remark added a rebuke to the explanation" (McGarvey, p.153).
- e. The ASV omits the statement of verse 21, although many ancient authorities included it, as does Mark 9:29. "As weakness of faith was the point of failure, we understand that the prayer and fasting would be effective, not by imparting directly the power in question, but by intensifying their faith, and thus enabling them to fully exert the power which had been imparted to them. That 'this kind' goes not out but by prayer and fasting, shows that it was more difficult to cast out this kind than some other kinds. Demons, like spirits in the flesh, are characterized by different degrees of will-force, and the one in question was an obstinate demon" (ibid.).
- f. The Lord stated that to the apostles nothing would be impossible. They were granted the full power of the Holy Spirit which enabled them to do many marvelous things.

C. Matthew 17:22-23: Jesus Announces again his Impending Death.

1. Verse 22: "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men."
 - a. Before leaving Galilee the Lord spoke these words. This fact is given in order to strengthen the force of the Lord's prediction relative to his crucifixion. He said that he would be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. "Jesus makes the discouraging announcement of his death at a time when their faith in him was in liveliest exercise. Three of them had just witnessed his transfiguration, and all had seen a demon, whom they could not cast out, depart promptly at his command" (McGarvey, p.153).
 - b. To be betrayed means that someone close enough to him to do this evil deed would be the culprit. He later identified the one unmistakably
2. Verse 23: "And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."
 - a. The things which transpired when he went to Jerusalem are commonly known to us all today, but to the disciples, who were as yet ignorant of those details, this was extremely depressing news. Their conception of Christ and his kingdom was in error.
 - b. "The ability of finite men to understand so Gargantuan a fact as God in Christ dying for the sins of the whole world was strained to the breaking point" (Coffman, p.270). Luke 9:45 adds: "But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying."
 - c. However, they understood enough to be filled with sorrow on hearing it. "Their sorrow arose partly from the disheartening thought of his death, and partly, no doubt, from the fact that he persisted in repeating an announcement which they knew not how to credit" (McGarvey, p.154).

D. Matthew 17:24-27: The Tribute Money found in the Mouth of a Fish.

1. Verse 24: "And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?"
 - a. In Capernaum, those who collected tribute money asked Peter whether Jesus paid it. This was a tax imposed for the upkeep of the temple activities, not the Roman tax. See 2 Chronicles 24:5f; Exodus 30:12-16.
 - 1) Exodus 30:12-16: "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when *thou* numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs:) an half shekel *shall be* the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich

shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *they* give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls."

- 2) 2 Chronicles 24:5-6: "And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened *it* not. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, *according to the commandment* of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness?"
 - b. The payment of this tax was construed as subjection to God as their King. As a religious teacher, Jesus might have exempted himself from this tax.
 2. Verses 25-26: "He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free."
 - a. Peter replied in the affirmative. The Lord knew what had happened and broached the subject to Peter. "Prevented" means "preceded" (he spoke first). Kings do not impose taxes on members of their own family, but on the subjects of his kingdom.
 - b. The Lord remarked that that meant the children were free. His point is that since he is God's Son, he was not obligated to pay the tax.
 3. Verse 27: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."
 - a. Even though he was not required to pay the tribute money, he did so in order to avoid controversy. So Peter was sent to the nearby sea, told to cast a hook in the water and that he would find a shekel in the first fish he caught; this coin would pay the tax for them both. This foreknowledge of Jesus was further proof of his identity.
 - b. If he had refused to pay the tax, he would have been inconsistent with his teachings (Rom. 13:1-7). Christians should be willing to sacrifice in order to be consistent, and to avoid potential problems.
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MATTHEW 18

A. Matthew 18:1-6: Attributes of Little Children Enjoined Upon Followers of Christ.

1. Verse 1: "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
 - a. This question arose more than once among the disciples, and indicated their lack of humility and a misunderstanding of the nature of the coming kingdom (Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 9:47; Mark 9:34; Luke 22:24-30; John 13:4-17; Acts 1:6).
 - b. Mark (9:33-37) and Luke (9:46-48) show that the twelve had been disputing which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom, and that the Lord had inquired what their dispute was about. They were demonstrating pride, a characteristic which is foreign to any who would be a follower of Christ.
 - c. Humility is one of the basic virtues which is demanded of one who would become and be a Christian. Without humility one would not be able to genuinely repent for he would hardly be able to feel godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10) for his sinful conduct; and without that godly sorrow there can be no repentance. Humility enables one to recognize his lost condition, sincerely repent and obey the gospel, realizing that only the Lord can save him. And to remain faithful, humility must characterize us in all our daily activities and attitudes.
 - 1) Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
 - 2) Acts 2:36-38: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
 - 3) Ephesians 4:1-3: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
 - 4) Philippians 2:1-5: "If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."
 - 5) James 4:6-10: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."
 - 6) 1 Peter 5:5-7: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
 - d. Their quarreling over the supposed positions of distinction to be meted out in the kingdom is akin to relatives fighting over the estate of a departed family member. A worldly-minded man said, the covetous relatives sometimes play tug-of-war, using the dead man's innards as a rope.
 2. Verses 2-3: "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. Keeping in mind that these remarks were addressed to the twelve, the conversion was that of these apostles. Conversion means to be changed from one form to another, to be turned from one course of life to another. Since these men were children of God by virtue of their birth (they were all Jews), and were already followers of Christ, the conversion meant was from their selfish ambition and worldly
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- outlook. If they expected to enter the coming kingdom, and if they wished to be invited into the eternal abode of heaven, they must make this change and become as a little child.
- b. There are certain characteristics of children which are cultivated by Christians. The trait primarily enjoined here is that of humility. Children generally are willing to accept instruction; they recognize that their parent or teacher is more knowledgeable than they; they can be molded and shaped; they are docile, and free from ambitious aims. What children are by nature, Christians are to become by design.
 - c. The characteristic of humility the Lord required of the twelve is likewise required of any who wish to be translated into the kingdom and eventually to be invited into heaven.
 - d. "Benjamin Franklin, the great Restoration preacher, found in this text one of a triad on the subject of conversion. The expression 'turn' or 'turn again' is translated 'be converted' in the AV. The other two texts are Acts 3:19 and 28:27. The three texts represent instruction directed to three different classes of persons, depending upon their spiritual development. These three are: (1) believers who needed to repent (Matt. 18:3), (2) unbelievers (Acts 28:27), and (3) believers whose repentance was anticipated (Acts 3:19). From these three texts it is clear that Biblical conversion has three phases, faith, repentance, and something additional (baptism), these separate phases being accomplished by obedience to the gospel and involving three distinct changes in the individual. Franklin taught that the three changes are (1) a change of mind, (2) a change of will, and (3) a change of state or status. Thus faith was appointed to change the mind, repentance to change the will, and baptism to change the status. Significantly, these also sustain a certain relation to time, past, present, and future. Thus, faith changes the present, repentance changes the future, and baptism changes the past" (Coffman, p.276).
3. Verse 4: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. This verse shows that it is the humility of children that is being emphasized. It is the one who is humble that is considered by the Lord to be the greatest in the kingdom. This answers their question of verse one. The greatest is the one who is the humblest and least ambitious.
 - b. Psalm 131: "LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul *is* even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 14:20: "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."
 4. Verse 5: "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."
 - a. This remark does not have reference to a physical child, but rather to the humble Christian. "One *such* little child" is the one who humbles himself as a little child; in other words, a faithful, humble child of God. Verse four identifies the person being discussed as one who "shall humble himself as this little child." Verse six further describes the same person as "one of these little ones which believe in me."
 - 1) The point of verse five is that one who receives a child of God in the Lord's name, receives the Lord. When we receive a faithful follower of Christ, we receive Christ, because every faithful saint belongs to Christ. To "receive" another Christian means to approve, love, treat with kindness, and aid when needed (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).
 - 2) "But if one does not help the humble and trusting disciple, he is likely to hinder him, that is, cause him to stumble. It appears that the primary reference was to the effect the selfish contentions in which the disciples had been engaging might have on others. This should be an impressive lesson to those followers of Christ who engage in quarreling among themselves" (ALC, 1959, p.169).
 - b. The passage has nothing at all to do with receiving little children into church membership.
 5. Verse 6: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea."
 - a. To cause someone to stumble means to trip them up, to entice them to sin (Thayer). "But as Jesus said concerning offenses, it must needs be that the occasion for them come, for some are not willing to follow the Lord's teaching; 'but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!' One should be made to tremble when he considers that even his speech and conduct, which have no reference to the
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by-stander, may cause his stumble. This, of course, has reference to speech and conduct which are contrary to the Scriptures" (ALC, *ibid.*).

- b. "Contentions as to who shall be greatest always give offense, and at the same time, by exciting evil passions, they ensnare the persons engaged in them. Jesus desired that his disciples should see this tendency of their discussion, and to show how fearful the final result would be to the offender, he assures them that it were better for such to have a millstone hung about his neck, and to be cast into the sea. It were better, because his actual fate will be worse than that. (Comp. 8,9.)" (McGarvey, p.156).
- c. "An ancient mode of punishment for certain crimes was to hang a millstone about the neck of the victim and cast him into the sea to drown; this was practiced by the Syrians, Greeks, and others. The Jews at times had practiced this by casting the victim into the Dead Sea with a stone tied around him" (Boles, p.369).
- d. It is said that there were two kinds of millstones: one turned by woman power and another turned by donkey power; the latter one is used in this passage.
- e. The terrible fate alluded to in the passage is the eternal punishment the guilty will receive in hell. This is one [of many passages] which speaks of punishment after death, and which denies the materialist concept dreamed up by modern false teachers.

B. Matthew 18:7-14: Warnings Against Causing a Christian to Stumble.

1. Verse 7: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"
 - a. "By a natural transition Jesus here passes from the particular cause of offense under consideration, to offenses in general. 'It must needs be that offenses come,' not because it is the will of God that they should come, but because the depravity of men makes them inevitable....No man should look for the day when there will be no offenses, but each should see to it that he is not the cause of them" (McGarvey, pp.156f).
 - b. The unbelieving world has always seen to it that offenses came. That is, men continually, in every generation and society, raise up persecution, opposition, and temptations against the children of God. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done" (Acts 4:19-21). Polycarp was given the opportunity to renounce and revile Christ in order to save his life. He declined. This was a means of evil men trying to trip up and cause a Christian to commit sin.
2. Verses 8-9: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."
 - a. It is better to give up some pleasure, opportunity, position, state, practice, etc., if the thing involved causes one to commit sin. It is better to forego such if the result is to lose one's soul in eternal punishment.
 - b. "In the physical realm, amputations of various kinds daily illustrate the validity of our Lord's words. Removal of a mortally infected member is required for the preservation of life. The use of strong metaphor, as in the case here, frequently marked the teachings of Christ. (Also see Matt. 5:29,30)" (Coffman, p.278).
 - c. "The words of Jesus here are not to be taken literally, for God does not permit us to injure and maim our bodies in order to avoid temptation, but shows us, by this impressive figure of speech, that we should deny our selfish and proud desires, and 'put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth'" (Boles, p.371).
 - d. It is better to be alive spiritually here (and eternally in heaven) while deprived of certain things which cause sin, than to enjoy the pleasure of those sinful things which culminates in one's being cast into *Gehenna*. Compare: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the

- pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).
- e. What verse eight calls "everlasting fire," verse nine calls "hell fire" (Gehenna). Again, the view that there is no punishment of sinners after death is false.
3. Verse 10: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."
 - a. To despise is to regard with contempt. We are warned against having this attitude toward another Christian. The little ones under consideration are still those identified in verses 4-6, and which are characterized by the good traits of children. God has promised to avenge those who mistreat his people. "That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified" (1 Thess. 4:6; cf. Jas. 5:1-9)
 - b. The statement about "their angels do always behold the face" of God is given as a reason for not despising another saint. These angels have access to the throne of God, and thus can bring the power of God to bear on the situation.
 - c. The Bible nowhere says that there is a guardian angel watching over each Christian. This verse is often interpreted to teach the fact of guardian angels. If the Bible did teach it, then this verse would probably be rightfully construed to be an allusion to it. But the doctrine of guardian angels is first developed, then this verse is asserted to support the view. "This expression shows that the 'little ones' in question have angels which are in some sense *theirs*. All the angels are 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation;' but this general ministration is effected by a ministration for particular individuals. '*Their* angels,' then, are the angels especially charged with ministering to them individually. The fact stated of these angels is that 'they do always behold the face of the Father in heaven'—a fact which shows the efficiency of their guardianship, seeing that in addition to their own power they have access to the helping power of God. The fact that these weak disciples have such angels to watch over them, makes it exceedingly preposterous that we should despise them" (McGarvey, p.157).
 - d. The Bible does not teach that individual saints become angels after death; rather it says that following the resurrection, we will become as angels, in the particular sense that we will not engage in marriage as we do here (the marital relationship pertains to earthly life, not to heaven). "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30).
 - e. If Christians do have guardian angels, what do those angels do for us? What do they guard against? Death? Problems? Pain? Sickness? Accidents? Danger? Persecutions? How do these guardian angels operate? Directly? Miraculously? Do they suggest ideas and motives to our minds independent of the Bible? Some difficulties are created by the idea of guardian angels:
 - 1) It does not harmonize with the Bible doctrine of the free moral agency of man (Gen. 2:16-17; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:16-18; John 5:28-29; Rom. 2:1-11; Jas. 1:13-15).
 - 2) When a faithful Christian dies, or suffers, or is afflicted, where is his guardian angel? When a saint gets involved in a tragic accident, where is his angel?
 - 3) Matthew 18:10 states that their angels are in heaven, not on earth. All angels serve all saints (Heb. 1:14) in God's plan. It does not say that each saint has his own personal angel. That God is interested in all faithful saints is indicated by the presence of angels before his throne. The picture of a guardian angel hovering over a Christian does not fit the picture, for these angels are in heaven, before God's throne.
 - 4) How does the guardian angel operate? Is his leading apart from the word of God? Is it irresistible? Who is to blame if the individual does not cooperate?
 - f. Note these miraculous episodes (the first is likely a figurative description).
 - 1) Psalms 34:7: "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."
 - 2) Daniel 6:22: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."
 - 3) Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

- 4) Acts 8:26: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."
- 5) Acts 10:3: "He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius."
- 6) Acts 12:5-15: "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel."
- 7) Acts 27:23: "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,"
- g. Barnes gives these comments on the passage: "This is taken from the practice of earthly courts. To be admitted to the presence of a king; to be allowed to see his face continually; to have free access to him at all times, was deemed a mark of peculiar favour (1 Ki. 10:8; Es. 1:14), and was esteemed a security for his protection. So, says our Saviour, we should not despise the obscurest Christian, for he is ministered to by the highest and noblest of beings—by beings who are always enjoying the favour and friendship of God" (p.186). "He does not mean, I suppose, to state that every good man has his guardian angel, as many of the Jews believed; but that the angels were, *in general*, the guards of his followers..." (p.185).
- h. Boles: "In the parable of the man who sowed good seed and evil plants grew in the field (Matt. 13:24-30), the servants, who were the angels, asked, 'Shall we gather up the evil plants?' He said, 'No; let them grow together until the harvest; then the reapers will separate them.' This teaches that there will be no superhuman interference with men until the judgment. The idea of guardian angels is attended with some evil; it is best not to teach it" (p.373).
4. Verse 11: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."
- a. The Lord warned against despising one of his followers (vs. 10), and gives as a reason for avoiding such the fact that "their angels" are in the presence of God. In the present verse he gives another reason, that being the fact that the Son of man had come for the purpose of saving those who are lost.
- b. Since he was willing to forego the position he occupied in heaven and come to earth to live and die for fallen man, woe to those who would oppose his great effort to save the lost by despising those who have accepted his mercy!
5. Verses 12-14: "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."
- a. "To show still further the reason why we should not despise Christians, he introduced a parable showing the joy felt when a thing lost is found" (Barnes, pp.186f). "As it is not the will of the shepherd that one stray sheep should perish, even so it is not the will of God that an erring disciple shall perish. And now, if the shepherd does not despise the foolish sheep, and leave it to perish because it has gone
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astray, and if God does not despise the erring disciple, why should we despise him? On the one hand, the disciple is of much more value than a sheep, and, on the other, God against whom he has sinned could much more properly despise him than we who are so much like him" (McGarvey, p.158).

- b. Christ came to save those who were lost, which included the whole race: (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23; 1 Tim. 1:13-15; Heb. 2:10; Matt. 26:28). No one should despise any other lost person.
- c. Christ wishes to reclaim any of his little ones who go astray. No one should despise any of these erring disciples. It is the will of God that none of these little ones (followers of Christ) should perish. "The importance of this lesson cannot be overemphasized. The selfish conduct of brethren who are more interested in having their own way, than in strengthening and saving the weak and uninformed, is in direct opposition against the declared will of God, and they will be held responsible for the souls whom they have despised when they face the judgment at the last day. Cf. 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:9" (ALC, 1959, p.170).
- d. False teachers use verse 14 in a vain attempt to teach that a child of God can never so fall as to be eternally lost. The verse simply states that God wants all men to be saved. However, God will not override man's free moral agency and force him to be saved against his will. It is the will of God that all men everywhere believe in him but there are multiplied millions who do not do so. It is the will of God that all men everywhere repent, but very few do. It is the will of God that men everywhere believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but most do not. It is God's will that no man take another man's life, but many do so anyway. God will not force any man to be obedient to his will. It is God's will that everyone who becomes a Christian continue faithfully unto death, but not all will do so. God will not force an alien to obey the gospel and he will not force a Christian to remain faithful. God gives all the motives and opportunities that men need, but each individual must make the personal decision and commitment to follow God.
 - 1) Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
 - 2) Romans 10:1-3: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
 - 3) Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

C. Matthew 18:15-18: How to Handle Cases of Personal Offenses in the Coming Church.

1. Verse 15: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."
 - a. "In addition to what Jesus had already said about causing others to stumble, he now gives instructions how to restore those who do stumble. Certain rules are to be observed and principles followed in dealing with the erring....This teaching is prospective as the church had not been established at this time" (Boles, p.375). "The word rendered *trespass* (*amartasa*) means to *sin*; and the clause should be rendered, 'if thy brother sin against thee.' In the former part of the discourse Jesus had warned the disciples against giving offense, or in any way mistreating a brother; now he tells them how to proceed when a brother sins against them" (McGarvey, p.158).
 - b. Notice the situation being discussed: it is a case where one brother sins against another brother (both are Christians). A personal offense by one saint against another saint is the circumstance being considered. Agreeing with the liberal element in the church, one Bible scholar asserts that before any false teacher can be called into question, the brother who observes the error must first go to the errorist and confront him face-to-face before any public rebuke can be scripturally given. He states, "In some 35 years of the ministry, countless cases have been observed by this writer in which the *first* effort to correct some alleged sin or error has been an ugly blast from a pulpit or in some religious paper, always justified, of course, on the basis that the alleged wrong-doing was a 'public' matter, and therefore requiring no private confrontation with the 'wrong-doer!'" If his view is correct, then those who spoke up or wrote about the wrong-doing as they did, were guilty of sin. We wonder if he

followed the principle he is advocating and went to those guilty of speaking or writing about the incident before he committed his comments just stated to writing? [See Coffman, pp.280ff].

- 1) There are Biblical instances where public offenses (error taught or sin committed) occurred and an inspired preacher rebuked the offender publicly, on the spot, without any private counseling sessions. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Gal. 2:11-14).
- 2) By using the inspired writings, we are permitted or required to expose sin and error publicly without first approaching the offender privately. In many cases it is not possible or expedient to go to the individual in private. Suppose a man espoused some significant error before a crowd of young people: to wait until the errorist can be spoken to privately is to ignore the evil impact his error has on their impressionable minds and exposes them to terrible danger, which could be avoided by a public, timely reproof.
 - c. The Lord is considering an offense of a private nature done against another saint. He is not discussing a sin done only against God, but one done by one Christian against another Christian: "If thy brother shall trespass **against thee**...."
 - d. In this situation, then, the victim of this sin is directed to go to the offender in private for the purpose of telling him his error so that he might be brought to repentance. The individual may not realize that he has done wrong; it might be that he does not recognize the seriousness of what he has done; he may not be aware that he has caused injury. The matter is to be kept private as long as possible.
 - e. "Observe, too, that it is not, as men are inclined to have it, the offender, but the offended who must go. True, it is elsewhere made the duty of an offender, when he remembers that his brother has aught against him, to go and be reconciled to his brother (5:23,24); but according to the teaching of the present paragraph, the offended is not to wait for this. The offender has fallen into sin, and without help he may never recover from it....It is well also to observe that the time, place and circumstances of going to the offending brother are not specified, but must, like the matter and manner of the rebuke, be chosen with reference to the one purpose of gaining the brother. Go at a time, and select a place, and seek for other surroundings, which are most favorable to success in your effort" (McGarvey, pp.158f).
 - f. Consider these passages:
 - 1) Leviticus 19:17: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."
 - 2) Acts 8:18-24: "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."
 - 3) Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."
 - 4) 1 Timothy 5:20: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."
 - 5) Titus 3:10: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."
2. Verse 16: "But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."
 - a. "The one or two more are to be taken primarily for the same purpose with which you at first went

- alone—the purpose of gaining the brother....But secondarily, in case of a failure, the one or two may serve as witnesses of all that passed between the parties" (McGarvey, p.159). "The Jews required at least two witnesses to every act of crime and offense against the law. (Deut. 17:6; 19:15.) This principle is carried out in the New Testament. (John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28.) This was wise or else God would not have commanded it. The design of taking two witnesses may be two fold; first the offending brother may be possibly induced to repent and return, if he has been proud and refractory, when he sees that persons of serious character and candid judgment are condemning his fault; and second, that in administering the discipline, the church later may have certain grounds on which to base its discipline and not upon imaginary or prejudiced ground" (Boles, p.376).
- b. John 8:17: "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true."
 - c. 2 Corinthians 13:1: "This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."
 - d. Hebrews 10:28: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses."
3. Verse 17: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."
 - a. If he does not repent even after these two efforts, tell it to the church. These words were spoken prior to the establishment of the Lord's church, but it was given with the coming of the church in mind. It was prospective in nature, and would have its main fulfillment only after the church came into actual being. "The rule of procedure is given only for cases of personal offense, where one individual has sinned against another. We are to learn from other portions of the New Testament how to deal with offenses of other kinds" (McGarvey, p.159).
 - b. The purpose of these procedures is to save an erring saint. It is not for the purpose of punishing him or in exacting vengeance.
 - c. If he still refuses to repent, let him be to you as the heathen and publicans were to the Jews: "He is to be avoided; yet he is entitled to the earnest good will, and all the offices of humanity; the faithful disciples of Christ are to have no religious communion with him until he repents. (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Cor. 2:6,7; 2 Thess. 3:14,15)"(Boles, p.377).
 - d. "When one feels wronged by another in the church, the temptation is for him to seek out some personal friend or confidant, and to elaborate the real or fancied wrong by embellishing it with every possible coloring and emphasis, thus spreading hate against the offending party. Telling the elders, the deacons, or the preacher, or anyone else, of the evil detected in another is wrong (till after the first admonition); and even after the first admonition, the greatest number to be acquainted with it is two others (see verse 16). *Go to the offender first!* That is God's commandment! Those who depart from it, preferring some other way, do so at their eternal peril" (Coffman p.283).
 4. Verse 18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
 - a. "All of the apostles, not merely Peter alone, were included in this promise. (See Matthew 16:19). Its mention in this context appears to make the action of a church in the rejection of an offending member a matter of the utmost consequences, now and eternally" (ibib.).
 - b. If this verse is taken as part of the preceding three-verse context, then it means that their decision about withdrawal of fellowship from a certain member of the coming church would be honored in heaven. We should not understand that the power to bind and loose was given equally to all members of the church for only the apostles were specially equipped and empowered to do thus; and even they did not do so with their own wisdom for they were guided by the Holy Spirit in accomplishing their important work (Mark 13:11; Luke 24:49; John 15:26; 16:7f, 13f; Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-4). But when a congregation follows the Lord's instructions and withdraws their fellowship from an erring member, the full sanction of heaven is behind their actions.
 - c. However, if this verse is to be understood as independent of the preceding three verses, and as a distinct part of the whole context (18:1-35), then it is saying very emphatically that the apostles possessed equal authority under Christ, power which no one else in the kingdom was given.
 - d. But whether we take the first or second view of the verse, the same point is made in reference to the binding and loosing. When we today implement the instructions here given (verses 15-18), we are
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following the instructions Christ gave *through* his inspired servants; it is their inspired message we are applying. And there is no distinction between the apostles in the authority and power they were given. Remember their question in verse one: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The statement as part of the overall context of the chapter affirms that all the apostles would be on equal footing as far as authority was concerned. "Verily I say unto you [the apostles], That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). This the apostles are doing today—by means of the message of the New Testament which was delivered through them. If someone objects, saying that there were thirteen apostles (including Paul), then we reply that there were thirteen tribes (including Levi), in ancient Israel.

D. Matthew 18:19-22: The Power of United Prayer, and the Need for a Forgiving Spirit.

1. Verse 19: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."
 - a. The Lord's appointed process for guiding an errant brother to repent, and for withdrawing fellowship from him if he refuses, requires a united effort on the part of the whole church. If the brethren are divided, the process will not have the desired result—the restoration of a sinful member. Standing in contrast to this disunity is the statement of this verse and the one following: When two or more saints unite in asking some good thing from God, they will be heard, *for* ("a causal particle or conjunction"—*Analytical Greek Lexicon*, p.75) Christ is present when two or three are gathered in his name.
 - b. There is power in united prayer as indicated by the example of the early church (Acts 4:23-33; 12:4-12). While we are not to expect God to answer miraculously, he can give answer providentially. "The promise here made is necessarily limited, like all other promises of the kind, by the well understood condition that the thing for which we ask shall be in accordance with the will of God" (McGarvey, p.160).
 - c. God is well-pleased when we offer up united prayers to him. This is one among many scriptural indications that audible, public prayers are permitted and encouraged. Some have assumed, based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 6:5-6, that prayers must always be offered in privacy (when no one else is present, or silently). The prayer of one humble, faith-filled saint has great influence on our Heavenly Father; of how much greater impact must the prayers of several of his saints have with him!
 - d. May a few Christians meet for worship? Does this verse condone [or declare the rightness] of so assembling? May two or three saints meet together in a private setting to sing? To study the Bible? To eat the Lord's Supper on the Lord's day? Is it right for two or three children of God meet to pray? Who would deny the rightness of these activities?
2. Verse 20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
 - a. "This statement confirms the promise that the prayers of any two of them would be answered, and at the same time it gives us the comforting assurance of the Savior's presence whenever we meet in his name" (ibid.).
 - 1) Weak saints in every congregation have shown their utter indifference toward the Lord by refusing to assemble with the Lord's people. By practice of long months or years, they absent themselves from the mid-week services, but when some *man* whom they honor and esteem is to be there, all their excuses are set aside, and they come! Does this not mean that they set greater store with being in the presence of some man than for being in the Lord's presence?
 - 2) If the Bible is God's word, and it is, then when we meet on Wednesday evenings, Christ is present. If we do not choose, or wish, to be present ourselves, what does that say about our regard for Christ? And if we do not wish to assemble here in his presence, what makes us think we would be any happier in his presence in heaven?
 - b. To do something in the Lord's name is to act with his authority (Matt. 28:18-19; Col. 3:17; Acts 2:36-38; 4:7-12; 19:5; 1 Cor. 1:10).
 - c. Ultimate authority rests with the Father; he gave authority to the Son; the Son sent the Spirit; the Spirit inspired the apostles; the apostles conveyed certain Spirit-given abilities to other people; the apostles plus Mark, Luke, James, and Jude were guided in recording the New Testament. God speaks to

mankind today through his Son; the Son speaks through the New Testament which the Spirit-guided men identified above received and recorded. We can only act by the authority of Christ today if we are guided by his gospel, the New Testament!

3. Verse 21: "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"
 - a. "Peter saw clearly that the rules just given would require on our part a large amount of forbearance and forgiveness, and he naturally inquired how many times he should forgive a brother who would sin against him" (McGarvey, p.160).
 - b. We are told by various scholars that the Jewish rabbis, who were uninspired, taught that forgiveness was limited to three times, which they apparently thought was indicated by Amos 1:3,6 and Job 33:29-30. The apostle Peter asked how many times should he forgive a brother who had sinned against him. He perhaps thought he would give a higher figure than did the rabbis, so he asked whether seven times would be sufficient, possibly getting that idea from Leviticus 26:18-28 and Proverbs 24:16.
 - c. The Lord had earlier taught (Mt. 5:20) that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. Peter increased the number to seven. He was beginning to make progress.
4. Verse 22: "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."
 - a. The Lord's reply is significant. He makes a play based on Peter's usage of the number seven, and says we are to forgive a brother seventy times seven (490 times). But since no one would be able to keep track of such a great number of such occurrences, the Lord is simply using a specific number to represent an unlimited number. "This simply means that a Christian must have the spiritual resources to keep on forgiving. Forgiveness of others was made a constant precondition of man's forgiveness by the Father, not only in these words of Jesus here, but upon other occasions as well. The business of forgiveness is so important that Christ immediately introduced one of his longest parables in order to reinforce the teaching and repeat the absolute necessity of forgiveness at the conclusion of it" (Coffman, pp.284f).
 - b. It is easy to see sin in other people, but much harder to see it in ourselves. David saw the sin of the wealthy man in Nathan's parable but only in this indirect and highly emotional story could he see his own sin (2 Sam. 12:1ff). The Pharisee could easily discern the publican's sinfulness but not his own (Luke 18:9-14).
 - c. One who retains resentment and hatred against one who has wronged him is turning that same sword against his own soul. If we wish to have God's pardon, we must first be ready to forgive others. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15).
 - d. "Take heed to yourselves; If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4).
 - 1) The Lord's statement here does not clash with his statement to Peter in our present text. In the latter case, a day is the time factor, while in the former, a lifetime is under consideration. In both cases, an unlimited number is intended. Note also in this passage from Luke that our forgiveness is hinged on the offending brother's repentance. God does not have a stricter code for us than he has for himself; since he does not forgive an unrepentant sinner, neither does he require our forgiveness of the same.
 - 2) However, we are required to maintain a present willingness to extend forgiveness (Mark 11:24-26). This does not mean that we are bearing a grudge against our brother any more than it means that God bears a grudge against him. God forgives in the sense that he releases the sinner from his guilt; we forgive in that we take him back into our fellowship and consider him never to have been guilty of any offense.
 - e. What do we do when we **forgive** a penitent brother? Only deity can remit the guilt of sin (Mark 2:1-12). We forgive another in the sense that the sin which divided us no longer stands between us. We accept him back into our fellowship as though no offense had been committed.

E. Matthew 18:23-35: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

1. Verse 23: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of

- his servants."
- a. The kingdom of heaven and the church are different terms describing the same organization. Therefore, when the Lord said that the kingdom is like something, he is giving us a picture of some aspect of the church. In this situation, he describes a case in which a certain king called his servants and took "account" of them. That is, he brought them in to settle accounts. The servants were probably high-ranking officials, possibly tax collectors for his kingdom.
 - b. "In the comparison which follows, the kingdom of heaven, as the context shows, is contemplated with regard to the duty of forgiveness, and it is like the king only in this respect, that the administration of its affairs is, in the particular under consideration, analogous to the king's administration in the case given" (McGarvey, p.160).
2. Verse 24: "And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents."
- a. A talent was not a coin but an amount of money. Scholars have estimated the value of a talent of silver from \$1000 to \$1600. Taking the latter figure, ten thousand talents would equal sixteen million dollars. Talents of gold were of much greater value. To see the immense debt of this one man, see the cost of constructing Solomon's temple (I Chron. 29:4-7).
 - b. William P. Barker [*As Matthew Saw the Master*, Westwood, NJ, Revell Co., 1964, p.89] says, "To give some idea of what a colossal debt this was, the total tax income of the five provinces of Palestine (Judaea, Peraea, Idumaea, Samaria, and Galilee) was only eight hundred talents. In other words, the servant's debt was over ten times the amount of the national budget" (quoted by Coffman, p.286).
3. Verses 25-27: "But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt."
- a. "The law of Moses tolerated the selling of men for debt. (Lev. 25:39,47; 2 Kgs. 4:1.) It seems from verse 30 that in the Savior's time imprisonment was also employed, and the latter penalty for insolvency has been continued among the most enlightened nations until a very recent date. It is only with the present century [19th] that it has been abolished in the various States of our own Union" (McGarvey, pp.160f).
 - b. The servant fell down before his lord and pleaded for time. "The fault of the unmerciful servant was his failure to realize the enormity and absolute hopelessness of his debt. His earnest promise to repay it showed that he did not have the slightest conception of how much he owed" (Coffman, p.287).
 - c. The king was moved with compassion and fully forgave the debt. He was about to lose his family and his own freedom, but the king forgave his immense liability. This was intended to illustrate the tremendous debt every sinner has before God.
4. Verse 28: "But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest."
- a. This same servant immediately went forth from the king, sought out a fellowservant who owed him fifteen pence, took him by the throat and demanded payment.
 - b. "The coin mentioned is the Roman *denarius*, which was equal to fifteen cents of our money. The fellow-servant's debt, then, was only fifteen dollars" (McGarvey, p.161). Others have estimated it to be about twenty dollars (Coffman), or seventeen dollars (ALC, 1959). The difference between the two debts was beyond compare.
5. Verses 29-31: "And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done."
- a. This second servant fell down before the first servant in much the same manner as had the first servant before the king; but whereas the king had forgiven him his debt he did not do so for his fellow-servant. He would not wait to be paid but had the man cast into prison until the debt was paid.
 - b. The other servants who witnessed this sorry display of greed related the event to the king. "...No matter how much we are inclined to deal harshly with men ourselves, we are always indignant, when,

as disinterested witnesses, we behold such conduct in others" (McGarvey, p.161).

6. Verses 32-35: "Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."
 - a. The king pointed out to the unmerciful servant his error, and then pronounced a very severe penalty upon him. To be imprisoned and suffer torture is far worse than being sold into slavery. The Lord then starkly draws the comparison between this servant's case and the case of a Christian who will not from the heart forgive a trespassing brother. This is the principal lesson of the story.
 - b. We are elsewhere exhorted to manifest a forgiving, merciful attitude toward others.
 - 1) "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (Jas. 2:13).
 - 2) "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32).
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MATTHEW 19

A. Introduction and background.

1. Jesus' personal ministry may be outlined in this way: (Roy Deaver)
 - a. Birth and infancy.
 - b. Period of preparation.
 - c. The Early Galilean Ministry.
 - d. The Early Judaeon Ministry.
 - e. The Great Galilean Ministry.
 - f. The Later Judaeon Ministry.
 - g. The Perean Ministry.
 - h. The Last Days.
2. "The country lying east of the Sea of Galilee and river Jordan was called by Josephus' the Peraea,' but it is referred to in the New Testament as 'beyond the Jordan.' (Matt. 4:15,25; 19:1; Mark 3:8; John 1:28; 3:26; 10:40.) It is never called Perea in the New Testament. This country seems to have been called in the Old Testament 'land of Gilead.' It is perhaps the most picturesque and beautiful part of Palestine. In the time of Jesus' ministry Perea with Galilee was under the dominion of Herod Antipas. The Jews recognized Perea, the land beyond the Jordan, as a province of the land of Israel, ranking with Judea and Galilee on the west. On the borders of Perea, some think that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan. It was the scene of happy and profitable intercourse with Jesus and his disciples; it furnished the retreat from Jewish enmity, and from whence Jesus was summoned at the death of Lazarus at Bethany. (John 10:40.)" (Boles, p.384).

B. Matthew 19:1-2: Jesus leaves Galilee and Enters Perea.

1. Verse 1: "And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;"
 - a. After the teachings delivered in chapter 18, Jesus took leave of Galilee. "Matthew, writing especially for the Jews, was concerned about the Lord's making his way in Jerusalem, in Judaea. Thus, Matthew virtually passes over The Later Judaea Ministry, and omits many things that took place between the Great Galilean Ministry and The Last Days. He departed from Galilee, to return no more until after the resurrection (Matt. 28:16,17; John 21:1)" (Deaver, *The Book of Matthew*, p.489).
 - b. "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again" (Mark 10:1).
 - 1) "The Lord worked for about four months in this area, according to the scholars. Nazareth, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Judaea, Samaria and Galilee had been closed to the Lord. One province remained before him. He thus began his work of teaching (Mark 10:1) and healing in Perea....
 - 2) "He went through the cities and villages teaching and performing a few miracles. The great parables recorded by Luke belong to this period: The Slighted Invitation (Luke 14:15-24); The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, The Lost Son, The Other Brother (Luke 15:1-32); The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13); The Importunate Widow (Luke 18:1-8); The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14); The Pounds (Luke 19:11-27).
 - 3) "It was during this period that the Lord discussed 'The Rich Man and Lazarus' (Luke 16:19-31), taught concerning divorce, showed his concern for 'little children.' We have also the incident of The Rich Young Ruler, and Matthew adds 'The Laborers in the Vineyard'" (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.490).
 - c. "The records of Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been called the 'Galilean gospels' because their scene is mostly in Galilee, and their subject the ministry of Jesus in that section; John's record has been called 'the Judean gospel' because its scene is mostly in Judea and in Jerusalem" (Boles, p.385).
2. Verse 2: "And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there."
 - a. Matthew simply says in summary that there were many people who heard his lessons and benefitted from his miracles.
 - b. As always, when the Lord healed, he experienced no failures. There were no "healing lines" into which only "qualified" candidates could enter, as modern "healers" require.

C. Matthew 19:3-12: A Question Regarding Divorce.

1. Verse 3: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"
 - a. These Pharisees were neither honest nor sincere; they were not seeking information. Their purpose was to try to get him to say something that would cause him to lose influence with the people. "It was their aim and determination to entangle the Lord in serious difficulties, inconsistencies, and/or contradiction" (Deaver, *The Book of Matthew*, p.493).
 - b. Their question grew out of the current controversy between two schools of thought over what constituted proper grounds for divorce. The passage in question was Deuteronomy 24:1-2: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed...she may go and be another man's wife."
 - c. Shammai taught: "The man is not to release his wife unless he have found something indecent in her." Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for virtually any cause. "The historical evidence is that the Jews in general followed the teachings of Hillel. But, the Pharisees would like to create a conflict between the Lord and Shammai and his followers, or between the Lord and Hillel and his followers. Whichever position the Lord took would get him in serious trouble" (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.493).
 - d. Further compounding the situation was the fact that at least under some circumstances Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife. If Christ had said that there was no proper grounds for divorce, he would have placed himself in contradiction to the Law. Furthermore, the area where he was now working was governed by Herod Antipas, the man who had murdered John the Baptizer. Herod had taken his brother's wife, and had been rebuked by John on this account.
 - e. The Lord stood to be in jeopardy whatever his pronouncement was on the question at hand. It appeared that he would infuriate some part of the people, no matter what he answered.
 2. Verses 4-6: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
 - a. The Lord replied in a way they did not expect. He was always able to meet their little schemes, regardless how ingenious and devious they were. In a move which had not been anticipated by his antagonists he would completely avoid becoming involved in any of the traps which they had set for him. He went back to the original home, the original law. It was God who created marriage and the home. It was God who gave the sacred laws by which he intended for marriage to be governed. So he took them back beyond the Law of Moses to the Garden of Eden and the first marriage.
 - b. **Have ye not read?** Is it possible that you do not even know what the Scriptures say? The answer to their problem was set forth in the Scriptures, and they should have been fully aware of what they taught.
 - c. **He that made them at the beginning.** Some of the Greek texts have the word for "created" instead of the word for "made." Adam and Eve were created (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:1ff). God made them male and female—different but compatible. This statement shows that the theory of theistic evolution is wrong for it was at the beginning, not millions of years after the beginning, that he made man and woman.
 - d. **He made them male and female.** He only made one Adam and only one Eve: one man and one woman. He did not make several females for one male; he did not make several males for one female. He made one of each; this was God's plan for marriage. It was only after men departed from God's will that multiple wives, divorce, etc., came into human experience.
 - e. **For this cause shall a man leave father and mother.** Because God had made them male and female, a man shall leave his parents' home and cleave to his wife. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). "This means, shall bind himself more strongly to his wife than he was to his father or mother. The marriage connection is the most tender and endearing of all human relations—more tender than even that bond which unites us to a parent" (Barnes, p.194).
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- f. **Shall cleave to his wife.** Cleave is from a Greek word meaning "to glue together, cement, fasten, unite." Barnabas used this word in exhorting the saints at Antioch to "cleave" to the Lord (Acts 11:23). We are told to abhor evil and cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12:9). "Those properly joined together in marriage are to *leave* all others and are to *cleave* to each other" (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.497).
- g. **They twain shall be one flesh.** They are two different individuals with distinct personalities, but they are united in their common love for each other, they are one in their aims and purposes, and they seek the common good of each.
- h. **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** "Marriage is God's creation. The laws to govern it are God's laws. When the two persons eligible (according to God's law) for marriage join themselves together in sacred matrimony, according to the laws of God and the laws of the land, they are also joined together *by God*. Hence, the declaration, '*Let not man put asunder*'" (*ibid.*). Since it is God who did the joining, it is only God who can disjoin the marriage. Any law by which a marriage is set aside must be God's law. "God's laws by virtue of his creating them male and female take precedence over all human laws....Man's laws cannot change the mind of God or the fundamental laws of God; hence man's laws cannot annul the marriage bonds which God has sanctioned" (Boles, p.387).
3. Verse 7: "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?"
- a. Moses merely granted (by inspiration) the privilege to the Jewish man the right to give his wife a writing of divorcement provided he found in her some uncleanness (Deut. 24:1-2). This freed the woman to seek another marriage and gave the man the right to remarry. The Pharisees had worded their question in a devious manner, implying that Moses had required them to put away their wives. But what had been required by the Law was the provision of a bill of divorcement *if* the man found some uncleanness in his wife and decided to put her away.
- b. "That was intended to make divorce more difficult and the result of more than a sudden whim or impulse, and also provided proof for the woman that she was no longer married and had a right to become somebody else's wife" (ALC, 1980, p.154).
- c. The Pharisees had been guilty of careless study. Sectarians make the same kind of mistake today in their conclusions on many passages (John 3:16; Mark 16:16; Rom. 8:1; I Cor. 1:17; Ps. 150). Some brethren make the same error in regards to Romans 14 and Matthew 19:9 (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:16-18). God was unhappy with the way the Jews practiced divorce (Mal. 2:13-16).
4. Verse 8: "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."
- a. The Lord replied that Moses only suffered (allowed, permitted) divorce; he did not command it. Rather, because of their hardness of heart this breakup of the home was permitted for the protection of the wives. Both the Jews and Gentiles are said to have had hard hearts (John 12:40; Acts 7:51; Matt. 13:15; Rom. 2:5; 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:14; Eph. 4:18).
- b. "God had made one woman for one man in the beginning, and for subsequent marriages he had authorized only one woman for one man, and vice versa, of course. This strikes against polygamy, whether simultaneous or successive" (ALC, pp.154f).
- c. From the beginning the provision of divorce was not permitted; it was merely a part of the Law of Moses on account of the hard hearts of many men. "Moses, far from being a champion of divorce, had only suffered or tolerated it as the lesser of two evils—a lesser evil toward the woman than the hardness and cruelty of men's hearts....'Had the law propounded at creation been reenacted by Moses, many would have refused to marry at all, preferring an illicit life to the hazard of matrimony under a stringent law, and others finding themselves unhappily married would have secretly murdered their wives to gain their liberty.
- 1) "As a choice of two evils, God therefore temporarily modified the law out of compassion for the women.' 'The conclusion of the disciples, that if divorce at will is prohibited, it is not good to marry, proves the wisdom of allowing divorce under the law of Moses; for if these men would so conclude, how much more those Jews who were less disposed to obey God? And if marriage were avoided, licentiousness would necessarily prevail.

- 2) "Even in the Savior's day, then, the hardness of heart among the Jews was still an obstacle in the way of the original law; but motives to obedience greater than any that had been known under the Jewish law were about to be presented in the completed gospel, and this made it wise to withdraw the temporary concession" (ALC, p.155).
- d. God overlooked certain things during the age of Moses' Law, including polygamy and divorce for various causes, but he now commands repentance from everyone (Acts 17:30).
- e. The concessions of the Law in reference to marriage, divorce, and remarriage, were due to human weaknesses. From the beginning God did not permit such things. "From the beginning it was not so." The present perfect active of *ginomai* is used here to emphasize the permanence of the divine ideal (Robertson, *Word Pictures*).
- f. Notwithstanding Moses' permission, the case has not been so from the beginning until now. The original ordinance has never been abrogated nor superseded, but continues in force (Vincent). Indulgence had been given by the law of Moses, but that indulgence was to cease, and the marriage relation to be brought back to its original intention (Barnes). (See *Christian Courier*, March, April, and May, 1981, for series by Wayne Jackson from which the above is cited). "The right and strict law, such as had been in the beginning while Adam and Eve were in the state of innocence, would now be restored in the kingdom which Christ came to establish. The privilege of the law of Moses shows the degeneracy of mankind and that the severest penalties, which human laws can inflict, are necessary to prevent the evils which the wicked passions of men would otherwise produce" (Boles, p.388).
- g. "Christ, therefore, prefaces his remarks to Matthew 19:9 with the affirmation that God's marriage law, as instituted in Eden, had never been abrogated—only relaxed—and now, in anticipation of the approaching NT dispensation, the Lord *restores marriage to its original basis*....Since the Lord's teaching in Matthew 19:9 is designed to reaffirm Jehovah's *original marriage code*, the verse cannot be a so-called 'covenant passage' applicable only to a Christian husband and wife....1) The Lord's teaching regarding marriage was a restoration of God's original plan. 2) But God's original plan encompassed mankind as a whole. 3) Thus, the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:9 was intended to be for the whole human family" (Wayne Jackson, *Christian Courier*, March, 1981).
5. Verse 9: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."
- a. Matthew Henry offers these observations:
- 1) He rectifies their mistake concerning the law of Moses; they called it a command, Christ calls it but a permission, a toleration. Carnal hearts will take an ell if but an inch be given them. The law of Moses, in this case, was a political law [?], which God gave, as the Governor of that people; and it was for reasons of state, that divorces were tolerated. The strictness of the marriage union being the result, not of a natural, but of a positive law, the wisdom of God dispensed with divorces in some cases, without any impeachment of his holiness.
 - 2) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, They two shall be one flesh. If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, Deut 22:22. Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty
 - 3) He [Christ] disallows it in all other cases: Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. This is a direct answer to their query, that it is not lawful. In this, as in other things, gospel times are times of reformation, Heb 9:10. The law of Christ tends to reinstate man in his primitive integrity; the law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment, but was from the beginning. If we consider what mischiefs to families and states, what confusions and disorders, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend Christianity is to our secular interests.
 - 4) The law of Moses allowing divorce for the hardness of men's hearts, and the law of Christ forbidding it, intimate, that Christians being under a dispensation of love and liberty, tenderness of heart may justly be expected among them, that they will not be hard-hearted, like Jews, for God has called us to peace. There will be no occasion for divorces, if we forbear one another, and
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forgive one another, in love, as those that are, and hope to be, forgiven, and have found God not forward to put us away, Isa 50:1. No need of divorces, if husbands love their wives, and wives be obedient to their husbands, and they live together as heirs of the grace of life: and these are the laws of Christ, such as we find not in all the law of Moses. [Commentary on the Whole Bible, PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database Copyright © 2006 by Bibesoft, Inc. All Rights reserved.]

- b. "The Lord was not (as some claim) simply EXPLAINING the Mosaic law, for the Law of Moses demanded the death penalty for the adulterer and the adulteress (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). The Lord was setting forth the teaching which would find application IN HIS KINGDOM—His law reaching back to God's original law concerning marriage" (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.503).
- c. **And I say unto you.** Some scholars (including Deaver) think that "de" (and) should be translated "but" in this instance, and that a contrast is being drawn. In either case, the authority of Christ is being expressed (Matt. 28:18; 17:5; Acts 4:11-12; Col. 3:17; Heb. 1:1-2). His authority superceded that of Moses and the prophets.
- d. **Whosoever.** Notice how the same word is used in Matthew 5:21; 11:6; 12:32; 16:25. The word is used inter-changeably in Matthew 5:22 with "every one" (ASV). "...The Bible is quite clear that the Lord's teaching on divorce and remarriage is *universally applicable* to the human family, and the novel notion that Matthew 19:9 is but a 'covenant passage' obligating only those relationships in which both parties are members of the church is both devoid of NT evidence and plainly contrary to the facts" (*Christian Courier*, *ibid.*). Cf. Revelation 22:17.
- e. **Shall put away his wife.** The term used is applied in the NT to the release of a prisoner (Mark 15:6-7); to one loosed from an infirmity (Luke 13:12); but especially to divorce (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3,7-9; Mark 10:2,4,11-12; Luke 16:18). "In 19:9, the form of the verb is *apoluse*, aorist tense, subjunctive mood. The aorist tense denotes simple, undefined action, with no consideration of its progress. The subjunctive mood is the mood of contingency or potential. The aorist subjunctive ignores the element of time and simply focuses upon the potential act, in the case at hand, that of 'divorce'" (*Christian Courier*, April, 1981).
- f. **Except it be for fornication.** Fornication is the only ground upon which a valid divorce (and remarriage) may be obtained. The term "fornication" is a generic term, denoting any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse. "It covers intercourse between unmarried people (I Cor. 7:1), and it also covers extra-marital adulterous sexual activity (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Homosexuality is likewise a form of fornication (Jude 7), as well as such gross, unnatural vices as bestiality, etc. Fornication is a deadly sin; it is the only thing [save death—Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39; Matt. 22:30] that can *break the wedlock* of holy matrimony" (*ibid.*). "God's attitude toward the person who breeches his vow of marital fidelity is well-illustrated in the book of Ezekiel. Spiritualizing his holy city under the symbol of a woman, Jehovah instructed his prophet to 'cause Jerusalem to know her abominations' (Ezek. 16:2)" (*ibid.*). See Ezekiel 16:8,9-14,15,25,32,38 (cf. Lev. 20:10).
 - 1) "Roman Catholic dogma declares: 'A valid Christian marriage, if consummated, cannot be dissolved (as to the bond) by any human power or for any cause except death' (D. Attwater, *Catholic Dictionary*, 153)...Presumably, therefore, the Catholic Church would negate even the Lord's exception of fornication. It must be observed, however, that Catholic theologians are able to out-do the Pharisees as get-arounders of divine law. While a Catholic cannot be divorced, he may have his marriage annulled for a whole host of reasons....'There is almost no type of marriage that cannot be annulled somehow under the complex rules of the Catholic marriage courts if a determined spouse is willing and able to go to the expense of prolonged litigation, and uses sufficient patience and ingenuity in constructing a plausible case' (Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, 171" (*ibid.*).
 - 2) "While the Catholic Church technically [though not practically] prohibits *all* divorce, others, arguing that Christ's teaching is too strict for our modern world of social and cultural change, allows divorce for every excuse imaginable. The truth is, *neither extreme respects the authoritative words of the Son of God!*" (*ibid.*).
 - 3) The passage plainly teaches that divorce for the cause of fornication, on the part of one member of the marital pact, permits the innocent party to seek divorce.

- g. *And shall marry another.* Reference is to a second marriage. The main thought in the statement is that after putting away his lawful wife for some cause (other than adultery on her part), he marries another.
- h. *Committeth adultery.* The man being described who puts away his wife (for some cause other than adultery on her part), and marries another woman, commits adultery by so doing. This verb is in the present tense, the general force of which is continuous action. It means therefore, "keeps on committing adultery." (Deaver, *ibid.*, p.504).
- 1) "Everybody who knows anything about Greek tense knows that the normal, regular, general, meaning of present tense is continuous action. On page 11 of *ESSENTIALS OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK* Dr. Ray Summers uses the words 'progressive' and 'continuous' synonymously, and then makes the statement: 'The present tense indicates progressive action at the present time.' In his *BEGINNER'S GRAMMAR OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT* William Hersey Davis says: 'Continued action, or a state of incompleteness, is denoted by the present tense,—the kind of action is called durative or linear. The action of the verb is shown in progress, as going on.' Burton says: 'The Present Indicative is used of action in progress in present time....The most constant characteristic of the Present Indicative is that it denotes action in progress.' (Ernest DeWitt Burton, *SYNTAX OF THE MOODS AND TENSES IN NEW TESTAMENT GREEK*, pages 7 and 8)" (Roy Deaver, *Biblical Notes*, June, 1981, p.27).
 - 2) "When Jesus says in Mt. 6:33, 'But seek (the Greek dzateite) ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...' the literal meaning of the verb 'seek' is 'keep on seeking.' In Col. 3:1 where Paul enjoins, 'seek (the Greek dzateite) the things that are above...' the real meaning is: 'keep on seeking the things that are above'" (*ibid.*).
 - 3) "Though we recognize that there are certain instances of the 'Aoristic Present' (point action in present time) the fact remains that the general force of the present tense is continuous action in present time. This fact cannot be successfully denied. Therefore, if and when a person decides that a present tense verb in any given instance indicates point action, he will have to have good and sufficient and compelling reason or reasons for this conclusion. For example: 'And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee...' (Acts 9:34). The word translated 'healeth' is a present tense verb, but the numerous passages which show the nature of the Lord's miracles compel us to recognize that in this verb we have 'point' action. The Lord had already used two aorist tense verbs, but then very deliberately shifted to a present tense verb. This fact has to be significant! Consider John 5:8,9. 'Says to him Jesus, Arise, Take up thy bed, and walk.' 'Arise' is an aorist tense verb. 'Take up' is likewise an aorist tense verb. But, 'walk' is a present tense verb. 'Arise' is point action. 'Take up' is point action. But the 'walk' is continuous action. The Lord literally said: 'Arise (single act), take up thy bed (single act), and go on walking (continuous action).' In his book *THE MINISTER AND HIS GREEK NEW TESTAMENT*, Dr. A.T. Robertson actually uses this passage to illustrate that 'Often a sharp distinction is drawn between the aorist and other tenses in the same context' (page 94)" (*ibid.*, p.28).
- i. **And whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.** The man who marries a woman who has been put away commits adultery. "Commits" is in the present tense and means, as shown above, that he "keeps on committing adultery" as long as he is married to her.
- j. There are two individuals described by the Lord's statement who commit adultery: (1) One who puts away his wife for some cause other than adultery on the wife's part, and then marries another woman. (2) The man who marries a woman who has been put away. Note: While the Lord discusses the situation from the point of view of the man, the same truths apply from the woman's view point.
- k. The Lord's statement teaches by implication that the man who puts away his wife because she has committed adultery, and marries another woman, does not commit adultery by his new marriage. In other words, the "innocent" party has the right to enter a new marriage. However, the "guilty" party does not have this same privilege. If the guilty party does have the right to remarry, then the sure way to break a marriage and enter another marriage is for him (or her) to engage in adultery! But God does not place a premium on sin; he does not reward sin! Why would God allow an adulterer to remarry while forbidding another to remarry because she no longer pleased her husband? Such a view violates common sense and places the Lord in an untenable position.

- l. "Please let it be observed that the fornication does not in and of itself destroy the marriage bond. The choice of continuing or discontinuing is placed in the hands of the innocent party. The woman of I Corinthians 5, though she had become guilty of fornication, was still the '*father's wife*.' Herodias had left her husband Herod Phillip, had married her husband's brother, Herod Antipas (Mark 6:17), but she was still the '*wife*' of Herod Phillip (Mark 6:18). If the person guilty of fornication can GENUINELY REPENT, and if the innocent party sinned against can GENUINELY FORGIVE, then the marriage can be held together" (Deaver, *The Book of Matthew*, p.507).
- 1) "In recent times a novel notion has been conceived that the word 'adultery'—even as used literally—does not primarily denote a sexual act. Rather, some are contending that 'adultery' is merely 'the breaking of the marriage covenant.' According to such a view, therefore, one could *unscripturally* divorce a mate, re-marry, then simply promise God that he would henceforth break no more covenants, and so *continue to share the sexual bed of the new partner with absolutely no guilt of adultery!*" (Wayne Jackson, *Christian Courier*, May, 1981).
 - 2) "The term 'adultery' is employed in two basic senses in scripture. First, it may be used *figuratively* to denote lust, i.e., the mental disposition which leads to the act (cf. Matt. 5:28), or it may symbolically denote a breach of faithfulness to God by the practice of false religion (cf. Jer. 3:8,9; Ezek. 23:37; Hos. 3:17), or spiritual intercourse with the world (Jas. 4:4)...Secondly, the word 'adultery' is frequently found in the Bible in its literal sense....The *International Standard Encyclopedia of the Bible* says that adultery is 'sexual intercourse of a man, whether married or unmarried, with a married woman' (I, p.63). Or again, adultery is 'sexual intercourse of a married man with a female not his wife, or that of a married woman with a man not her husband' (*Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p.12)" (ibid.).
 - 3) "There is simply no question about the matter, when one is said to be committing adultery, extramarital sexual intercourse is being practiced....'Since God instituted marriage as an exclusive and permanent union, a union which he makes and man must not break, Jesus draws the inevitable deduction that to divorce one's partner and marry another, or to marry a divorced person, is to enter a forbidden, adulterous relationship. For the person who may have secured a divorce in the eyes of human law is still in the eyes of God married to his or her first partner' (John R.W. Stott, *Christian Counter Culture*, Inter-varsity, 1978, p.96)" (ibid.).
- m. Are alien sinners amenable to the law of Christ? This is a prominent argument today by many who, out of sympathy for those involved in remarriage situations, seek to find a way to allow such people to continue in their present marriages. The argument states that God's marriage requirements applies only to those who are already Christians.
- n. "There are those who contend that non-Christians (those out of the church, that is, in the world) are under (amenable to) civil law only and are not under (amenable to) Christ's law on *any* subject. Since they thus contend, they also contend that those people who divorced and remarried before entering the church (that is, before becoming Christians) do not sin in so doing even when such action is in violation of the conditions set forth in Matthew 19:9 provided the *civil* law to which they are amenable is not violated" (Thom. Warren, *Your Marriage Can Be Great*, p.361).
- 1) If marriage does not pertain to those in the world, we would have to perform a marriage ceremony immediately after a couple obey the gospel! Brother Warren offers several viable objections to the view under consideration (pp.365ff):
 - a) *It would allow polygamy.* Some civil governments permit a man to have many wives. If a man living under such a civil law had ten wives, and since (according to the argument) he is not violating God's law since he is not amenable to it, if he should become a Christian he may continue to live with his ten wives! "And if repentance does not demand that all relationships which violate the law of Christ (and which are entered before one is baptized into Christ) be severed in order to be pleasing to God *after* baptism, then it would mean that he could continue to live with all of these women *even after he is baptized!* Believe that who can! Yet it is the irresistible conclusion to the premises set forth by those who uphold this view. A comparison of Romans 7:3 and Matthew 19:9 shows this to be false."
 - b) *It would allow many divorces and marriages for any cause permitted by civil law.* A man or
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- woman could deal deceitfully and wickedly with a spouse in obtaining any number of divorces for any number of reasons and still not incur the displeasure of God. According to the view, men in the world have no obligations toward God in the area of marriage.
- c) *It would allow group marriages as long as such is permitted by civil law.* If repentance does not require that one sever relationships which violate the law of Christ, then one could remain in such a group even after being baptized.
 - d) *It would allow concubinage.* If repentance does not require cessation of such under the law of Christ, concubines could still be kept in lands where civil authority permits them.
 - e) *It would allow force-marriages: wife-capture and wife-purchase.*
 - f) *It would allow grossly unfaithful marriage partners free to divorce and remarry* any number of times with pure and innocent girls—as long as civil law permitted.
 - g) *It would mean that homosexual "marriages" would be acceptable to God.* And, that if such a person were baptized, he could continue in that relationship.
 - h) *It denies that Christ is King of kings (Rev. 19:16).* The New Testament teaches that Christ has authority to command kings, even those who do not even believe in him.
 - i) *It denies that the gospel is addressed to every creature.* Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; cf. Acts 4:11-12; Philippians 2:5-11. If he could only command those in the church, how would one out of the church ever enter the church?
 - j) *It denies that men out of the church can sin in violation of the law of Christ.* 1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Civil law does not forbid covetousness, etc. How had these become sinners? Cf. Galatians 5:19ff; 2 John 9.
 - k) *It denies that Jesus has authority over all flesh.* John 17:2; Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 7:21ff.
 - l) *It denies that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth.* Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Acts 2:39; Romans 6:17-18.
 - m) *It denies that rejecting the gospel will lead to condemnation.* This is so because it denies that men out of the church are amenable to the law of Christ and one can only violate a law if he is amenable to that law. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
 - n) *It denies that unbelief is a sin since no civil law demands faith in Christ.* But see Mark 16:16 and John 8:21,24.
 - o) *It denies that the gospel will be the standard of judgment.* Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 1:1-2; John 12:48.
 - p) *It denies that men enter the world by violating God's law.* But see Romans 3:23; Mark 16:15-16; Romans 4:15; 3:19.
 - q) *It denies that one must obey the law of Christ to be made free from sin.* Romans 3:19; 6:17-18; 8:1-2; Acts 15:7-14; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Romans 10:13-18.
- 2) Marriage is the oldest of the three institutions God established: Civil, Church, Home.
- a) Genesis 2:18-24: "And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."
 - b) Matthew 19:3-9: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God

- hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."
- c) Romans 7:1-2: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband."
- 3) Ephesians 5:22-33: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."
- 4) 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 is also important for the current study.
6. It is important that we know as much as we can about what God's says about marriage and the home.
- a. Marriage and the home are of great importance to everyone for all of us have made, are presently making, or will make vital decisions regarding them.
 - b. Marriage is of vital importance to society as a whole, because the home is the foundation of society. No society or nation can be any better or stronger than its homes. To improve our society, the home must be improved.
 - c. The sanctity of marriage and the importance of the home are being disparaged and undermined, and God's plans for both are being ignored or blatantly repudiated.
 - 1) Thousands of couples are living together without the benefit of marriage. It does not mediate the sin to claim that they are just seeing if they are compatible. Fornication is sin, and is punishable by the severest possible penalty.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - b) Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
 - c) 1 Corinthians 6:18: "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."
 - d) Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
 - e) Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and
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- adulterers God will judge."
- f) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - g) Mark 9:48: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."
- 2) Divorces are granted on any pretext, in many cases simply because the individuals no longer want to live up to their commitments.
 - 3) The home, which was intended in part to be a haven from the coldness and pain of the world, is often the scene of the greatest of cruelty and neglect, and where love and compassion and guidance and comfort are scarcely to be found.
 - a) It is common to hear of children being neglected, or mistreated, or ignored, or killed; the problem of battered wives has become so prominent that special organizations have been set up to offer safety from an oppressive husband; and many husbands are hated and abused (verbally, legally, or otherwise).
 - b) Many marriages and homes are not situations of happiness and love, but filled with bitterness, enmity, jealousy, and bickering.
 - d. God designed us and he knows what is best for us: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25). Although he does not require marriage, yet it is the only relationship in which he permits sexual activity, and the home is the best situation for rearing children.
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An Excerpt From Author's Material on Marriage and the Home

Marriage as God Designed it

A. Scriptures:

1. Matthew 5:31-32: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."
2. Matthew 19:3-9: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

B. All mankind (believers and unbelievers) is amenable to God's moral laws.

1. Revelation 19:16: "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."
 - a. To have authority over kings and lords is to have the right to command what these great ones must do or refrain from doing.
 - b. Since Christ (who received his authority from God) has authority over earthly rulers, he obviously has authority over all lesser men. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:2).
 - c. Christ has commanded that the gospel be preached to every person on earth; this commandment is based on his right to demand that all obey his will.
 - 1) Mark 16:15,16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) Matthew 28:18,19: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
2. If unbelievers are not accountable to God's moral laws, they could not commit moral sins.
 - a. 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - b. 1 John 5:17: "All unrighteousness is sin...."
 - c. 1 John 5:19: "*And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."
 - d. Romans 4:15: "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression."
 - e. Romans 5:13: "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."
 - f. 1 Corinthians 6:9,11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind....And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
 - 1) Romans 6:17,18: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

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- 2) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 3) Romans 3:19: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."
 3. Those who do not believe and obey God's law will be punished.
 - a. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."
 - b. John 8:24: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."
 - c. Acts 17:30,31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
 4. God offers salvation to all men, hence all accountable individuals are lost.
 - a. Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Compare:
 - b. John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
 - c. Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
 - d. Hebrews 2:9-10: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."
 - e. Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - f. Romans 8:1-2: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
 - g. Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."
 - h. 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 5. God's law of marriage is intended for all men, whether they are believers or unbelievers.
 - a. Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."
 - b. Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."
 - c. Matthew 19:4-6: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
 - d. God recognized marriages between unbelievers, and repudiated other marriages which violated his law
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of marriage.

- e. Matthew 14:3: "For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her."
- f. Acts 24:24: "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife [Drusilla], which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ."
- g. Genesis 39:9: "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

C. Marriage is a divine institution.

1. Matthew 19:4-5: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"
 2. It was designed by the Lord at the beginning of time; it is not a gradual natural development. Different societies and cultures have developed their own unique customs regarding how marriage is contracted, the ceremony involved, and a host of other details, but the basic concept was designed and instituted by the Creator.
 3. At the beginning, God made a man and a woman. They were made in his image (Gen. 1:26-27). Our physical image is not patterned after God's image, for he has no material body (John 4:24; Luke 24:39).
 - a. Genesis 1:26-27: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."
 - b. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - c. Luke 24:39: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."
 4. Rather, we are made in his spiritual image (Zech. 12:1); we are made in his rational image (Prov. 23:7; 1 Cor. 2:9-16); we are made in his emotional image (Deut. 7:7-8; Mark 12:29-31).
 - a. Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - b. Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."
 - d. Deuteronomy 7:7-8: "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."
 - e. Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 5. A beast has only a physical being; mankind is different from the beasts, for we have both a physical and
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a spiritual being: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

- a. God made man and woman, but there are notable physical and emotional differences between the two. The woman is the *weaker sex* only in a physical sense. Compare: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Generally, men have stronger bodies than women; neither is inferior to the other in any other sense.
- b. God made man and woman for each other (Matt. 19:5). He intended there to be a close companionship between them (Gen. 2:18). His plan for them was that they should propagate and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28; 9:1,2,7, 19; 1 Tim. 5:14).
 - 1) Matthew 19:5: "And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"
 - 2) Genesis 2:18: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."
 - 3) Genesis 1:28: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."
 - 4) Genesis 9:1-2, 7, 19: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.....And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein....These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread."
 - 5) 1 Timothy 5:14: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."
6. Marriage is a divine institution; God designed and ordained it. It follows, therefore, that if marriage is to be all it can be, we must abide by the plan God appointed and accept the restrictions he placed upon both partners. In reality, marriage involves more than the husband and the wife: for it to be what it ought to be, God must also be involved in this holy institution.

D. Marriage is the supreme earthly relationship.

1. Matthew 19:5: "And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"
2. The fellowship between Christians is not, strictly speaking, an earthly relationship; it begins and exists on earth, but its ultimate fulfillment is in heaven (Matt. 8:11). Marriage is designed only for our time on earth; in heaven, there will be no marriages (Matt. 22:30).
 - a. Matthew 8:11: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."
 - b. Matthew 22:30: "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."
3. The relationship between a man and his wife takes precedence over all other human relationships.
 - a. There is a close comradeship between members of a sports team, a military unit, a business partnership, and school mates. But those associations are temporary and part time. Marriage is intended for life.
 - b. The relationship between mother and child is special, intimate, precious, and holy (Eph. 6:2), but the time comes when the child grows up and leaves his mother in order to establish his own home or make his own way in life. Marriage is designed to last until death (Gen. 2:24).
 - 1) Ephesians 6:2: "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)."
 - 2) Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."
 - c. The companionship between fleshly brothers or sisters is often very close and warm, but the marital union is far more permanent and dear.
 - d. Our natural love for those who brought us into the world must not displace our love for our marriage

partner.

- 1) If a husband or wife loves father and mother more than the marriage companion, it would be better for them not to marry at all.
 - 2) Marriage does not break the ties with parents, or with the childhood home, and it does not mean we are to love our parents any less than before our marriage. In fact, with the passing of years, we should grow to appreciate our father and mother more and more.
- e. If there comes a day when a choice must be made between those old relationships and the new one (our marriage), assuming that sin is not a consideration, our decision must be in favor of the husband or wife. Marriage is the supreme human relationship.

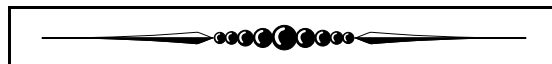
E. Marriage unites husband and wife.

1. Matthew 19:5-6: "And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
2. Christ refers back to the first couple, and the origin of the race, and makes his appeal to God's will expressed in the very beginning: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4).
3. In this union, they belong to each other; neither belongs to himself any longer; and neither belongs to someone else. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:28-32).
 - a. They, by virtue of their marriage, constitute one conjugal body.
4. The husband and wife must be one in other ways.
 - a. They must be united in what they give. What they have must be shared by both; and if one is willing to ask for everything, he/she must be willing to give everything.
 - b. They must be united in their material possessions. What they have of this world's goods are no longer his or hers, but theirs. There may be special considerations in a marriage in which joint ownership may not be the wise procedure.
 - c. In spiritual interests, both should be devoted to the same God.
 - 1) There have been happy marriages where one was a Christian and the other was not. This is not the rule, however, but the exception. Spiritual unity virtually guarantees the highest degree of marital happiness. If both sincerely and zealously follow Christ, their marriage will be successful.
 - 2) When a young man and young woman are truly married to each other, and both are devoutly married to Christ, there is no reason why their marriage should fail. There is every reason to believe the marriage will remain strong through all of the difficulties that commonly arise in life.

F. Marriage is for life.

1. Matthew 19:6-7: "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?"
 2. Unfortunately, a mentality has developed in our country concerning marriage which says in effect, "I will get married, but if there is any trouble, I can always get a divorce, and find someone else."
 - a. But God ordained and designed marriage to endure unto the death of one. God does the binding in marriage, and no man has the right to untie what God has bound.
 - b. Marriage ought not to be entered into lightly, and no one should think lightly of breaking that holy bond.
 3. Marriage was designed to be permanent. "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Rom. 7:2-3).
 - a. Malachi 3:14-16: "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his
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- ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name." God hates *putting away*. "Putting away" means "divorce."
- b. But he does not require an innocent mate to continue to live with an adulterous spouse: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9).
4. God has permitted only one exception to the rule that marriage is for life; that exception is fornication on the part of one spouse in the marriage.
 - a. Matthew 19:9: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."
 - b. Matthew 5:31-32: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."
 5. God never intended for there to be a cause for divorce; he never intended for anyone to be guilty of fornication. Compare: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Adultery is one form of fornication; homosexual conduct is another form.
 - a. Under the Law of Moses, God made provision that the fornicator be stoned. "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 20:10).
 - 1) If a man was guilty of fornication, and was executed for his error, this left his innocent wife to remarry; widows and widowers had the right to remarry, even as they do under the New Testament law.
 - 2) But under the Law of Christ, no requirement or authority is given to execute such offenders, but God does retain the right to punish every fornicator: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Since adulterers are not to be executed under Christianity, God gave the exception clause permitting the innocent party to obtain a divorce and to remarry.
 - 3) Even in this case, only the innocent individual is free to remarry.
 - b. In the case of the death of one, the surviving spouse is free to marry again.



6. Verse 10: "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry."
- a. The disciples, with a background in current Jewish traditions, concluded that if what Jesus had said about marriage is true, then it would be better for a man not to ever marry! If this conclusion seemed logical to the disciples who had sat at the Master's feet, and had heard such wonderful truths from him, what might the others of their generation, less fortunate in this regard, think? This truth, which was new to them, seemed very strange and demanding. But the Lord has many things to say which are strange to the ears of men: the plan of salvation; the plan for worship; the reality of the resurrection, hell, the Judgment, and eternity; the demand that we put him first in our priorities; the willingness we must have to suffer and even die for his Cause; the Great Commission. Just because men may think the Lord's will strange does not cancel it out or otherwise mitigate against it.
 - b. "The conclusion of the disciples, that if divorce at will is prohibited, it is not good to marry, proves the wisdom of allowing divorce under the law of Moses; for if these men would so conclude, how much more those Jews who were less disposed to obey God. And if marriage were avoided, licentiousness would necessarily prevail. Even in the Savior's day, then, the hardness of heart among the Jews was still an obstacle in the way of the original law; but motives to obedience greater than any that had been known under the Jewish law were about to be presented in the completed gospel, and this made it wise to withdraw the temporary concession" (McGarvey, p.165).
 - c. "They thought that the privilege of divorcing a wife when there was a quarrelsome disposition, or anything else that rendered the marriage unhappy, was a great privilege; and that in such cases to be always *bound* to live with a wife was a great calamity" (Barnes, p.195).
7. Verses 11-12: "But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*."
- a. "The Lord proceeded to explain that their suggested solution could not be applicable to all men, but only to some. As God planned it, as God made them, men and women are generally prepared for marriage. They are characterized by strong physical and emotional needs that are to be met only within the confines of marriage. Those to whom marriage would have no special appeal, and for whom there would be no special need, would be—in some sense—eunuchs" (Deaver, *The Book of Matthew*, p.509).
 - b. Those who are eunuchs from birth, or who have been made so by the cruelty of men, or those who have the ability to subjugate their sexual desires so that they may be more dedicated servants of Christ, are men who may remain unmarried as per the statement of the disciples. But for most of the race, such is not the case. Those who are able to abstain from marriage honorably, may do so.
 - c. In the time of severe trials, it is better that Christians remain unmarried: 1 Corinthians 7:1ff. "The present distress" (verse 26) is a reference to the current persecution.

G. Matthew 19:13-15: Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me.

1. Verse 13: "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them."
 - a. See Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17 for the parallel accounts. The stated purpose for these children being brought to the Lord was that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. "The prayers of a good man in our behalf have always been regarded as a blessing: no wonder that the mothers of these children desired the prayers of Jesus in behalf of their little ones" (McGarvey, p.166).
 - b. These little ones were not brought for any healing, but for the Lord's prayers. "It was an ancient custom to lay hands on one in pronouncing the blessing. (Gen. 48:14; 2 Kings 5:11; Matt. 9:18.) The parents believed that since children at the age of eight days were taken into the privileges of covenant with God they could receive a covenant blessing....These parents came with their children and interrupted the course of instruction; the disciples thought that these parents were interrupting an important subject with trivial affairs" (Boles, p.390).
 2. Verse 14: "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. "Those who have imagined that there is an allusion here to infant baptism, or to infant church
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membership, are indebted for the idea, not to their Bibles, but to their creeds" (McGarvey, p.166).

- b. In chapter 18, Christ had already held up little children in their innocence and humility, as proper examples of what all in the kingdom must be and have. Here he declares that the kingdom of heaven (the church) is comprised of such.
 - c. The "coming" to Jesus under consideration is not the coming to him for salvation, but for the purpose plainly stated in the previous verse: they were brought that Jesus might lay hands on them, pray for them, and convey this blessing. The very nature of their spiritual condition erases any need for them to come to the Lord for salvation. Lying behind the notion of infant baptism and church membership is the foul doctrine of original sin. If a little child comes into the world guilty of sin, from whom did he inherit that guilt? Certainly it was not from God! And Ezekiel 18:20 frankly says that sin is personal; it is not obtained from the individual's father (or mother). Sin is said to be the transgression of God's law (I John 3:4); Ezekiel declares that the wickedness (sin) of the wicked individual shall be upon himself; it cannot be transferred to another, just as righteousness pertains to him who does righteousness.
 - d. There is no record, direct or indirect, in the New Testament of any little one being baptized. If the household of Lydia, the Jailer, or Cornelius had any that were baptized, then let the proponents tell the name and age of just one! The pure spiritual nature of a little child shows that he has no need to be baptized; the requirements of the gospel plan of salvation show that no infant can obey the gospel: they cannot believe, repent, or confess faith in Christ; thus, they cannot obey the gospel in baptism.
 - e. **Of such is the kingdom of heaven.** "Not of little children, but of such *as* little children. Neither the kingdom as it now is, nor the kingdom as it will be, is composed of little children, but in both states of its existence it is composed of persons with characters like theirs....As, however, children are here made the models of those in the kingdom, it is quite certain that on account of their freedom from personal transgression they will be admitted unconditionally into the eternal kingdom. (McGarvey, pp.166f).
3. Verse 15: "And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence."
- a. The Lord is said to have taken them in his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Any right-thinking parent would have wanted the Lord to intercede with the Father in behalf of their children.
 - b. "The fortuitous coincidence of these two conversations has been noticed by the commentators generally. The little children, the offspring of happy wedlock, and a source of constant happiness to faithful husbands and wives, were brought into notice at the close of a conversation about divorce and about the supposed inconvenience of an indissoluble marriage bond. The pleasant incident served as a comment on the discussion, and left a better impression in reference to married life" (ibid., p.167).

H. Matthew 19:16-22: The Rich Young Ruler Asks Jesus a Question.

1. Verses 16-17: "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."
- a. For parallel accounts see Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23. Mark says that he came running to Jesus and knelt before him. His question implies that he knew that eternal life was not given unconditionally.
- b. The young man had addressed Jesus as "Good Master." The Lord asked why he had addressed him in that manner. "The Lord's question calls attention to the fact that the young man recognized the deity of the Christ. This was demonstrated by his words and by his actions, his kneeling. This crucial point would remove all grounds for any failure to follow instructions to be given" (Deaver, *The Book of Matthew*, p.512).
- c. "'The Good was one of the many Judaic titles of God. The point of our Lord's remark is that a word with such hallowed association should not be used in a merely conventional manner.' (See Ps. 145:9.) In fact, it is easy to detect in this conversation a definite leading on the part of Christ to elicit an acknowledgment from that young man that Christ is God. It is as though the Lord had said, 'I see you recognize me as Good; since only God is Good, do you thus receive me?'" (Coffman, p.296).
- d. In reply to the young man's first question, Christ told him that he must keep the commandments in order to enter into life. So, from the Lord's plain words, obedience to God is a requirement if we

would have eternal life. This is what is said in other places (see Heb. 5:8-9). It matters not that this man lived under the Mosaic Dispensation; regardless of the age under which a man spent his time on earth, it must needs be that he have been obedient unto God if he is to have eternal life in heaven. The specific requirements of God's law have changed with the passing of the various laws, but there has never been a time when God did not require obedience to his will.

2. Verses 18-20: "He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and *thy* mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"
 - a. In response to the Lord's statement about obedience, the young man asked which commandment was to be obeyed. Jesus answered by referring to five commands of the ten in the Decalogue, plus "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This latter command embraces the sentiment in the last requirement in the Ten: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," etc.
 - b. Notice that Jesus interpreted the command "Thou shalt not kill," as "Thou shalt do no murder." Thus, the Law did not forbid all killing, but forbade murder. It was right for those in authority to execute certain lawbreakers; it was right for God to do so. What was forbidden was murder, not legal executions.
 - c. Why the Lord omitted the first four while including the last six is a matter of conjecture. "We suppose that he named the last six rather than the first four, because the six were then more frequently violated than the four, and obedience to them was on this account a better test of character" (McGarvey, pp.167f).
 - d. This young man was a credit to his generation in many ways. He would be considered an outstanding person by many of our day who think a facade of spirituality is sufficient. He inquired whether there was yet something else that he needed to add or change. Thus, "What lack I yet?"
3. Verses 21-22: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."
 - a. Mark's account tells us that the Lord "beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest...." The Savior knew the man's heart and discerned his great weakness: his interest in material possessions was too great, hence the Lord quickly devised a means of exposing this frailty to the young man's mind. He told him to sell his possession and come follow him, if he would be perfect.
 - b. No one in the flesh is able to attain to a state of absolute, sinless perfection; no one but Christ was ever able to do so. However, each one of us is expected to reach a state of spiritual maturity where all our faculties have been brought under the control of the Lord. (See Matt. 5:48; 1 John 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:12-14; Jas 1:4; 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1). But none of us will ever reach a point in this life when we can say that we do not sin (1 John 1:7-10; Rom. 3:9,23).
 - c. The blessings of heaven are described by the Lord as "treasure in heaven." (cf. Matt. 6:19-21). The instruction to follow Christ was probably intended in the literal sense as was the case in Matthew 8:19-22 (cf. the Twelve). To follow Christ requires that we be willing to sacrifice anything we hold dear if it comes between us and the Lord. It is likely the case that Jesus expected the young man to join his band of disciples, as they traveled about Palestine.
 - d. Does the Lord require that any who would follow him today must sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor before they can be Christians? We can know that this is not required for several reasons. Mary had a house in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12); Philip had a great house in Caesarea Palestina (Acts 21:8); Ananias and his wife were not required to sell their possession, or to give the money it brought to the church after it was sold (Acts 5:4). Philemon was evidently a wealthy man and he was not required to rid himself of his wealth. These all were in good standing with the Lord even though they retained their property. "Furthermore, the Lord's teachings in the parable of the pounds, the parable of the talents, and many other passages suggest and even demand that ownership of property was not condemned by Jesus nor forbidden to members of his kingdom" (Coffman, p.298).

I. Matthew 19:23-26: Rich Men and Salvation.

1. Verse 23: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."
 - a. The Lord stresses the difficulty of a rich man's entry into the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing inherently wrong with having material wealth or possessions, even with having them in great abundance. The inherent danger is that one will place his trust in his riches instead of in God.
 - b. We know that riches are not sinful for many great men of faith in Bible times were wealthy, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the New Testament, Philemon and Cornelius were evidently men of substance. The warning given in the Bible is against the love of money, not against money.
 - 1) Proverbs 30:8-9: "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 6:6-19: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
 2. Verse 24: "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."
 - a. The Lord now speaks more specifically about a rich man and salvation: as it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, so it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Mark 10:24 makes the meaning clear: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" The rich man Jesus envisions is one who puts his trust in riches, and not in God. It is certain that no man can be saved, be added to the church, and go on to heaven who has his trust in his money. The Lord is speaking literally in this passage. It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of the needle; it is also impossible for one who trusts in his riches instead of in God to enter salvation.
 - b. Notice that the amount of money in question is immaterial: if one trusts his \$10 to see him through difficult times, and does not trust God to give him deliverance, he is sure to fail. He cannot be saved in that frame of mind, and he cannot please God if he is already a child of God when that evil attitude arises. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The rich young ruler was one who ultimately placed his trust in his riches more than in God.
 3. Verse 25: "When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?"
 - a. This statement amazed the disciples. The Lord had continually astonished them with his bold proclamations and deeds in the past few months (cf. Matt. 6: 16-19).
 - b. They asked, "Who then can be saved?" "If they had been thinking of rich men who grind the poor and live licentiously, they would not have been surprised. But the case before their minds was that of a rich man who lacked only one thing of being perfect. It was the statement that it was easier for a camel
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to go through the eye of a needle than for such a rich man to be saved, that amazed them..." (McGarvey, p.169).

4. Verse 26: "But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."
 - a. McGarvey suggests that the impossible thing of this verse has primary application to the camel passing through the eye of a needle. "As it is possible for God, though impossible with men, to cause a camel to go through the eye of a needle; so it is possible with God, through a work in itself difficult, to save a rich man. The point of difficulty was seen in the case of the man who had just gone away—his disposition to esteem riches more highly than eternal life" (ibid.).
 - b. Boles states that the disciples "still had the idea of temporal kingdom, and if Jesus declined the aid and influence of the rich, then how could his kingdom be established? Men's standards and God's have ever differed. The disciples thought that power and wealth gave one a favorable standing with God; they thought that the poor were in some way cursed of God; but now since it is next to impossible for the rich to be saved, then what will become of the poor? With men it was impossible, 'but with God all things are possible'" (p.395).
 - c. While it is impossible for one who trusts his riches instead of trusting God to be saved, it is possible for a wealthy man to be saved although there is the likelihood that he will feel independent and have no need of the Almighty. The Lord can still lead such a one as the latter through certain circumstances of life, and provide certain motivations through his word, to bring this rich man to repentance. Men cannot do this, but God, in his own way, can.

J. Matthew 19:27-30: What the Apostles Would Receive.

1. Verse 27: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"
 - a. We would expect that it would be Peter who would raise this question. It is a natural question that needed to be answered. Peter stated that they had forsaken all in order to follow the Lord during his personal ministry. What will be our reward?
 - b. "The refusal of the rich young man to sell all and follow Jesus (21,22), reminded Peter that a similar demand had been made of him and his companions, and that although they had but little to forsake, they had forsaken all they had. He now wishes to know what shall be their reward for this" (McGarvey, p.169).
2. Verse 28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - a. In the Lord's response to Peter's question he made two great and wonderful promises. The first promise had to do with the apostles' relationship to the kingdom.
 - b. "This is not a reference to literal thrones but to spiritual thrones of eminence and authority in Christ's kingdom, from which they should exercise influence, not over fleshly Israel but over the spiritual Israel which is the church (Rom. 9:6; Gal. 3:29).
 - 1) Note that no preference was given Peter. There was not to be one throne, occupied by Peter and his successors, but twelve thrones, implying the equality of the Twelve. The word of the apostles, that is, the New Testament, is the instrument through which they exercise the authority that Jesus granted them in this promise.
 - 2) "*Times of the regeneration* refers to the times of the new birth, namely, the time of the present dispensation when men are hearing the gospel, obeying it, and being born again. Efforts to apply this passage to some kind of literal return of Jesus to the earth and which envisions Christ and the apostles actually occupying literal earthly thrones must surely be rejected in the light of the truth that Christ and the Twelve are *now* reigning in his kingdom.
 - 3) "The reign will continue till all enemies have been put under foot (1 Cor. 15:24-28). When death, the last enemy, is destroyed, Christ will not initiate a reign but will end it, delivering up the kingdom to the Father" (Coffman, pp.300f).
 - c. The apostles were to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), which would bring back to their remembrance everything the Lord had personally taught them (John 14:26), teach them all things (John

- 14:26), guide them into all truth (John 16:13), and show them things to come (John 16:13). They would be empowered to act as ambassadors of Christ, binding and loosing his will as he thus guided them (Matt. 16:16; 18:18; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).
- d. When this inspired message had been fully revealed and recorded as the New Testament, it formed the basis on which God deals with man in this Christian Age (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3; Heb. 1:1-4; 10:9-10; Rom. 1:16; Acts 4:11-12; John 14:6; Jas. 1:18,21; 1 Pet. 1:24-25).
 - e. "The period designated by the term regeneration is further limited by the words, 'when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory.' He sat down on that throne when he ascended up to heaven, and he will still be seated on it in the day of judgment. (Acts 2:33-35; Heb. 1:13; Matt. 25:31; 1 Cor. 15:24-28.) 'The regeneration,' then, is contemporaneous with this period, and therefore it must be that process of regenerating men which commenced on the Pentecost after the ascension, and will continue until the saints are raised...
 - 1) "The statement of Paul that 'the saints shall judge the world' (1 Cor. 6:2), has led many to suppose that the judging here is to take place at the final judgment. But clearly the judging and the sitting on thrones are declared to be contemporaneous with the regeneration and with Christ's sitting on his throne; and therefore they must be regarded as now in progress...
 - 2) "The judging consists in pronouncing decisions on questions of faith and practice in the earthly kingdom, and the twelve are figuratively represented as sitting on thrones, because they are acting as judges. During their personal ministry they judged in person; since then they judge through their writings. True, we have written communications from only a part of them, but judgments pronounced by one of a bench of judges with the known approval of all, are the judgments of the entire bench.
 - 3) "The twelve thrones had reference, of course, to the original apostles, and the place of Judas was filled by Matthias. (Acts 1:26.) The apostle to the Gentiles is left out of view....
 - 4) "Their work is with the true Israel, and not with Israel according to the flesh; consequently, we are to construe the terms metaphorically, the twelve tribes representing the Church of God of which they were a type" (McGarvey, p.170).
3. Verse 29: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."
 - a. The second promise is a reference to their blessings under Christ. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).
 - b. "The Lord thus stresses that ultimately no one loses anything by putting the kingdom of God first in his life. This is our duty, our privilege, our responsibility. Those who put God and His kingdom FIRST in their lives are promised even wonderful material blessings IN THIS LIFE, but—more important than this—the eternal reward which is HEAVEN itself (Cf. Matt. 6:33)" (Deaver, p.515). "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).
 - c. The blessings are described as an hundredfold (or manifold). "Not manifold in the same exact form, but manifold in the value as affecting real happiness. This is the reward in time, while in eternity the party shall inherit everlasting life. This last is an inheritance as well as a reward, because it results from having become a child of God. Doubtless Peter felt satisfied when he heard that these honors and blessings were to be his reward" (McGarvey, p.170).
 - d. Those first citizens in the Lord's spiritual kingdom often lost their material possessions and family: they had to flee from the persecutors, their lands and houses were confiscated by the authorities, and their families sometimes turned against them. But they would receive many times over what they lost: there would be other Christians who would share their material possessions with them; they would have a spiritual family to replace the one they lost; the homes of other saints would be opened to them freely and they would lovingly be received. And eternal life in heaven would be the final blessing they would ultimately receive! Although the apostles (and other saints) had forsaken many earthly
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advantages in order to serve Christ more fully and faithfully, they would more than sufficiently be compensated!

4. Verse 30: "But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first."
 - a. "Exactly what does the Lord mean by this proverb? It seems to fit in closely with the matter which He is about to discuss: The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. Things are not always what they seem. Some, like Judas, who were early in relationship to blessings of the Lord, would not properly use their opportunities; others like Paul, who would be later in coming to have these blessings and opportunities, would use them correctly"(Deaver, p.515).
 - b. "This proverbial expression, in its present connection, means that many who are first in prospect of everlasting life shall be last, and many who are last in this respect shall be first. For example, the rich young man whose inquiries had given rise to this conversation (16-20), had been among the first, but now it appeared that he was among the last. Judas, also, who was then among the first, was destined to be last, and Matthias, who was among the last, being then only an obscure disciple (Acts 1:21-23), was to take his place" (McGarvey, p.171).
 - c. The Jewish people were the first to have the gospel preached to them, beginning on the Pentecost Day of Acts Two; but the great majority of them rejected the truth [only three thousand obeyed the gospel in Acts 2]. At the proper time, the gospel was presented to the Gentiles; great numbers of them obeyed the gospel happily.
 - 1) Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
 - 2) Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."
 - 3) Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
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Matthew 20

A. Matthew 20:1-16: The Parable of the Householder Hiring Laborers.

1. Verse 1: "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard."
 - a. The word "for" introduces this parable and also connects the parable with the preceding thought expressed in verse 30 above: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." The parable closes in verse sixteen of this chapter with almost an identical statement: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." The meaning of this parable, therefore, must be found in connection with the information recorded in the closing part of the previous chapter, and will illustrate the twin comments of 19:30 and 20:16.
 - b. As chapter 19 drew to a close, Peter had asked about the reward the apostles could expect to receive in view of the fact that they had forsaken all to follow Christ. The Lord gave them a two-part answer: they would receive the privilege of occupying twelve figurative thrones, judging spiritual Israel; and houses, brethren, sisters, parents, lands (in this life), plus eternal life in heaven. (See comments on verse 29 above).
 - c. Those who apparently had great advantages in this life would not necessarily end up in that superior state. The rich young ruler had many earthly advantages due to his wealth and station in life; he refused to give this up so that he could follow Jesus. The apostles had forsaken all their meager possessions to follow him. From a human viewpoint, they were last when compared to that rich young man; but the relative status of the apostles and this worldly young man would be reversed in eternity: he who loved his possessions more than he loved Christ would be last; and they who loved Christ more than the world would be first. The situations of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16) were reversed following death.
 - d. To illustrate this principle further, the Lord gave the parable of the householder who went forth to the market-place to hire laborers for his vineyard. He hired some early in the morning, and others at various other times during the day. A householder was one in charge of a house and those other properties associated with the house: the fields, livestock, and vineyards.
 - e. "The parable has very differently been explained; few commentators are agreed as to the meaning of it. Some see in it the principle that God is no respecter of persons in the gifts of honor in his church; that the awards given are not by accidental circumstances as wealth or priority of time. Verse thirty of the last chapter and verse sixteen of this chapter seem to indicate that the parable is an explanation of the thought in these verses. The disciples were expecting great honors in the kingdom of heaven because they were *first* who were called; the Jews were expecting exclusive honors in the kingdom of heaven, but they are to learn that, because they are Abraham's seed, the blessings of the spiritual kingdom of God are distributed even to the Gentiles" (Boles, pp.397f).
 - f. In some way, the kingdom of heaven is like the householder who went out early to hire laborers.
2. Verse 2: "And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard."
 - a. He hired a certain number of workers, having agreed with them on the wages they could expect to receive at the end of the day. The amount was a penny (shilling—ASV). The reference is to a Roman denarius, a silver coin, many of which have been preserved to our day. The price agreed upon was likely the common wage for a day's labor. In England, in 1351, the price of labor was regulated by law at a penny a day.
 - b. Barnes also states (p.205) that the "provisions were proportionally cheap, and the avails of a man's labour in articles of food were nearly as much as they are now." Despite times of inflation and depression in the economy, a man's daily wage generally will provide for a day's necessities.
3. Verses 3-5: "And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise."
 - a. At about the third hour, he hired others who were standing idle in the marketplace; and again at the sixth and ninth hours he hired others. The Jews divided the day up into four parts, the third, sixth, and ninth hours, and sunset. The night-time they also divided up. Since the days are longer during the

- summer, the day time periods were longer.
- b. The marketplace was a common gathering place for those seeking work, and consequently those who needed workers would look there. In the case of the second group of workers, the householder simply stated that he would pay them what was right. Presumably, the same arrangement was made with the later groups also.
4. Verses 6-7: "And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive."
 - a. Again at the eleventh hour, shortly before sunset, the householder still needing workers, went again in search of workers. He found a group of men standing idle and asked them why they were not working. They responded by saying that no one had hired them.
 - b. Some scholars assert that these men were not speaking the truth here, but there is no reason to so believe. But why did not the householder see and hire them earlier? He may have found them at some other place, or in a crowded marketplace, they might not have been readily observed. He hired them and promised to pay them a proper wage. They took him at his word also, and went to work out the remainder of the day.
 5. Verses 8-9: "So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny."
 - a. At sunset the householder instructed his steward to call the workers in and pay them off, beginning at the last hired unto the first. The point of the story required that this order be followed or else those longest in the field would not have had occasion for their complaint, which in turn, brought forth the Lord's lesson.
 - b. The men who had worked only from the eleventh hour received a penny, the amount which the owner had promised those who had worked all day. The first group hired supposed that they would receive more than the owner had promised them, since these late comers had been paid a full day's wage. Man often gets into trouble when he "supposes."
 - c. The householder in the story was following the Law of Moses by paying his workers at the end of the day (Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15).
 6. Verses 10-12: "But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day."
 - a. When this first group received their agreed-upon wage, they began to complain about it. "These men only worked one hour and you gave them as much as we received for laboring all day in the heat of the day. That is unfair!"
 - b. There have always been problems that separated management and labor; sometimes real, sometimes imagined; sometimes manufactured.
 7. Verses 13-15: "But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"
 - a. The householder replied that they had agreed to work all day for the amount specified. He pointed out that he had kept his bargain, and thus they had no grievance.
 - b. "It is lawful for me to pay these other men whatever I think is right, for the money is mine. Do not think evil of me because I choose to do good!" "Having shown that no injustice was done, the employer now justifies the gratuity which he had given to the others, on the ground of his right to do as he would with his own, to bestow his gratuities where and when he chooses. He also traces the complaint of the murmurer to its true source by demanding, 'Is thine eye evil because I am good?' *An evil eye* is a synonym for jealousy, and it acquired this meaning from the malicious leer with which jealousy regards its object. (cf. Mk. 7:2; 1 Sam. 18:9.) These laborers were jealous of the others because of the unmerited favor which the latter had received" (McGarvey p.172).
 8. Verse 16: "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."
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- a. The following is cited from McGarvey, which we regard as the best interpretation of the passage: "Here Jesus states the point of comparison in the parable. 'So'—that is, as in the parable, so in the kingdom of heaven—'the last shall be first, and the first last.' How, then, were the last first and the first last in the parable? In the payment of the laborers the householder told his steward to begin with the last and end with the first (verse 8); but this mere order of sequence in receiving the reward can not be the point of comparison, for there is nothing in the rewards of the kingdom of heaven to correspond with it.
- 1) "The last were first in another and much more important sense; they received a reward much greater in proportion to the labor which they had performed. Those who came last were first of all in respect to the ratio between the reward and the labor, and those who came first were last of all in this particular.
 - 2) "The payment of wages was not regulated by the rule of *quid pro quo*, so much money for so much labor; but, while there was a full reward in every case, in all except the first there was more than a reward—there was an undeserved gratuity, which showed the *goodness* of the householder.
 - 3) "The contract with those who came first, and who receive no more than they had earned, is evidently mentioned for the purpose of showing the real price of a day's work, and setting forth the fact that the others did receive a gratuity. It has no significance in the application of the parable, but is, like a shade in a picture, intended to make the significant figures more conspicuous.
- b. "Thus it is in the parable: now what is there like this in the kingdom? Peter and his companions had left all and followed Jesus, had come at his call to work in his vineyard, and he had just inquired of the Master, 'What shall we have therefore?' 'What shall be our wages?' (19:27.)
- 1) "He was told what their reward was to be, and then, lest they might think that those with the best prospects would be in every instance most certain of the reward, Jesus tells them that many first shall be last, and the last first; and, lest they should think that the promised reward would be only a just compensation for their sacrifices and toils, he recites the parable and says, 'So the last shall be first and the first last.' That is, in the kingdom of heaven, as in the parable, rewards are not distributed on the principle of a just compensation for labor performed, but, while all labor receives a just compensation (for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and love—Heb. 6:10), all laborers will receive a reward far greater than they deserve—a reward which will show the *goodness* (verse 15) of the Master.
 - 2) "And as a consequence of this principle of reward, the last shall be first, and the first last; that is, the last in amount of labor performed shall be first in the ratio between labor and reward, and the first in amount of labor shall be last in said ratio. This we know to be a fact; for eternal life is inconceivably more than a compensation for all that a man can do and suffer in pursuit of it, and among those who will inherit it those who will have done and suffered the least will be first in the ratio between their labor and their reward, and *vice versa*. Compare the thief on the cross, for example, with the Apostle Paul.
- c. "From the preceding interpretation it follows, that the different hours at which the laborers were called into the vineyards do not represent different periods of human life: for although two old men, one of whom had spent his life in the Church, and the other had just entered it, would be cases in point, yet he who becomes a Christian in childhood may, and often does, on account of early death, do less labor for the Lord than he who is called in the meridian of life, or even in old age.
- d. "This parable has often been used to encourage hope in cases of deathbed repentance. It certainly does teach, that however little the labor which a man does in the Lord's vineyard, he will receive the final reward if only he be really in the vineyard; that is, if he be really a child of God. But whether a man who repents on his deathbed actually becomes a child of God, is a different question, and is not touched by the parable. Certainly, the eleventh-hour laborer who had stood idle all day only because no man had hired him, and who came into the vineyard as soon as he was called, can not represent the man who has been called by the gospel every hour of his life, but has rejected every call until his sun has sunk so low that he knows he can do but little work when he comes. In order to represent this class of sinners, the eleventh-hour men should have been invited early in the morning, and should have replied, 'No, it is too early; I will not go now.' Then they should have been invited at the third, the
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sixth, and the ninth hours, and should have made some equally frivolous excuse each time; then, finally, at the eleventh hour, they should have said, 'Well, as you pay a man just the same for an hour's work as for a day's work, and as I am very anxious to get your money, I believe I will now go.' Had they acted thus, it is not likely that they would have found the vineyard gate open to them at all. Yet such is the sharp practice which some men attempt in dealing with God" (pp.172-174).

9. Some lessons which we may derive from this parable:
 - a. It is within God's power to reward. He rewards those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).
 - b. Some come to the kingdom early, perhaps in youth. Some do so and fall away, and others are faithful all of their days. God, in fact, encourages remembrance of him in youth (Eccl. 12:1).
 - c. God is a God of mercy, and he does not withhold blessings, in the fullest extent, from those who might come to him later, at various stages of their lives. All have remission of sins (Acts 2:38), entrance into the kingdom (Acts 2:47), fellowship with God and Christ in God's family (I Tim. 3:15), are privileged to walk in the light (I John 1:7), can worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24), can have continued forgiveness of sins as they walk in the light of the gospel (I John 1:7,9), and have a living hope (I Pet. 1:3) regarding all that God promises in an eternity with him.
 - d. Even those who truly obey at the eleventh hour will have that fullness of blessing. However, we need to note that these eleventh hour workers in the parable did not willfully waste their day prior to being hired. No man had hired them, and thus the eleventh hour was their first opportunity.
 - e. No reward is offered to any man who does not work in the Lord's vineyard. He must work, and the work done must be in the Lord's vineyard—one does not have the right to work in the vineyard of his choice!

B. Matthew 20:17-19: The Third Announcement of His Impending Death.

1. Parallel accounts of this announcement are found in Mark 10:32-34 and Luke 18:31-33. The two previous prophecies concerning his death were earlier given in Matthew 16:21 and 17:22-23.
2. Verse 17: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them."
 - a. Jesus had concluded his work in Galilee and had been working for some time in the area east of the Jordan opposite Judea (Matt. 19:1-2). Matthew only records a little of the events of this time frame. "Much matter related by John (perhaps all from his seventh to his eleventh chapter inclusive), and some related by Luke (17:1-18:14), are here omitted" (McGarvey, p.175). This would be the Lord's last trip to Jerusalem prior to his death. It was important that the apostles understand that he was to die there, but that he would be raised from the dead. "As on the two former occasions, Jesus makes the announcement of his death to his immediate followers alone. Such an announcement to the unbelieving multitude would have confirmed them in their unbelief, and at the same time it might have encouraged his enemies in their machinations against him" (ibid.).
 - b. The Twelve had the same general conception of the coming kingdom as was possessed by the average Jew: the kingdom would be temporal; the Messiah would rule from Jerusalem as did David and Solomon, only with more power. It was difficult for the apostles to see how the death of Christ could fit into this view of the kingdom. Luke reports that "they understood none of these things" regarding the announcement of his death.
 - c. However, they did understand the great danger Jesus faced by going to Jerusalem. Mark says that they were "amazed" that he would go, and that they were "afraid" (10:32).
3. Verses 18-19: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *him*: and the third day he shall rise again."
 - a. In this remarkable prophecy, Jesus described precisely what would later occur. He would be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes; they would condemn him to death; they would deliver him to the Gentiles who would mock, scourge, and crucify him; and on the third day he would rise again. The Romans occupied Palestine and had taken authority to carry out capital punishment away from the Jewish leaders, thus after condemning the Lord in their perverted legal conspiracies, he would be delivered to the Gentiles to be put to death.
 - b. Scourging was a cruel form of punishment involving a "terrible laceration by the severest thongs that

could be devised, and inflicted only upon the lowest criminal; it was done by placing iron spikes or sharp stones in the lashes of the whips and applied to the bare back of the victim" (Boles, p.402).

- c. He would be mocked—treated with derision (Cf. Judges 16:25; Jer. 38:19). Only the Lord could have predicted in such detail the events leading up to and following his death, including the type of death he would endure and his resurrection from the dead on the third day. He gave more than enough specifics to show that a genuine prophecy had been presented.

C. Matthew 20:20-28: The Misguided Ambition of James and John.

1. Verse 20: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him."
 - a. The mother of Zebedee's children came to make a certain request of Jesus. Her name is determined to be Salome, according to a comparison of Matthew 26:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1. Since Zebedee is not personally mentioned following the call of his sons (Matt. 4:21), he is supposed to be dead or else was an insignificant person as far as the gospel story is concerned. It is likely that he was dead since (1) Salome is identified, not as the wife of Zebedee, but as the mother of his children; and (2) she seemed to be in the company which was often with Jesus (Mark 16:1; 15:40; Matt. 4:18-21—they lived in Galilee).
 - b. According to Mark 10:35, it was James and John who approached Jesus with the request. Our text states that Salome came with her two sons. The sons were behind the move, but it was the mother who articulated their desire to the Lord. She approached Christ in a respectful manner—humbly prostrating herself before him.
2. Verse 21: "And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."
 - a. Having stated that there was a certain request to be made, the Lord asked what it was specifically (cf. Mark 10:35; Mt. 20:20). The petition was that James and John might have the honor of sitting on either side of the Lord in his kingdom.
 - b. Mark's account says "in thy glory." He would be sitting on the throne of his glory while he rules over his kingdom. Since he is on the throne now (Heb. 12:2; I Pet. 3:22; Acts 2:30-38), he is now on the throne of his glory (cf. Matt. 25:31). The view Salome and her sons had of the kingdom was wrong; they thought it would be a literal, earthly kingdom.
 - c. "The place of highest honor in the courts of kings is at the right hand of the throne, and the next, at the left hand. Salome therefore desired to secure for her two sons the highest possible honors in the expected kingdom" (McGarvey, p.176).
3. Verse 22: "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able."
 - a. "They knew not what they were asking, because to sit on his right hand and on his left was far different from what they thought, and was to be obtained in a way of which they had no conception" (McGarvey, p.176). The very nature of the spiritual kingdom precluded the exaltation of anyone above all the rest of its citizens. All those who are part of this kingdom are on equal footing.
 - 1) Matthew 23:8: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren."
 - 2) Galatians 3:28-29: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."
 - b. "The Lord first informs them that they have no idea as to what they were asking. They thought in terms of a literal, earthly kingdom, and in terms of a king sitting upon a throne, and in terms of the men of rank and power sitting in those special places beside their king. They knew what they were asking in those terms, but did not realize that what they were asking would be impossible because it could not be realized in the kingdom that Jesus would head" (Bill Jackson, *Book of Matthew*, p.526).
 - c. His next response was to ask the question, "Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink?" "It was common in ancient times to execute criminals by compelling them to drink a cup of poison, and assassination and suicide were often effected by the same means. The cup, therefore, became a symbol

of suffering and of death, and it is so used here" (McGarvey, p.176). Socrates was forced to drink hemlock. In the garden Jesus prayed that "this cup" might pass from him. The cup was the horrible ordeal he was about to endure.

- 1) Psalms 11:6: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup."
 - 2) Psalms 75:8: "For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and drink them.*"
 - 3) Isaiah 51:17: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, *and wrung them* out."
 - 4) Jeremiah 25:15: "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it."
- d. The Lord added, as a different figure for the same hardship, the question: "Are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am to receive?" "Jesus here paints by another striking word his coming sorrows and sufferings as if a great wave of the sea were burying him, in their confusion and uproar, as if he were to be drowned in a terrible baptism in them. (Psalm 42:7; 69:2; Luke 12:50.) This is a graphic picture of the agonies of the soul of Jesus, yielding to the tremendous tides of human sin, passion, hate, and rage, and sinking alone, out of sight, in the gloomy waves of death. Incidentally, we see what is meant by baptism; it is not a mere 'sprinkling' of suffering, but an overwhelming of suffering in death; so baptism in water is not a sprinkling, but is a dipping, submersing, or overwhelming, or burial in water" (Boles, pp.404f).
- e. An interesting admission is made by Barnes, a pedobaptist: "Are you able to bear it when sorrows shall *cover* you like water, and you shall be *sunk beneath* calamities as *floods*, in the work of religion? Afflictions are often expressed by being *sunk in the floods and plunged in deep waters*, Ps. 69:2; 124:4,5; La. 3:54" (p. 209, Emphasis Added).
4. Verse 23: "And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father."
- a. The two apostles boldly asserted their ability to endure the sufferings Jesus described, to which the Lord said that they would indeed undergo these hardships. James drank the cup of martyrdom when he was slain by the sword (Acts 12:2). John lived to be an old man, living longer than any of the apostles, and died a natural death (according to secular references); but during that long life he suffered many things for the cause of Christ. Jesus knew that they would be faithful and thus face severe persecution. But he could not give them that which they had requested—to sit on either side of him as he reigned over his kingdom.
 - b. "Without doubt, Jesus states, these disciples will drink of the cup of suffering, but he adds that places on his right hand, and on his left in the kingdom *'is not mine to give'* (v.23). Not even the Son of God can give that which is completely against the nature of the Father's kingdom, and against the nature that is to be in the kingdom's citizens....The Lord is not here stating that while he cannot give those chief places to men, that the Father has prepared chief places for two certain ones. Rather, in the Father's preparation—in the plan of God—places in the kingdom may be obtained but he will show that all have the same place: Not regal rule, but SERVICE!" (Bill Jackson, *The Book of Matthew*, p.527). Cf. Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:1-8; Matthew 23:6; 3 John 9.
 - c. "Christ did far more than merely deny the request of that ambitious woman on behalf of her sons. He went much further and explained that the usual concept of some men ruling over others would not be allowed in the kingdom of God under any circumstance (Coffman, p.314).
5. Verses 24-25: "And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them."
- a. "Nothing moves the indignation of men more than to know that one of a company of equals is plotting to get an undue advantage over the others. It was now necessary that Jesus should interfere as a peacemaker" (McGarvey, p.177).

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- b. The others were "much displeased" over this move on the part of James and John (Mark 10:41). The devil had used human ambition and anger to divide the apostles on this occasion. Unless Jesus could bring about a reconciliation, his great mission was in jeopardy.
 - c. In Gentile arrangements, society was controlled by authorities at various levels. This makes sense in secular settings, especially in the military. Definite authority was had by various individuals with which order was forcibly maintained.
6. Verses 26-27: "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."
- a. The Lord did not allow for such an arrangement in his kingdom. Yet this is precisely the setup in the modern denominations! But this is no strange thing because they have seen fit to change virtually every major feature of the Lord's plan, including the plan of salvation, plan for worship, organization and designation of the church. The exaltation of certain individuals to positions of authority, or in giving certain ones titles which exalt and distinguish them from the rest, is contrary to the Lord's order. In the kingdom there are no chief seats or positions of power. Rather, all are equal under Christ. Only the apostles who were selected to receive from God and convey to men the New Testament have any authority, and that authority is simply in the privilege of communicating the truth to humanity.
 - 1) Matthew 19:28: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - 2) Luke 24:46-49: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
 - 3) John 14:26: "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
 - 4) John 16:13: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."
 - 5) Acts 1:5: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."
 - 6) Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
 - 7) 2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
 - b. The one who would be great, in the Lord's system, is one who is servant to the others. He does not point to some exalted title or position as the proof of greatness. The means of obtaining greatness in God's sight lies in the humble service which one does in behalf of one's fellowman. The way to greatness is in humility. No wonder Christ has forbidden the exalted titles (Matt. 23:1ff) which men are wont to wear!
 - c. "There are different works to be done, but still there is no rank. Even the idea of authority, as it most certainly resides in the office of elders (Heb. 13:17), still does not carry with it the picture of a military-type rank and command function. We would all do well to remember that, as just a Christian with no assigned functions, or teachers, or deacons, or preachers or elders, all are to be SERVANTS! Servants, first, last and always!" (Bill Jackson, *Book of Matthew*, p.530).
7. Verse 28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
- a. The Lord makes this statement to illustrate the principle of greatness he had just bound. Since the very
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Son of God, the Lord of Glory, was a minister of humanity while in his earthly ministry, so should his followers be! (cf. John 13:1-17). "In this way both the ambition of James and John, and the indignation of the others, were suppressed. It is impossible for preachers, teachers, and other workers in the Church, to study this lesson too carefully" (McGarvey, p.177). Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:21.

- b. Christ did not come into the world to receive the honor and praise and service of mankind. He came rather to be a minister to us all, in that he lived the perfect life, and died the perfect sacrificial death.
- c. He came to give his life a ransom for many. "How and why the shedding of the blood of Jesus was essential to the salvation of man is, and has been, a trouble to many. The blood is the life. The shedding of blood is the giving of the life. When we say Jesus shed his blood for the sins of the world, we mean Jesus gave his life for the sins of the world....Since the blood can be seen by our fleshly senses, and the immaterial principle of life cannot, it is probable that the blood is spoken of to represent the life, the shedding of the blood, the giving up the life. When it is said he shed his blood for the forgiveness of sins, it means he gave up his life to provide for the remission of sins; he became a ransom for many" (Boles, p.406).
- d. "The word *ransom* means literally a price paid for the redemption of captives. In war, when prisoners are taken by an enemy, the money demanded for their release is called a ransom; that is, it is the *means* by which they are set at liberty. So anything that releases anyone from a state of punishment, or suffering, or sin, is called a ransom" (Barnes, p.210).
- e. The life of Christ was given as ransom for many. Actually, he died for everyone. But not everyone will receive the benefits of his gift (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; 1 John 2:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). Those who benefit from the giving of his life are the "many" of the present text (Matt. 26:28; Rev. 1:5; Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 5:5-8; 6:1-18). They receive it on the basis of personal obedience.

D. Matthew 20:29-34: Two Blind Men are given sight.

1. Verse 29: "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him."
 - a. Luke 18:35 speaks of the healing of the blind as taking place when the Lord came nigh unto Jericho; Matthew says it occurred as he left the city; Mark 10:46 says that the miracle took place as Christ went out of Jericho.
 - b. Logical explanations have been offered. The second of these appears to be the better explanation.
 - 1) Some have suggested that two separate miracles occurred: one as the Lord entered into the city and the other as he departed from it. This might also explain the difference in the number of blind men healed (Matthew says two, the other accounts mention only one); perhaps he healed one as he entered and the other as he left.
 - 2) "The discrepancy as to place, 'as he went out from Jericho,' or 'as he drew nigh to Jericho,' is best explained by the recent suggestion that the healing occurred after he left old Jericho, and as he was approaching the new Jericho which Herod the Great had built at some distance away" (Robertson, quoted by Coffman, p.316).
2. Verse 30: "And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David."
 - a. At this point in the journey toward Jerusalem, two blind men, who were sitting by the road, called out to Jesus for mercy. They had heard that Jesus was passing that way. They probably often positioned themselves on the roadside to beg alms (Mark 10:46), so the approach of the Lord was an added and unexpected benefit. They seized this one opportunity to ask for his aid.
 - b. By addressing Jesus as "Son of David," they acknowledged their belief that he was the Messiah. By calling to him for mercy, they declared their faith in his ability to grant their request.
3. Verse 31: "And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David."
 - a. The multitude, for some reason which is not specified, tried to quiet the cries of these two blind beggars. Some scholars suggest that it may have been the Pharisees who did this, not wanting Jesus to have another occasion to demonstrate his power. But there is nothing in the context which identifies them as Pharisees.
 - b. "The clamor appeared to the multitude indecorous, and it interrupted conversation; hence their desire to suppress it. The multitude were thinking of their own comfort and dignity instead of sympathizing

- with the unfortunate" (McGarvey, p.177). But the blind men were not about to let this opportunity slip by them; they continued to cry out to Jesus.
4. Verses 32-33: "And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened."
 - a. Jesus heard their cries, stopped, and asked them what it was they wanted. This question does not imply that the Lord was asking for information. He wanted them to express in plain words their request, thus to show their faith to all.
 - b. They plainly stated that their keenest desire was to have their eyes opened. Indeed, this would be the constant wish any blind man would have. Mark identifies one of these blind men as Bartimaeus, and says he cast off his garment (the outer garment) and approached Jesus.
 - c. "Thus, naked, or nearly so, this poor beggar, blind, despised, and suffering the most abject shame and poverty, appeared as an object of the utmost pity as he stood trembling before the Lord of Life and heard the blessed words, 'What will ye that I should do unto you?'" (Coffman, pp.318f).
 5. Verse 34: "So Jesus had compassion *on them*, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."
 - a. The compassion of Christ is stated by Matthew, and demonstrated in the healing of their blindness. "And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way" (Mark 10:52).
 - b. "Though they came not for spiritual comfort, the bodily blessing which they received attached their hearts to Jesus and led them in the direction of the blessings yet more to be desired" (McGarvey, p.178).
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Matthew 21

A. Matthew 21:1-11: The Lord's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem.

1. Verses 1-2: "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me."
 - a. Parallel accounts of these events are found in Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:29-44, and John 12:12-19. The events we are now studying occurred during the last week of Jesus' life prior to the crucifixion. Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany (John 12:1). "If the passover began on Friday, which is certain, though it has been questioned by a few writers, then six days before the passover fixes the arrival of Jesus at Bethany on Sunday. This follows from the universal custom of the Jews, in stating the number of a series of days or years, to include in the aggregate both the first and the last, even when only a small part of either was actually included. According to this method, a count of six days ending Friday must begin with Sunday" (McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*, pp.405f).
 - 1) On the day of his arrival at Bethany, a supper was made for him (John 12:1-2); this was on Sunday, in view of the statement by McGarvey above. It was during this supper that Mary anointed the Lord's feet with the expensive ointment (John 12:3-8). "Though not explicitly stated, the presumption is that this supper was given on the evening after his arrival" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, p.406).
 - 2) The next morning (John 12:12), Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when great multitudes spread palm branches and garments before him (Mt. 21:8). "It is palm Monday, if it is palm anything. Thus one of the Roman Catholic traditions, which is without foundation in fact, passes away" (*ibid.*).
 - 3) "While Mark, like the other synoptics, says nothing about the day of the week, he makes a series of chronological statements, extending from the day of the public entry to the first day of the passover, which corroborate perfectly the six days of John.
 - a) "To show this let us suppose Monday to be the day of public entry, and make the count. He says, at the conclusion of his account of the ride, that Jesus 'entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when he had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, he went out to Bethany with the twelve' (11:11).
 - b) "This brings us to the close of Monday; and it shows, by and by, that the public entry took place in the afternoon. Mark next says that 'on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered,' and then comes the incident of the barren fig-tree (12-14). This now is Tuesday. They go into the city, he casts out the traders whom he had seen there the evening before, and the statement follows that 'every evening he went forth out of the city' (19).
 - c) "Then comes the statement that 'as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig-tree withered away from the roots' (20). This was Wednesday. They pass on into the city (27), and the discussions follow which occupy the rest of the eleventh chapter and all of the twelfth.
 - d) "Then he goes out to the mount of Olives, and delivers the discourse about the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming (13:1-37). At the close of this discourse, still Wednesday, Mark says, 'Now after two days was the feast of the passover and the unleavened bread' (14:1). But 'after two days' from Wednesday, in Jewish count, would be Friday.
 - e) "So we have counted in Mark five consecutive days—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; and if we add to these the sixth day previously mentioned by John, but omitted by the synoptics, we have John's account reproduced" (McGarvey, *ibid.*, pp.407f).
 - b. Making their journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, they came to Bethany and Bethphage unto the mount of Olives. These two villages were on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and were located close to one another. Lazarus, Mary and Martha lived at Bethany where the supper of John 12:1-9 was given. Some scholars maintain that this was the 10th of the month, the day on which the animals for the Passover were taken into the city to be kept there until Thursday when they were slain (Exod. 12:1ff).
 - c. Jesus selected two disciples and sent them into the village nearby, which was Bethphage. "About one mile east from Jerusalem lay the ridge of the mount of Olives, so called from the great number of olive

trees which grew upon it. (Acts 1:12.)

- 1) "In leaving Jerusalem one must first pass across the valley of Jehoshaphat, called at its lower end the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna. Through it ran the brook Cedron or Kidron. (John 18:1.) One then passes by the enclosure of Gethsemane (meaning the place of the oil press) which lay along the west side of the hill nearest Jerusalem; ascending the Mount of Olives one could see Jerusalem, and trace the buildings, and especially the temple crowning Mount Moriah.
 - 2) "Then passing over the hill or ridge, one first reached Bethphage on the eastern side, and further still, or two miles from Jerusalem, the village of Bethany, from which Jesus began this day's walk. The Mount of Olives is about a mile in length from north to south and with three peaks. The road to Bethany wound around the middle peak. Palm trees flourish on Mount Olivet, whence the name Bethany, the house of dates and figs, whence the name Bethphage, the house of figs. The oil of the olive was used in the tabernacle and temple worship. (Ex. 30:24-29)" (Boles, pp.409f).
- d. These two disciples were sent to obtain an ass and a colt upon which Jesus would make his entry into Jerusalem.
2. Verses 3-5: "And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."
 - a. The Lord instructed them what to say in case someone questioned their taking these animals. They were simply to say that "the Lord hath need of them." Mark 11:5-6 shows that they were called on to give this answer. Some scholars link Genesis 49:11 to the present text. Jesus foreknew the location of the animals in question, knew their gender and knew that the response the disciples were to give would suffice. This was done that the prophet's words might be fulfilled (Zech. 9:9). Solomon rode upon a mule (I Kings 1:38). See also Judges 10:4; 12:14; 1 Samuel 25:20.
 - b. The horse was generally considered a weapon of war, and the multiplying of horses was forbidden of Israelite kings (Deut. 17:16).
 - 1) Jesus entered Jerusalem as a picture of peace, not as a conqueror with battle gear, or on a fiery charger; rather he came as the Prince of Peace.
 - 2) "Foreseeing the strange figure of a king riding in triumph into the capital city of his kingdom, not on a richly caparisoned steed and surrounded by pomp and glory, but on the colt of an ass, the last animal which vanity would choose for a grand display, the ass without a bridle and with no saddle but a man's coat thrown across its back, the prophet exclaims, 'Behold, thy King cometh to thee *meek*, sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass'" (McGarvey, pp.178f).
 3. Verses 6-7: "And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set *him* thereon."
 - a. After the animals had been brought to the Lord, garments were placed on the back of at least one of them, and the Lord mounted and rode toward Jerusalem. Matthew speaks of both the ass and her colt being brought; Mark and Luke speak only of the colt, while John says he rode on a young ass (12:14).
 - b. Matthew supplies an additional detail but does not say which of the animals Jesus rode. Evidently both animals were together for the short trip, but Jesus rode on the colt.
 4. Verses 8-9: "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strowed *them* in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."
 - a. The Bible reports that a very great crowd of people went forth from Jerusalem to meet Jesus upon hearing of his approach. This was a momentous occasion; and the entry of the Lord was one fraught with the greatest of danger for the religious leaders had been conspiring to put him to death, as well as to kill Lazarus (John 12:10-11). They were much disturbed over the popularity of Jesus, for as his fame increased, their fortune waned.
 - 1) Matthew 27:18: "For he knew that for 1) envy they had delivered him."
 - 2) John 12:17-19: "The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they

heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him."

- 3) John 11:47-48: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."
- b. "The people were wild with delight and admiration. Only the most extravagant state of feeling could prompt them to make a carpet along the mountain path with their garments, and with the soft branches of the palm-tree. (John 12:13.) It was 'a very great multitude,' and their numbers enabled them to spread this carpet all the way from the mountain top to the gate of the city" (ibid., p.179).
- c. Luke gives an interesting detail in 19:39-40. Some of the Pharisees, who were always trying to find fault, called on the Lord to rebuke the multitude for this tribute he was being shown. Christ replied that if they should stop this praise the stones would cry out immediately! This welcome was one of necessity.
- d. Another detail furnished in Luke 19:41-44 was the compassion the Lord showed for the citizens of Jerusalem: he wept for them, for they did not know the great tragedies and hardships awaiting them in the near future.
- e. **Hosanna**: a shout of prayerful joy; it is derived from two Hebrew words meaning "be now propitious" and "save us now" (See Boles, p.412). Others gave additional cries (Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38).
 - 1) Psalms 118:25: "Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity."
 - 2) Mark 11:10: "Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."
 - 3) Luke 19:38: "Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."
5. Verses 10-11: "And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."
 - a. As the great procession neared the city, the tumult was heard by those yet in Jerusalem, many of whom asked, "Who is this?" They could know that some truly great personage was approaching. The reply was, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." This is an appropriate answer to the question raised by Nathaniel in John 1:46 ("Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?").
 - b. The whole city was stirred; the multitude filled the city with their cries of gladness; the rulers were filled with rage and envy. No wonder the Lord's enemies said on this occasion, "The world is gone after him" (John 12:19).
 - c. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this experience is the great change of heart the populace had within the next few days: today they gave him a king's welcome; before the week was out they were calling for his crucifixion! This change was effected by the devious work of the religious leaders who manipulated the people to work up a frenzy of hatred toward Christ: "But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them" (Mark 15:11). False teachers are powerful in ability to deceive and destroy; their power is not to be underestimated.

B. Matthew 21:12-17: The Cleansing of the Temple.

1. Verse 12: "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves."
 - a. One characteristic of Matthew's account of the gospel story is that he groups teachings and events according to topic. Mark and Luke sometimes discuss the material chronologically. In this particular, Matthew's account taken by itself implies that the cleansing of the temple occurred immediately after the triumphant entry.
 - 1) But Mark shows that it was on the following day that he cleared out the moneychangers: "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany...to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple..." (11:11-15).
 - 2) The Lord cleansed the temple twice during his ministry: once at the beginning (John 2:13-17), and

- here.
- b. The Law prescribed that doves could be offered by the poor in place of the more expensive animals; it also directed that a half-shekel coin be given each year for the upkeep of the tabernacle or temple (Matt. 17:24-27). "The only coin received in the sacred treasury was the Levitical shekel or half shekel; these money-changers were men who took pains to buy up all the legal coins and sold them again to the Jews, who had come to worship; they charged a high price for the exchange" (Boles, pp.413f).
 - c. The common currency of the day was Roman, which was unacceptable for the contribution indicated. The animals to be offered in temple worship could not handily be brought from afar by those making the pilgrimage. A bustling business was had by those who sold the doves and who changed the money. The Lord's action in shutting down these businesses doubtless met with strong approval on the part of those who had to pay the exorbitant prices these businessmen charged. Any time there is a strong demand for some product or service which is not otherwise readily available, there are always those who will take advantage of the situation.
 - d. There was a degree of violence involved in the Lord's casting out the businessmen, and the overthrowing of their tables and seats. It is useless to speculate what the outcome would have been if these men had refused to leave. The approach the Lord took was more than sufficient to cause them quickly to depart. Perhaps they knew about his miraculous activities, and feared what he might do to them. Further, the huge crowd which had welcomed him into Jerusalem would certainly have exalted the Lord's influence.
2. Verse 13: "And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."
- a. The quotation is from Isaiah 56:7, and the latter part may be from Jeremiah 7:11, although it may be the Lord's personal comment. Thieves and robbers often inhabited dens and caves. It is reported that on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem there were many such places (cf. Luke 10:30-37).
 - b. Christ describes the despicable merchants who operated from the temple courts hyperbolically as "thieves," and said they had turned the house of God into a "den of thieves." This is extremely critical language, and obviously condemns their sinful dealings as well as their choice of location. The place intended as a place where God met with men in a sincere and holy worship setting had been defiled with commercialism which was itself extortionate. Notice the antithesis of the verse: house of prayer -vs- den of thieves. As previously observed, there was great danger associated with this journey into Jerusalem.
 - c. Of course the Lord knew what awaited him there, and had even foretold exactly what would transpire. It was to that end that he had come to earth. He was not terrified of his enemies; he willingly went to their own territory, and fearlessly entered and "bearded the lion in his own den!"
3. Verses 14-16: "And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"
- a. Among the throng with him were ones who were blind and lame. These the Lord healed—in the sight of even his enemies. This was yet another opportunity for them to open their eyes, see the truth about his identity, and make the proper changes. But they were so hardened that they would not see (cf. Matt. 13:15).
 - b. When they saw these miraculous signs, and on hearing the praise given to him by the children, they were "sore displeased." "The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him" (John 12:17-19).
 - c. "There was a wide contrast in what Jesus did in the temple and what the Jews were doing; they were practicing extortion on the people for their own selfish gains; he was healing the diseased and distressed among them; they were working for themselves, he for others" (Boles, pp.414f). They
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wanted the Lord to put a stop to what the children were shouting. But Christ simply cited Psalm 8:2.

- d. "These chief priests and scribes seem to be astonished that Jesus, a meek Galilean, should allow them to proclaim his praises as the Messiah. Jesus stood in their midst meek and lowly, only seeking to do good and to heal the diseases of body and soul; he received the praises of the multitude, but showed no signs of any intention of seizing the supreme power and setting the Jews free from the Romans, but now of the perfect praise, praise which came from the purity and innocency of the hearts of the children, Jesus said, in reply to the Pharisees when they rebuked the multitude, 'I tell you that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out.'" (Luke 19:40)" (Boles, pp. 415f).
 - e. "The outcries of these children was the perfection of praise, and therefore the most appropriate of all places for it was the temple. It was the perfection of praise because, being an irrepressible outburst of admiration in the midst of solemnities which were likely to overawe the children, and under the frown of the priests which would ordinarily frighten them into silence, it was the strongest attestation to the completeness of his triumph" (McGarvey, pp.180f).
4. Verse 17: "And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there."
- a. Following this encounter, the Lord left the city, returned to Bethany and lodged there that night. These events took place on Tuesday, according to McGarvey's comment given at the beginning of this chapter.
 - b. We are not told whose house he stayed in while at Bethany, but we may assume it was with his good friends, Lazarus and his two sisters.

C. Matthew 21:18-22: The Cursing of the Fig Tree.

1. Verses 18-19: "Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away."
 - a. As he and his disciples were returning to Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus was hungry. Apparently he had left Bethany without eating. Some think this implies that they had not stayed with any family that night. He saw a fig tree, evidently near the road and thus public property (Deut. 23:24-25). It was fully clothed with leaves, a sign that the fruit was there and ripened. "When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put *any* in thy vessel. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn" (Deut. 23:24-25).
 - b. "In Palestine the fig tree puts out its fruit first, afterward the leaves; by the time that the tree is in full foliage, the fruit ought to be ripe. This tree was an exception; a perversion of the laws of its nature; it deceived the eye, was to all appearance fruitful, but only cumbered the ground" (Boles, p.416). It was like the Jewish nation: full of leaves but had no proper fruit. Thus by cursing the tree a severe rebuke to the nation was given also.
 - c. This episode has elicited a variety of responses from its readers. Some find reason for taking exception to what happened.
 - 1) Some think that Christ had no right even to try to eat from the tree since it did not belong to him. But according to Deuteronomy 23:24-25, a passerby had to right to eat of another's vineyard or grain field; he did not have the right to harvest it. A tree that grew by the wayside was public property.
 - 2) Some say the Lord had no right to expect fruit of that tree because "the time of figs was not (yet)" (Mark 11:13). The ASV says, "It was not the time of figs." The scholars give differing views on this statement. Some interpret it to mean that the time for figs to be ripe had not come; others interpret it to mean that the time of the harvest of figs (a) had not yet arrived or (b) was not over. If the time for the ripened figs had not come, why did the Lord expect to find figs on the tree since none could possibly be there? And why did he curse the tree for having no figs when the laws of nature had prohibited the presence of figs on the tree at the time?
 - 3) Some say that Christ only pretended to look for figs, knowing that there was none to be found. The omniscience of the Lord would reveal to him whether there was any fruit on the tree, unless he chose to "turn off" his omniscient powers. It is reasonable to assume that the Lord knew full well

- that there were no figs on the tree. So why did he look? Obviously to teach some object lesson; what that lesson was becomes apparent in the rest of this chapter and in chapters 23 and 24. Jesus was not guilty of deceit for we are told (1 Pet. 2:22) that he was without guile.
- 4) Some say that Christ had no right to destroy the tree since it did not belong to him. Actually, it did belong to him since he was God's agent in the original creation (Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:1-4). Anyhow, the tree was unproductive and thus useless; he did no one any harm by destroying it. He was able, by cursing the tree, to teach a needed and timeless lesson by which millions have been benefitted.
 - 5) Some say that Christ exhibited petty anger over learning there was no fruit on the tree. But there is nothing in the text which indicates any anger on his part. The Lord was teaching an important lesson which appears in the following context; he chose a tree with which to teach this lesson; he had power to punish mankind with death, as was done many times in the Old Testament, but he chose to use a tree instead.
- d. Regarding the fig trees in Palestine, the scholars give this information, which is partially contradictory. It is reported that there are two different varieties which are common to the land: one ordinarily ripens in June and the other in August. It is also reported that some figs might remain on the tree through winter, and that there might even be figs available at most times during the year. At that ancient time there may have been other varieties of which we know little or nothing today. It is reported that figs were ripe by March and April, the time of these events. It is also reported that some of the people liked to eat the figs before they became ripened. With this information at hand, it is difficult to come to a satisfactory conclusion regarding the current story, but some facts are clear:
- 1) If Jesus knew there were no figs on the tree, why did he look anyway, and why did he curse the tree? In order to teach a lesson.
 - 2) If the season for figs had not come, why did he pretend to look for figs? Everyone would know that the leaves on the tree meant nothing, yet the disciples said nothing to dissuade his look for figs. Although the season for ripened figs may not have come, it was possible that this one tree prematurely put forth leaves.
 - 3) If the time of fig harvest was not over, we can see why he would look even though he would know the tree was barren—to teach the lesson.
 - 4) If the time for figs to appear on the tree had not yet come, then there should not have been any leaves either. Why were there leaves? If it would have been miraculous for figs to be present, it would be likewise miraculous for leaves to be on the tree. But we have no reason to believe any miracle was involved in the presence of the leaves or the absence of the fruit.
 - 5) It appears to this Bible student that Jesus had reason to expect figs to be on the tree by the presence of the leaves; that this was what anyone would expect; and that therefore the statement in Mark 11:13 means that the time of gathering the figs was still in progress. Of course, Jesus knew that no fruit would be found, since he was all-knowing, but used the tree as an object lesson.
- e. One conclusive fact regarding fig trees in Palestine is known: the figs are on the tree before leaves appear, so that when one ordinarily saw the leaves, he would be sure the figs had been produced. Matthew says the tree was "in the way," while Mark reports that they saw it "afar off." It was beside the road but still a good way ahead when they took sight of it. This shows that Jesus did not try to steal from some farmer. Deuteronomy 23:24-25 gave any one the right to partake of it as he traveled down the road.
- f. The Lord had related a parable in Luke 13:1-9 about a certain man who had a fig tree in his vineyard which produced no fruit. He ordered that it be cut down since it had borne no fruit for three seasons. His vine-dresser asked that he be allowed to dig around it, and dung it, and if it then did not produce, to cut it down. This parable was given immediately following the exchange recorded in the first five verses of the chapter, in which the Lord showed that all would perish unless they repented. The non-producing fig tree in this parable describes those people in the context who were guilty of sin but would not repent. Vineyard and fig tree illustrations were often used to teach spiritual lessons to Israel (Isa. 5:1ff; 28:1ff; 42:1-4; 61:1-3; Matt. 11:15-21; Luke 13:1-9; Matt. 21:18-22).
- g. "The vine is used in the Bible to represent what is beautiful and good, but the fig tree is rarely used
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except as a symbol of what seems bad. There is a Jewish legend to the effect that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a fig tree. The Greeks called a bad man, a fig tree man. Thus the word *sycophant* (a flatterer, a man who acts dishonestly), when literally translated, means a man that shows figs" (Lockyer, *All The Miracles of the Bible*, p.237).

2. Verse 20: "And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!"
 - a. This is the only miracle involving a curse which Jesus is reported to have done. All the others involved mercy, goodness and help. But here the tree is cursed that it promptly died. The next morning as Christ and the apostles made their way into the city, Peter called attention to the fact that the tree was already withered (Mark 11:20-21). They probably did not notice it the evening before as they returned to Bethany due to darkness (Mark 11:19).
 - b. Matthew's account tells us that it withered "presently." The withering of the tree was miraculous for if a tree or limb is cut down, or if a leaf is plucked from a tree, it retains its greenness perhaps for several days. Mark tells us the it dried up from its roots. The apostles were amazed to find it so soon dead.
 - c. "Every miracle affecting a new department of nature, filled the disciples with fresh surprise. They had seen miracles wrought on the human body, on demons, on the winds and the waves, on bread and flesh; but they had not until now seen one that took effect on a tree. Their surprise, though by no means philosophical, was not unnatural" (McGarvey, p.181).
 - d. Although the Lord does not directly, in plain words, say that the fig tree represented the barren nation of Israel, the following context will show that this was obviously the intent. In cursing the tree, which gave the appearance of fruitfulness, he showed his rejection of those who merely put on a show of righteousness. Israel had every appearance of being very religious and righteous, but inwardly they were full of deceit and disobedience. The remainder of chapter 21, and chapters 22-25, further develop this theme.
3. Verse 21: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."
 - a. The Lord gave the apostles assurance that they would also be enabled to perform miracles, provided their faith was sufficiently strong. The New Testament record bears out the fact that they did truly perform great miracles. The Lord's language should not be pressed too far. There is no record of anyone ever miraculously uprooting a mountain and casting it into the sea. The Lord apparently used this as an illustration of the wondrous power to which they would have access (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 3:1ff; 2 Cor. 12:12).
 - b. Christ was giving the apostles a promise of the miraculous power he would soon give them. They would be endowed with supernatural abilities to confirm the message they would be broadcasting throughout the world.
4. Verse 22: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."
 - a. This statement is not intended to be an unlimited promise, but was given only to the apostles, and based on conditions stated elsewhere in the Scriptures. The Lord is not promising them that all their wants would be furnished; even Christ did not provide his necessities by miracle (cf. 21:18-19).
 - b. The promise of verses 21-22 is a repeat of that which was given in Matthew 17:20. Christians of every generation are promised that their prayers will be heard by the benevolent Father, provided the conditions of acceptable prayer are met, and the requests are in harmony with his will.

D. Matthew 21:23-27: The Lord's Authority Challenged.

1. Verse 23: "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"
 - a. If prompted by the proper motive, this question raised by Jesus' enemies is very important. It is a question that needs to be asked of everyone who speaks on a spiritual issue. If the authority is only from man, the practices and teachings are without value; if they are from God, they are to be accepted and applied.

- b. The chief priests were the heads of the twenty-four courses (classes) of priests. David had made these classifications; each group had one of their number appointed as its chief priest. Hence the chief priests were the twenty-four heads of the twenty-four courses of priests; these were the spiritual leaders in Israel. The elders were the rulers of the cities, thus bore civil authority. Mark adds the scribes to the list. These were authorized teachers. Their job entailed making copies of the Law, and since they were considered learned men of the Law, they held positions of authority in religious instruction.
 - c. These men came to Jesus, demanding to know the authority behind his actions and words. "What authority to cast out the traders, as he had done on the previous day, to teach, and to allow himself to be called the Son of David. As he was neither priest nor a civil ruler, and had not been commissioned either by Caesar or the Sanhedrin, they denied that he had rightful claim to the authority which he exercised" (McGarvey, p.182).
 - d. These men were not sincere in their questions for they showed by their response to his question that truth was unimportant to them. They wanted to hold to their own positions of power and wealth. They might have been receiving financial gain from the merchants doing business in the temple.
 - e. The Lord's enemies were aware of his miracles, but closed their minds to the implications involved. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:47-48).
2. Verses 24-25: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?"
- a. "It was absurd and impertinent to ask him for his authority when his miracles had given an unmistakable answer; consequently his reply was not an attempt to enlighten them, but to expose their folly. They had often tried to place him in a dilemma, and had never succeeded; he sometimes tried the same with them, and never failed. He does so on this occasion by asking them the source of authority for John's baptism....They were forced either to tell a lie, which they did, or to acknowledge the fact that John's baptism was from heaven" (McGarvey, p.183).
 - b. His miracles were more than sufficient proof of his authority: his authority was from God, and he was the very Son of God. The Lord raised a devastating question which exposed them as hypocrites. He knew they had rejected John's baptism (Matt. 3:7-12); they had refused to receive John as a true prophet for the same reason that they refused to accept Jesus—it would have meant an end to their positions of authority and wealth.
 - c. They were religious hypocrites and not sincere adherents thereof. They were very much like the fig tree which gave a beautiful appearance of fruitfulness by its grand display of foliage, but were as barren of [spiritual] fruit as was the cursed tree. The parable of the two sons (21:28-32) and that of evil husbandmen (21:33ff) point out the hypocrisy of these Jewish leaders in particular and the whole nation in general. The same theme is further developed in chapter 22 by the confrontation between the Lord and various parties and individuals who questioned him; and still further in chapter 23 when the Lord denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees; and the doom of such hypocrisy and disobedience is described in chapters 24-25. All of these immediately follow the story of the cursing of the barren fig tree, and it is clear that the fig tree episode occurred to illustrate that very matter.
 - d. If they had admitted the divine source of John's baptism, they would have had to take John as a true prophet; and since he was a true prophet and had announced publicly that Jesus is the Messiah, to accept John would necessarily have required acceptance of Jesus also. By rejecting John's baptism, they rejected the counsel of God (Luke 7:29-30), the messages given through John, and ultimately rejected the Messiah as well.
3. Verses 26: "But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet."
- a. That the Lord's question cut to the heart of their problem is seen by the terrible quandary into which they were placed. They were quick to see their predicament and were able to know they could not give an answer. "If we say it was from heaven, he will demand to know why we rejected him; but if we say from men, the people are liable to stone us for they consider John as a true prophet."
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- b. They were fairly trapped! Their hypocrisy would be seen by all who witnessed this exchange. Their only possible reply convicted them of hypocrisy, so they blindly and stubbornly had to hold to their course, or repent. These men appear to be unable to have godly sorrow (2 Cor. 5:10), a prerequisite to repentance.
4. Verse 27: "And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."
- a. Their answer was: "We cannot tell." Those who love truth will recognize it and accept it. Those who have pleasure in their own wisdom, or in a system they love, or in unrighteousness, will try to escape the truth in some manner. Some will design some argument against it, which will always be contradictory to some other truth; some will change their arguments to suit the changing situations even though the latter positions contradict what they formerly affirmed; and some will try to plead ignorance. This is seen often when the truth on baptism, the identity of the church, the kind of music God has ordained for worship, faith, unity, etc., is presented. Cf Matthew 13:13-16; Mark 3:1-6; John 5:45-47; 8:43-45; 9:39-41; Acts 13:44-51.
- b. They answered by saying that they did not know. This is a foolish position, for these were learned men; the common people who had little or no education could see that John was a prophet, but these of the educated elite did not know! Actually, they pleaded ignorance as the only "out" they could see; but their answer showed either they were dense or ignorant, or else they were hypocrites. They were neither stupid nor ignorant! They could not tell because they would not tell.
- c. Having exposed their hypocrisy, Jesus saw no need to answer their question. He had demonstrated his identity many times by his miracles, which also revealed his source of authority; but they had refused to accept that positive, absolute proof. They could not disprove or logically deny his miracles; and his miracles proved his claims to be true. These men were not sincere in their question; they were trying to find fault with Christ, and to discover some basis on which to nullify his influence. Thus the Lord refused to give them an answer. Cf. Matthew 12:1-30.
- E. Matthew 21:28-32: The Parable of the Two Sons.
1. Verses 28-29: "But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went."
- a. "Jesus now exposes the hearts of his enemies by a series of parables; in them he lays bare the evil thoughts which they had against him at this time. They had fully determined to destroy him, and had set themselves in opposition to the common people. (John 7:49)" (Boles, p.420). The parable, in the context in which it was related, describes the religious and civil leaders in Israel (the 2nd son), and the publicans and harlots (the 1st son). In a broader sense, it can also picture Jews and Gentiles.
- b. In the story, the father asked the first son to go work in his vineyard. His reply was one of rebellion: I will not. However, he later repented and obeyed his father.
- c. The request of the father was: (Coffman, p.331)
- 1) Impartial—it was addressed to both sons.
 - 2) Loving and tender—it was prefaced by a term of endearment; it was not given as an order of a superior to an inferior.
 - 3) Reasonable—nothing is improper for a son to work in his father's vineyard; it is work actually done in his own behalf for he shall one day inherit the property.
 - 4) Specific—the exact vineyard was identified. To work in another vineyard would not fulfill the obligation.
 - 5) Urgent—the time for the work to be done is today, not tomorrow.
 - 6) Necessary—the work was necessary for without it the vineyard would perish.
 - 7) "All of these characteristics of the father's command have an application today in God's command, or invitation, for men to work in his vineyard, the church."
- d. The first son refused to obey his father at the outset, but later he repented and went. This was what the publicans, harlots, and other sinners had done with respect to God's word: they had disobeyed. But as Jesus points out later in the context, many of these sinners repented and obeyed God. The actions of this first son picture for us the nature of repentance: whereas he formerly refused to work in the vineyard, he later had feelings of remorse which led him to go and do the work asked of him. True
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- repentance is produced by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), and is followed by a changed life (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20).
- e. "Let it be further observed that the first son's response did not cancel or remove any of his duties or obligations. His duty did not derive from his commitment (if he had made any), but it sprang from the father's inherent right and authority to lay upon him such a requirement as working in the vineyard. Some in the church do not see this. They 'won't promise anything,' 'will not make a pledge,' etc., as if such refusal would cancel or diminish any duty. However, all of man's duties in the church derive... not from man's voluntarily accepting them, but from God who has the right to command his creation" (Coffman, p.332).
2. Verse 30: "And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not."
 - a. The second son was given the same request as the first son, but his reply and action are different; he told his father he would do so, but he did not do what he said he would do.
 - b. This pictures the case of the Jewish leaders who came to Jesus in the preceding passage: they claimed to follow the will of God but did not do so. This is an accurate picture of a true hypocrite.
 3. Verses 31-32: "Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."
 - a. The Lord asked them which of these two boys did the father's will; they answered correctly by stating it was the first. The Lord used the same approach as Nathan had in getting David to see his sinful conduct (2 Sam. 12:1ff). One of the purposes of parables was to get someone to convict himself of sin by seeing a parallel case which was obviously sinful. In Nathan's parable, a rich man had taken the pet lamb belonging to a poor neighbor as food for a visitor.
 - 1) David denounced such wicked, heartless behavior, and declared that the man who had done it would be severely punished. Having shown the king this fictitious story, Nathan said that it was David whom he had just described; he then pointed out how David had taken another man's wife, and to cover up her pregnancy, had arranged for her Hittite husband to be killed in battle.
 - 2) Just so, Jesus presented a clear story of two sons who both disobeyed their father, but one of them repented. They acknowledged that it was the one who repented and changed that eventually did the father's will. Now he boldly, and we might say stoutly, applied the point to the case at hand.
 - b. The publicans and harlots, who were outcasts of society, and with whom these leaders would have nothing to do, had indeed been disobedient to God; but many of these had repented and turned back to God. But, these priests and elders, who were looked on as outstanding examples of spirituality and faithfulness, actually had only made a pretense of obedience: they were like the barren fig tree—without any fruit. They had professed to obey the Father, but did not obey.
 - c. Neither of the two classes of people described were obedient at the first; the first group later turned and began to do right; the latter group continued in disobedience. While any disobedience is to be regretted, when a sinner repents there is cause for rejoicing (Luke 15:7,10).
 - d. "Here the conduct of the publicans and harlots as a class is declared to correspond with that of the first son, and that of the chief priests and elders (verse 23) to the conduct of the second son. The assertion that they 'go into the kingdom of God before you,' does not mean that either party had already gone into the kingdom of God, but it declares the direction in which they were moving, and points to the result soon to be attained. The publicans and harlots had made one step in that direction by believing in John (verse 32), while the priests and elders had not gone so far as that. The rebuke was a stinging one on account of the contempt with which publicans and harlots were regarded by the priests and elders, and the great disparity which had formerly existed between the two classes" (McGarvey, p.183).
 - e. When John came into Israel proclaiming the coming of the Messiah's kingdom, he used that forthcoming event as a motivation to get the people to repent (Matt. 3:1ff). The nation had degenerated into great sin, and there was an immediate need for them to change. Many of the common people, including many of the vilest of sinners, the publicans and harlots, repented, and thus were in a position to receive John's testimony regarding the Messiah. These all believed in God, and knew
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somewhat of the Law of God as given through Moses; they were aware that a great Personage (the Messiah) was to come. John came to call the people of Israel to repentance so that they would be ready for the Messiah who was even then among them.

- f. "The word translated *repented* here and in verse 29, is not *metanoeo* the one usually so rendered, but *metamelomai*. The former expresses a change of *thought* or *purpose*, the latter a change of *feeling*. The latter is used in the case of Judas (27:3), who did not *repent* as sinners are required to repent, though he experienced regret even to the degree of remorse. *Regret* is its best English representativeThe first son and the publicans and harlots did experience a change of purpose as well as a change of feeling; but the change of feeling only is expressed in the word, while the change of purpose is ascertained only by its being implied in their subsequent action" (McGarvey, p.184).
- g. "All the vaunted righteousness of the Pharisees could not save them while they were in rebellion against God's commands, nor can all the moral excellence of upright men today avail anything for them apart from faith and obedience of the Lord's commandments. But the same premise, all the sins of the publicans and harlots could not take away their hope as long as they heard and obeyed" (Coffman, pp.333f).

F. Matthew 21:33-46; (Mark 12:1-12; Lk. 20:9-19): The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

1. Verse 33: "Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:"
 - a. The Lord very efficiently set the stage for the story by detailing the essentials which were done by the householder in preparing the vineyard for producing harvests.
 - b. He dug a winepress: "The wine-presses of the ancients were literally *dug*, for they consisted in an excavation in the solid rock a foot or two in depth and several feet square. The grapes were thrown into these excavations and mashed by young men tramping them with their feet. Another excavation lower down the hill side, whose top was on a level with the bottom of the press, received the juice as it ran from the mashed grapes through an orifice provided for the purpose" (McGarvey, p.184). See Nehemiah 8:15; Lamentation 1:15; Isaiah 63:2-3; Jeremiah 48:33.
 - c. The tower was for the purpose of stationing a watchman to keep out any one or any animals that might break through the hedge. "The Jews lived in cities and villages, knowing nothing of the farm life so common in America. They went to their fields in the morning and returned at night, except in times of harvest and vintage, when they sometimes slept in the fields. (See Ruth 3:1-7.)" (McGarvey, p.185).
2. Verses 34-35: "And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another."
 - a. At the time when the harvest should be ready, the owner sent certain servants to get the produce of the vineyard, either the fruit or the money from the fruit. The husbandmen were those who had rented the vineyard and cultivated it for a certain percentage of the yield.
 - b. The meaning of this parable was probably already beginning to make itself known to the Lord's enemies, for Isaiah had pictured Israel as a choice vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7). The husbandmen, not wanting to relinquish any of the fruits of the vineyard to the owner, beat one of the servants, killed another, and stoned another. These servants represent the various messengers and prophets who had been sent by God to Israel through the ages (Cf. Heb. 11:37-38; Jer. 37:15; Matt. 23:31-35; Acts 7:51).
3. Verses 36-39: "Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*."
 - a. The householder send more servants, but these were likewise mistreated. The owner lastly sent his son, thinking that they would have reverence for him, and would live up to their bargain. But these wicked men connived together, saying that if they killed the son they could seize the inheritance. So they caught him, cast him from the vineyard, and slew him. Since the household in the story represents God, and the servants the prophets, then the son represents the Messiah, God's only begotten Son.
 - b. Notice that the Son was sent lastly. This signifies that he will be the last effort made by God in behalf

of man. The details fit the case also in the matter of the son being cast outside the vineyard where he was slain. Jesus was crucified outside the camp, the walls of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12-13; John 19:17). The story shows the mercy of God for he sent servants, and finally his Son, even though the husbandmen were unworthy.

4. Verses 40-41: "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."
 - a. Jesus asks his auditors (verse 23) what the householder will do to these wicked husbandmen when he returns. Their answer is clear and to the point: He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let out his vineyard to others who will render him his due.
 - b. The Lord had accomplished what he set out to do: to get these men to see their sin by giving them a parallel case. Since they could see the sin involved in the story on the part of the husbandmen, they would be able to see their own sins. This is another case similar to that proposed by Nathan to David (2 Sam. 12).
5. Verses 42-44: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."
 - a. Jesus makes the bold application of the parable to these men. They could understand the concept of justice and could not miss the thrust of the parable.
 - b. Christ first refers to Psalm 118:22ff where a prophecy had been made of the Messiah, describing him as a stone which was rejected by the builders. The corner stone was the main part of the building for it was cut and placed perfectly so as to align two walls of the building. If it were imperfect or incorrectly placed the whole building would be out of kilter.
 - 1) A rejected corner stone was one the builders had inspected and found wanting. This is just what had happened with Christ: the Jews had a preconceived notion about the Messiah; when Jesus did not measure up to their expectation, they rejected him. Similar points are also made in Acts 4:11-12 and 1 Peter 2:4-8.
 - 2) "In the figure of the rejected cornerstone, the chief priests and Pharisees are represented as trying to build the walls of a house, but being unable to fit the stones at the corner because they rejected the only stone that was cut for that place. They were guilty of this folly in rejecting Jesus while trying to construct a conception of the kingdom of God" (McGarvey, p.185).
 - c. The Jews had largely rejected Jesus as the Messiah; only a remnant obeyed the gospel. Hence, the gospel would be presented to the Gentiles who would, in a great many instances, accept it.
 - 1) Down through the centuries the church has been comprised almost entirely of Gentiles; the Jews still reject Christ and his gospel, even though there is more than sufficient evidence to prove that he is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, and his gospel is the will of Almighty God.
 - 2) "And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region" (Acts 13:44-49).
 - d. "This verse [43] contains the application of the parable, and the key to its interpretation. The vineyard represents all of the religious privileges granted to the Jews who are the husbandmen, from the beginning of their history until the kingdom itself was offered to them by Jesus and afterward by the apostles.
 - 1) "The prophets, from Samuel down to John, are the messengers sent to demand the fruits of

- righteousness; the son who was sent last is Jesus; the destruction of the husbandmen is the final destruction of the Jewish nationality; and the transfer of the vineyard to other husbandmen, the transfer of the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles.
- 2) "The kingdom of heaven was chiefly Jewish before the destruction of Jerusalem, but it became, after that event, almost exclusively Gentile, both in its membership and in the predominant characteristics of its membership; and thus it was taken away from the Jews and given to a nation which would bring forth the fruits thereof" (McGarvey, pp.185f).
- e. This stone, representative of Christ, would maintain great power. Anyone who would fall upon it would be broken, and any upon whom it shall fall would be ground to powder.
 - 1) "As Jesus is the stone, falling on it is coming into conflict with him; and being broken represents the injury which persons who thus fall will sustain. Jesus warned John the Baptist against this when he said to him, 'Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me' (11:6)" (McGarvey, p.186).
 - 2) "The apostle Peter, referring to this metaphor, quoted Isaiah 28:16 and added, 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient' (1 Pet. 2:7,8).
 - f. Thus our Lord's reference to the Pharisees' falling on that stone (himself) is a reference to their stumbling at his word.
 - 1) "This passage also suggests Daniel 2:45 and the 'stone cut out of the mountain without hands' which smote the kingdoms and broke them in pieces. Christ's virgin birth was 'without hands,' in the sense that it was not dependent upon human agency or upon the natural processes of procreation. That little stone, Christ, from such humble beginnings (in the earthly view) grew and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34,35). This intriguing statement of our Lord (v.44) suggests another remark he made, 'The scriptures cannot be broken' (John 10:35). Men who think they break the scriptures only break themselves; those who stumble or fall upon Christ and his word do not break him but are themselves broken. Furthermore, there are two theaters of confrontation with that 'stone' which is Christ. In time, men may receive or reject him; but in eternity (the judgment) the stone will fall upon the disobedient with devastating and total punishment for their sinful and obdurate hearts" (Coffman, pp.339f).
 - 2) See also: Psalm 127:1; Matthew 7:21-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.
6. Verses 45-46: "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."
- a. The elders of verse 23 are now referred to as Pharisees. The chief priests are said by the scholars to be Sadducees. It was easy for these errorists to perceive that both of the parables (verses 28-32 and verses 33-44) applied to them. Rather than bring them to repentance, these men stiffened their necks even more.
 - b. "With a genius surpassing that of any mortal, Christ wove eternal truth into the fabric of the parables. He held the completed picture up before his enemies, as one might hold up a mirror; and at last, confronted with a likeness of themselves as plain as any photograph, they got the point! Their fury was unbounded....They probably would have rushed upon him to kill him then and there, but the Master had too carefully laid the plan for that to happen" (Coffman, p.340).
 - c. "Before that week ended, those evil men would by falsehood, suborned and lying witness, political pressure, intimidation, and mob violence, accomplish his crucifixion, under Christ's permissive will, and with themselves and others as the instruments of Satan....They would disperse the vast concourse of people who loved Jesus and hailed him as the son of David. They would use their wealth, official prerogatives, social position, and political power to intimidate and frighten into silence all who disagreed with them....They would even stoop to take the part of loathed and hated Caesar in order to strengthen their presentation before the governor....Their every word and action would appear in full view and understanding of millions of men for all ages....The dark drama would soon move to its shocking culmination" (Coffman, p.341).
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Matthew 22

A. Matthew 22:1-14: The Parable of the Unwilling Guests.

1. Verses 1-2: "And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."
 - a. This is the third in a series of three parables the Lord related to his enemies by which he illustrated their reprobate condition. The preceding (21:33-46) concerned the wicked husbandman, and the first (21:28-32) was about the man who asked his two sons to work in his vineyard. Lying in the background of this whole discussion Jesus had with the Jewish leaders is the story of the barren fig tree: it gave the appearance of having fruit but had none; so it was with these people—they gave only an appearance of righteousness for inwardly they were extremely sinful. In this present parable the Lord likened the kingdom to a certain king who made a marriage feast for his son.
 - b. "Many think that it is the same as the parable recorded in Luke 14:16-24; it is similar to it in some points, but it is not the same parable" (Boles, p.427). "This parable has no parallel in the other gospels though some falsely attempt to find a parallel to Luke 14:16-24. The two texts are different in time, details and spiritual meaning. Luke 14 pertains to the latter Perea ministry some three months earlier; whereas, Matthew 22 is set in the temple of Jerusalem (Matt. 21:23) and preceded by the parables of The Two Sons (Matt. 21:28-32) and The Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. 21:33-46)" (Terry Varner, *Book of Matthew*, p.561).
 - c. There are certain facts in the parable which are similar to the kingdom (the church). The invitation was extended to many but not all chose to attend the feast; and not all who attended were acceptable in the final setting. Just so, many are invited to become members of the kingdom of God but not all will accept the gracious invitation; and not all who do accept will be acceptable in the Judgment. These facts will become observable as the story progresses.
 - d. As worded by Coffman, the different aspects of the parable represent the following in the kingdom: (pp.343f)
 - 1) The king represents God, The king's son is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - 2) The marriage supper stands for the privileges of the true faith; The messengers are the evangelists of all ages who preach the truth (see below).
 - 3) The mistreatment of the messengers refers to the hostility of the Pharisees against the apostles, first, and to other preachers later. The rejection of the invitation is the rejection of Christ's message by the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders.
 - 4) The destruction of their city is the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and Vespasian in 70 A.D.
 - 5) The sending of the messengers into the byways prefigures the call of the Gentiles.
 - 6) The man without a wedding garment represents all who despise the privilege of true faith, and, while professing it, prove themselves unworthy of it.
 - 7) The coming in of the king to see the guests is the arraignment of all men at the final judgment.
 - 8) The binding of the offender and casting him out show the punishment of the wicked in hell.
 - 9) The speechlessness of the offender shows that evil men at last shall concur in their own punishment, being able to make no defense of their own conduct.
2. Verses 3-4: "And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage."
 - a. In the ancient mode of planning a feast and inviting the guests, this arrangement was followed: the feast was planned and a preliminary invitation was issued to the guests so that they could be preparing to attend; when the feast was ready, servants were sent bidding the guests to come and eat. "The guests had been invited before, but no exact time had been fixed for them to come. Now they are notified that it is time to come; and 'all things are ready'" (McGarvey, p.186).
 - b. Coffman has the servants (of vs. 3) represent the preachers of the word, especially in the first century. But more fitting is the view that says they are the prophets of the Old Testament who prophesied to Israel of the coming kingdom, thus trying to prepare the nation for it. The first invitation seems to be a reference to the preparatory work done by many prophets over many years.

- 1) Moses viewed Christ as the Prophet who was greater than he (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22-23).
 - 2) Isaiah and Micah prophesied of the kingdom as the "house of God" (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2; I Tim. 3:15).
 - 3) Jeremiah prophesied of the kingdom as the "new covenant" (31:31-33; Heb. 8:6-10).
 - 4) Ezekiel saw the kingdom as a sheepfold (34:11,22-23; John 10:14-16).
 - 5) Daniel prophesied specifically of the eternal kingdom (2:31-44; Acts 1:8; Col. 1:13-14).
 - 6) Joel prophesied the kingdom would begin with the baptism of the Holy Spirit (2:28-32; Acts 2:1ff).
 - 7) Amos saw the kingdom as the restored tabernacle of David (9:11-12; Acts 15:13-18).
 - 8) Zechariah prophesied of the kingdom as the temple (6:12-13; Heb. 6:20; 8:4).
 - 9) John the Immerser, Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy all preached the fact that the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:10-11).
- c. The second invitation involves a different period from the prophetic and preparatory eras. This invitation was extended only after the feast had been prepared, which was after the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. The killing of the oxen and the fatlings is a figure of speech describing the spiritual feast which God has prepared for all who will partake:
- 1) Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."
 - 2) Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."
- d. This invitation was first extended to the Jews starting on the first Pentecost following the Lord's resurrection. These "other servants" represent the apostles and other Christians who carried the gospel to Israel during the first several years of the church's history.
3. Verses 5-6: "But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*."
- a. "It was an insult to the king to treat his invitation with contempt by going, one to his farm and another to his merchandise; but to seize the servants who had brought the kind invitation, and to mistreat and slay them, was an act of the most malignant hostility, justifying, according to the usages of kings, the most fearful retribution"(McGarvey, pp.186f).
 - b. This part of the parable describes the attitude on the part of many of the Jews when the gospel was first being preached. "They made light of it." They were more interested in their own mundane affairs. These servants were shamefully mistreated at the hands of some of the Jews (Cf. Matt. 21:35-36; Acts 7:51-60; 8:1ff; 9:1ff; Acts 12; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; Rev. 2:8-11-17; 3:7-13). To treat "shamefully" (spitefully) is "treatment which is calculated publicly to insult and openly to humiliate the person who suffers from it" (Varner, *Book of Matthew*, pp.563f).
4. Verse 7: "But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."
- a. In consequence of their mistreatment of his servants, the king in the story sent his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. The very obvious intent of this part of the parable is to describe the punishment to be meted out against the rebellious Jews who not only slew the Messiah, but having continued to reject his word, also persecuted and slew the messengers sent to them.
 - 1) This punishment was meted out against them in the coming of the Roman army against Jerusalem in A.D. 70, when the city was taken, the temple razed, and hundreds of thousands of Jews slain.
 - 2) In Matthew 24:1-35 Jesus will describe many of the horrors attendant to the demise of the Jewish state.
 - 3) In Luke 19:41-44, this is given: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."
 - b. This verse serves as "a parenthesis and is not to be understood that the destruction of Jerusalem took

- place prior to the Gentiles' invitation to share in God's grace and kingdom. Acts 10 and 15, the missionary journeys of Paul, and the New Testament Epistles serve as adequate evidence that the Gentiles were not only invited but accepted God's grace not too long after Pentecost" (Varner, *Book of Matthew*, p.564).
- c. "...The destruction of Jerusalem was a direct action of heavenly vengeance upon the Jewish nation for their rejection of Christ. Man may temporize and avoid the fact if they will, but the wrath of God is the ultimate answer to all human perversity....
 - 1) "The type of historical visitation upon cities and nations that disobey God, like that which fell upon Jerusalem, has not disappeared but may still be seen. France rejected the Bible, tied it to the tail of an ass, dragged it through the city, and burned it on the city dump, elevating at the same time the low goddess of Reason; but since that time, the government of France has fallen 35 times!
 - 2) "Hitler burned the Bibles at Nuremburg in 1933, but it was that same generation that saw God's armies split open the ugly heart of Nazism and spill its filth upon the ground.
 - 3) "God still uses armies to punish wicked nations. The armies of destruction which visited wrath upon Nazi Germany were no better than the pagan legions of Titus (referred to in this parable as the armies of the king, who stands for God in the metaphor), but they were nonetheless instruments of the divine wrath. God grant that our own beloved America, now on a collision course with most of God's teachings, receives an awareness of this truth before it is too late" (Coffman, pp.345f).
5. Verses 8-10: "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."
 - a. The king remarked to his servants that those who were originally invited were not worthy, therefore they were to go to the highways and invite all that they would be able to find to come to the feast. By this means, an ample number of guests were provided for the son's wedding feast.
 - 1) "The wedding was a success. So also will the true religion of God prevail at last....No man or group of men, no nation or group of nations, can prevent the accomplishment of the eternal design of God. The fact that the ultimate guests were 'both bad and good' emphasizes the probationary nature of the church in this dispensation" (Coffman, p.346).
 - 2) This point is similar to the lesson taught in the parable of the net wherein fish of all kinds were caught (Matt. 13:47-48).
 - b. "The first invitations had been extended only to those of suitable rank to be guests of the king; but now all persons found on the highways, 'both bad and good,' are invited, and they, appreciating the honor conferred on them, accept the invitation, and the king triumphs in reference to the number, if not in reference to the rank of his guests. The conduct of those first invited brought ruin on themselves without defeating the purpose of the king" (McGarvey, p.187).
 - c. The Jews, having generally rejected the gospel, are left to their own sorry fate; the Gentiles, having been steeped in sin for generations, accepted the gospel in great numbers, so that today the church is comprised almost exclusively of them.
 - d. "Invariably, in all Christ's teachings, it is also clear that mankind in the broadest sense is not worthy of salvation; that is, they cannot merit it. In the three parables in this series here delivered to the Pharisees, it is clear that in the case of the two sons, neither of them was what a son should have been; and in the case of the one before us, the total population, in the truest and highest sense, were not *entitled* to be invited, the first because they were unworthy of it, and the others because they were not of sufficient excellence. In the light of this, how can any man feel that God, in any sense, 'owes' him eternal life?" (Coffman, p.347). See also Matthew 20:1-16, the story of the laborers in the vineyard.
 6. Verses 11-12: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."
 - a. The rest of the parable relates to the Judgment. In the story, the king found a guest who had not put on the wedding garment. The garment he wore was not proper for the occasion. By having on common clothes this man had insulted the king. The king asked why he came in without a wedding
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garment. The man was so taken aback that he had nothing to say; he was speechless since there was no excuse that would justify his lack of preparation. This man represents the member of the church who has not donned the proper spiritual garments. The wedding garment represents the "robes of righteousness," the "new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Rev. 3:4-5,18; 19:8).

- b. While the elements which permit us to become a new man are furnished in the kingdom, it is nevertheless the responsibility of the individual to avail himself of them. If he neglects to do so, he may deceive himself and fool the brethren, for a while perhaps, but he will be "speechless" when he stands in the Judgment.
 - c. "In verse 12 the King addressed the man as 'friend' (*heltaire*) meaning comrade or companion but used it with a tone of reproof (cf. Matt. 26:50; 20:13) and not a term of affection. When asked *why* he was not properly attired, the man was 'speechless,' that is muzzled, dumb from confusion and embarrassment....Any answer would condemn him. One cannot deceive God (Gal. 6:7-8). The same word is used of the ox being muzzled (I Tim. 5:8), silencing of the demon (Mark 1:25), the quieting of the raging sea (Mark 4:39), and answering those who question our faith (I Pet. 2:15)" (Varner, *Book of Matthew*, p.566).
7. Verse 13: "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- a. "In this verse there is a transition from the symbol to the thing symbolized, beginning with the binding of the insolent guest, and ending with the weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness which are to befall those represented by the guest" (McGarvey, p.187).
 - b. The servants are not apostles, preachers, or any other human, but the angels of heaven. The "outer darkness" is not the same place where the rich man of Luke 16 was for in that place they could see each other. This is Gehenna. The one cast into this place was one of the guests—a child of God; thus a saved person can be lost!
8. Verse 14: "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."
- a. "This is the subject illustrated by the preceding parable. The parties first called, who slighted the invitation and mistreated the king, are the Jews. The words, 'He sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city,' would answer for a description of the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - 1) "The persons called in from the highways are the Gentiles; and the fact that the wedding was supplied with guests from this source after those first invited had been slain and their city burned answers to the fact that after the destruction of Jerusalem the Church was filled up almost exclusively from the Gentiles.
 - 2) "The entrance of the king to see his guests (11) clearly represents the final judgment; and the man without a wedding garment, those who will be found in the Church without a suitable character. All such, together with all who reject the gospel invitation, are among the many who are called but not chosen; while the few who are chosen are those who shall be found at their posts clothed in the garments of righteousness" (McGarvey, pp.187f).
 - b. "These will be few, not absolutely but relatively; that is, few as compared with the number that *should* be chosen. Such is the leading train of thought in the parable, but incidentally it contains other valuable suggestions. The parties who slighted the invitation were moved, a part of them by indifference born of business cares (verse 5), and a part of them by malice (verse 6). The enemies of the gospel, and those indifferent to its claims, are both represented. Again, the man without the wedding garment was guilty of insolence as well as neglect, and so it is with him who holds a place in the Church without the character of a Christian" (McGarvey, p.188).

B. Matthew 22:15-22: The Pharisees and Herodians Question Jesus About Tribute.

1. Verse 15: "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk."
 - a. The Pharisees connived together how they might entrap Jesus by getting him to say the wrong thing. They doubtless thought that their devious conference would not be known, but little did they know that it would be reported in God's word, to be read and discussed by multiplied millions unto the very end of time! All things are naked and opened to the eyes of heaven (Heb. 4:13).
 - b. They were deliberately planning a scheme by which they could "entangle him in his talk." To

- "ensnare" (entangle) is a term used to describe the method by which a wild animal or bird was caught.
- c. "Far from being humbled and reproved by those wonderful parables in which the Lord had held up, as in a mirror, the truth concerning themselves that they might see it and repent, the Pharisees were all the more ready to destroy him. Their first maneuver was to confront Christ with some questions from which, if they could, they would obtain words from the Master which they would twist or misquote, thus giving them some pretext for condemning him to death. They thought to do this through intermediaries while they remained in the background" (Coffman, p.350).
2. Verse 16: "And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any *man*: for thou regardest not the person of men."
 - a. The leading Pharisees selected certain of their disciples who, in company with the Herodians, came to Jesus to raise the question which they had decided to ask. The chief Pharisees did not come for Jesus was apt to recognize them, perhaps having had other exchanges with them. In their stead, these leaders sent some of their aspiring young pupils, perhaps those who were sharp, or beguiling in appearance, and ones the Lord was not apt to recognize as enemies.
 - b. The Herodians were a political party who were so named because of their support of King Herod. This put them on good terms with, not only Herod, but the Roman authorities in Palestine also. These men were made part of this entourage because they would be quick to recognize in Jesus' answer anything that might be used against him before the Romans. Ordinarily, the Herodians and Pharisees were on opposite sides. But Jesus was seen as an enemy by both of the groups, and a common enemy often makes strange bedfellows.
 - c. They tried a different approach as they introduced their question. They gave the Lord some flattering compliments which were intended to give him a favorable attitude toward them. One who has been warmly complimented tends to react warmly, favorably, and openly toward the complimenting party. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps. 55:21, cf. verse 3).
 - d. They called him Master (Teacher), implying he was superior in position and knowledge to them. They next said they knew he was true (that he was always truthful). Further, that he taught the way of God in truth (he did not compromise the truth in any way). Also, that he did not care for any man (he was completely fearless), and did not regard the person of men (impartial, did not show partiality to men because of their position).
 3. Verse 17: "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"
 - a. Having softened the Lord up with this flattery, which was feigned since they came to ensnare him with his words, they now offered their question. "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"
 - b. "The Herodians ardently advocated Caesar's cause and favored a complete submission of Israel to Caesar's government. If the Christ made it unlawful to give tribute to Caesar, they would of course, have haled him into court on a charge of sedition, punishable by death. On the other hand, if Jesus had made it right to pay the tribute, they would have advertised it in order to diminish his popularity with the people who groaned under Caesar's yoke and longed to throw it off. They thought they had him impaled upon the horns of a dilemma" (Coffman, p.351). His enemies brought the charge against him in his trials that he forbade the giving tribute to Rome (Luke 23:2).
 - c. Is it lawful—is it in keeping with the Law of Moses for Jews to pay tribute money to Caesar? "These Pharisees did not care how he answered the question; they thought that his answer would hang him on one horn of the dilemma. The Jews based their opposition to paying tribute to a foreign government on Deut. 17:14,15" (Boles, p.432).
 4. Verse 18: "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?"
 - a. Jesus was infinite in knowledge and understanding, and thus was able to discern their motives. Their efforts are described as "wickedness." He bluntly accuses them of tempting him (putting him on trial with their question), and calls them "hypocrites."
 - b. A hypocrite is one who feigns to be one thing when he is another. They tried to give the impression that they were very sincere in their question, and even complimented the Lord highly, but their purpose was to find a means to destroy him. They knew immediately that their subterfuge had been
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discovered.

5. Verses 19-20: "Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription?"
 - a. In a brilliant display of wisdom, the Lord called for a coin which was used to pay the tribute indicated. When they brought him a penny (*denarius*), he asked whose image did it bear and what was the superscription written on it. The coin "had a value of about 17 cents and bore an engraving of Caesar with a superscription making him the ruler of the land. The very prevalence of those coins in Israel identified the land as Caesar's. It showed his title and authority to be recognized there" (Coffman, p.351).
 - b. Boles says that the inscription read, "Caesar Augustus, Judea being subdued" (p.433).
6. Verse 21: "They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."
 - a. They answered only one part of the question: the image is Caesar's. The Lord replied with the answer which has since become proverbial: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." What wonderful wisdom! Who but the Lord could have given such a reply!
 - b. "Nearly two thousand years have not diminished the wisdom and truth of that sensational answer. It fell like a blow on the questioners. It gave the truth about the tribute question, namely, that it should be paid, and that it could not be wrong to do so since it was paid with Caesar's own money, a plain fact attested by his picture and title on the coins! Christ then went far beyond their question and commanded the tax be paid, but in such a manner that no breach in the popular esteem of Jesus would result. Then, vaulting over all earthly and secular considerations, Christ, as always, directed their attention to the higher ground of God's authority rather than to Caesar's..." (Coffman, pp.351f).
 - c. "The answer is general, and in teaching that tribute must be rendered to those to whom tribute is due, it teaches that other obligations to civil rulers are to be discharged as well. While thus pronouncing unmistakably in favor of paying the tribute, he saves himself from popular prejudice by adding, 'and unto God the things that are God's,' asserting in a manner which carried conviction with it, that the payment of enforced tribute was not inconsistent with maintaining complete allegiance to God. The answer was not inconsistent with the statute in Deuteronomy, for this had reference, not to enforced subjection by a foreign power, but to the voluntary choice of a king" (McGarvey, pp. 189f).
7. Verse 22: "When they had heard *these words*, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way."
 - a. To this wisdom they could not respond; rather, they were amazed at the answer. There were several reasons for their amazement: he had quickly discovered their scheme; his effortless escape from the dilemma; his ability to shrug off the flattery which was intended to disarm him; and the tremendous wisdom of the reply itself.
 - b. Thus, baffled and amazed, they left him. One can but wonder what they told the chief Pharisees who had sent them on this fool's errand.

C. Matthew 22:23-33: The Sadducees' Question Regarding the Resurrection.

1. Verse 23: "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him."
 - a. Matthew says that this was on the same day. These enemies of Christ had perhaps witnessed the failure of the Pharisees and Herodians. The peculiar beliefs of the Sadducees place them in league with modernists of our day:
 - b. "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). Their question dealt with the resurrection. Their errors grew out of their denial of the existence of spirits: if there were no spirits, then there were no angels, and there was no resurrection, since there was no spirit awaiting the resurrected body. "The Sadducees were the sophisticated materialists of their day, relatively few in number, but holding most of the important offices of the Jewish system" (Coffman, p.352).
 2. Verse 24: "Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother."
 - a. They knew what the Law said about the matter they first introduced, which formed the basis for their
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- question. The teachings of the Law on this is found in Deuteronomy 25:5: "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her." The practice indicated by the Law was one which predated the Law (see Gen. 38:6-11).
- b. McGarvey says that the Sadducees had actively opposed Jesus on only one previous occasion: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven" (Matt. 16:1).
3. Verses 25-28: "Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her."
 - a. The situation was one that could have happened, but such was highly unlikely. They claimed to have known a case where seven different brothers, one by one, married the same woman after the preceding brother who had married her died. In each case, there was no child born to the marital union. Lastly, the woman died. Their question, which propounded a dilemma for those who believe in the resurrection, was, whose wife shall she be after the resurrection.
 - b. "The force of the question depended on the assumption that the marital relation would still exist in the resurrected state, and this assumption could be denied only by one competent to speak authoritatively of that state. On this account the Pharisees could not answer the objection satisfactorily. The case was strongly put; for not only were seven men supposed who would have equal claims on the same woman, but these seven men were brothers, between whom a wife in common, or a strife for possession of her, would appear more incongruous than if the seven were strangers to each other" (McGarvey, pp.190f).
 - c. The situation described was one which they had probably used with telling effect on their enemies, the Pharisees. Only the Lord could give a proper answer to the case presented. They probably thought that Jesus would be unable to answer, thus would his influence be diminished by this defeat. But they were doomed to the same fate suffered by the Pharisees and Herodians before them!
 4. Verses 29-30: "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."
 - a. The Lord smoothly pointed out three errors in their question. They erred in (1) not knowing the Scriptures, (2) not giving credit to God's power, and (3) in assuming that man will sustain the same marital relationships in the resurrected state. Only one with knowledge of the eternal state could have given this latter reply.
 - b. Many Old Testament passages teach the fact of the resurrection (Job 19:25-27; Ex. 3:6; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). But men who have developed their own theology are adept at ignoring what the Bible teaches in contradiction to their positions. The Sadducees believed the truth about Deuteronomy 25:5, but rejected what it said about the resurrection. Their kinsmen are alive and active today!
 - c. They had shown their ignorance of God's power also. If they had rightly assessed the power of the Almighty, they would have recognized that he has the ability to raise the dead and give them bodies without the "propensities on which marriage is based" (McGarvey, p.191).
 - 1) Hebrews 11:19: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."
 - 2) Romans 4:17: "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."
 - 3) Matthew 3:9: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
 - d. In the resurrected state there will be no need for marriage, the primary purpose of which is the propagation of the race. Since there will be no death in heaven, there will be no need for physical procreation. Marriage also furnishes companionship for the members of that relationship; but in heaven, there will be constant and perfect companionship, between the redeemed on that blessed shore,
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and between the redeemed and heaven's primary residents. Thus, the Lord says, on his own authority, that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." The Lord's argument also assumes the reality of angels; he ought to know they were real for they had served him in eternity before his virgin birth brought him into earthly life, and had ministered to him while here (Matt. 4:11).

5. Verses 31-33: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine."
 - a. McGarvey's comments on these verses are wonderfully perceptive:
 - 1) "Having refuted the objection of the Sadducees, Jesus next furnished a proof of the resurrection. The major premise of his argument is the proposition that 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' Here the term *dead* is used in the sense attached to it by the Sadducees. If he had been disputing with Pharisees, they could have answered, He *is* the God of the dead; for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were dead when he said, 'I *am* their God.'
 - 2) "But to the Sadducees a dead man was *non est*—he had ceased to exist, he was nothing; and to say, in their sense of the term, that God is the God of the dead, is to say he is the God of nothing. It would be nonsense. But God did say, hundreds of years after the death of the three patriarchs, 'I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' (Ex. 3:6.) The conclusion follows, that these patriarchs were not dead in the Sadducean sense of the term; and as the conclusion applies only to their spirits, it proves that spirits continue to be alive after the bodies which they inhabited are dead.
 - 3) "The thoughtful reader may have observed that the conclusion of this argument falls short in its terms, of the demands of the subject. This subject is the resurrection of the dead, while the conclusion affects only the question whether the spirits of the dead are still alive. We can not escape the difficulty by supposing, as some have done, that the resurrection spoken of is that of the spirit, not that of the body; for there is no such thing as a resurrection of the spirit. The spirit does not die, and therefore it does not rise from the dead. It leaves the body as the latter dies, its departure is the immediate cause of death, and it departs in the full possession of life. Resurrection is always spoken of in the Scriptures with reference to the body.
 - 4) "How, then, does the Savior's proof that spirits continue to live apart from the body, include proof of a resurrection? It seems quite certain that the argument appeared conclusive to the Sadducees; for Jesus assumed that it was so, and they tacitly admitted the fact, while the bystanders who knew the view of the party 'were astonished at his doctrine.' (Verse 33.) In other words, the Sadducees admitted that if the existence of human spirits apart from the body were proved, the necessity for a resurrection would follow.
 - 5) "The argument, then, was conclusive at least to them; but was it no more than an *ad hominem* argument? We think not; for human spirits, having been originally created for the exercise of their powers through the organs of the body, must, unless their original nature be changed, which is an inadmissible supposition because unsupported by evidence, be dependent for their highest enjoyment on the possession of a body. This being so, the continued existence of spirits after the death of the body creates a demand for the resurrection of the body, and the Sadducees were philosophical enough to see this" (pp.191f).
 - b. Many liberals of our time look on the Bible, not as a book which is to be studied and interpreted closely, but as a message of general principles. Many have the notion that one cannot so interpret the Bible as to reach a conclusion that is any more than an opinion. But the Lord had the highest confidence in the Bible, even the Old Testament, which he quoted.
 - 1) His argument hinged on the difference between the present and past tenses of a verb: I am the God of...
 - 2) "Paul made similar use of Bible text in Galatians 3:16, his argument turning on the difference between the singular and plural of the word "seed."
 - c. The Bible is trustworthy; it was written to be understood, and when we all understand a Bible text, we

will understand it alike; it was meant to be final authority for all our spiritual and religious activities; we must study it diligently, and often in minute detail, to obtain the message it has for us:

- 1) 2 Timothy 2:15: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:13, 15-16: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
 - 4) Acts 17:11-12: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."
 - 5) John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."
- d. "The astonishment of the multitude arose from two circumstances: first, that Jesus was at all able to answer the boasted objection of the Sadducees; and second, that he found the answer in the writings of Moses, where it was supposed then, and has been supposed since, that the doctrine of a future life is not taught" (McGarvey, p.192).

D. Matthew 22:34-40: A Lawyer Asks About the Greatest Command of the Law.

1. Verses 34-36: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, Master, *which is the great commandment in the law?*"
 - a. The Pharisees were still smarting from the shameful defeat their disciples had suffered at the response of Jesus to their devious question (22:15-22). They heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence. "Silence" is the word used to describe the action of "muzzling" an animal. The Sadducees were unable to utter any response to the Lord's answer. The Pharisees were now emboldened to make another attempt at Jesus, and chose a certain lawyer to word a question. A "lawyer" in Bible terminology is a specialist in the Law of Moses, and not what we call lawyers today. Mark's account (12:28-34) describes him as a scribe.
 - b. The purpose of the question here raised is said by Matthew to be for the purpose of "tempting" (trying) Jesus. Their aim was to entrap Jesus in some technical fault on some command of the Law.
 - 1) They figured he would specify some particular command, and that selection would engender opposition from those who thought another command was most important. It was after the Pharisees had "gathered together" that the lawyer asked the question, hence it appears that he was selected to be the spokesman.
 - 2) Although he started out to ensnare the Lord, he was an honest man, and saw the truth which Jesus had spoken to the Sadducees, and readily perceived the good answer Jesus gave to his question (Mark. 12:32-34).
 - c. The Pharisees had the idea that some commandments were more important than others (Cf. Matt. 23:23; Luke 18:11-12). "The teachers among the Pharisees had decided that no man could observe perfectly all the commandments of the law delivered by Moses; they were sticklers for perfect obedience; but they saw in their own lives that no one kept perfectly all the commandments of the law; therefore they had decided that if one man kept perfectly one commandment his obedience to this one would be accepted as obedience to all of the laws. However, the question arose among themselves as to which one was the most important, or which one should be selected to be kept. Some of them exalted one law above the other; some thought the law regarding the Sabbath was the more important, others thought that the law regulating conduct with respect to human life the most important" (Boles, pp.437f).
2. Verses 37-39: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

- a. Instead of one, Jesus gave two commands. First, love God with all the heart, soul, and mind (Mark adds "strength" to these three); second, love thy neighbor as thyself. One should not try to exalt any particular command above another, for "all thy commandments are righteousness" (Ps. 119:172).
 - b. "The commandment cited was not, as the lawyer might have expected, taken from the decalogue, but from a comparatively obscure place in the Pentateuch. (See Deut. 6:5.) It is called the first and great, as the sequel shows (verse 40), not because, apart from all others it is great, but because in observing it all others are observed. The second was also selected from an obscure passage (Lev. 19:18), and was as little expected as the first. The best explanation of its meaning is that given by Jesus when another lawyer, conversing on the same subject, inquired, 'Who is my neighbor?' Jesus showed him by the parable of the good Samaritan that every man, even an enemy, is our neighbor, and that to love him as the commandment requires is to entertain toward him such feeling as will cause us to relieve him when in distress. (See Luke 10:25-37.) The love enjoined is a benevolent good-will toward all persons" (McGarvey, p.193).
 - c. To love God with all our hearts means to have our feelings, desires, emotions, affections, and longings involved in the process of serving God. To love God with the soul involves our life and being. To love him with our mind involves fully dedicating our mind to learn his will and to apply our mind to his service.
 - d. "To love thy neighbor as thyself is not to feel a magnetic attraction toward him, but it is to have the purpose of heart, soul, and mind to do him good, to work for his happiness and well-being as we labor for our own well-being and happiness. He is a true child of God who is willing to sacrifice every fleshly feeling and impulse and bear all things to do the will of God. He loves his neighbor as himself who can choke back the angry feeling and forget wrongs suffered in order to benefit and help him" (Boles, p.439).
3. Verse 40: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."
- a. On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets. "Jesus' answer is far more than a clever summary of all the commandments. It is the fundamental commandment underlying the whole economy of redemption. Above everything else, God desires and commands his human children to love him totally and completely....In a technical sense, all the law and prophets do hang on the twin injunctions Christ named before the Pharisees. The first five words of the Decalogue deal with man's relation to God, and the second five have to do with man's relationship to men. The fifth commandment might go in either group" (Coffman, pp.356f).
 - b. "There is a tacit comparison of these two commandments to a hook in the wall on which are hung all the books of the law and the prophets. As the book supports all, so to keep these two commandments is to do all that is required by the Scriptures. He who loves God as required will keep all of God's commandments, and he who loves his neighbor will fulfill every obligation to his neighbor" (McGarvey, p.193).
 - c. Mark gives some additional information to the story, showing that the lawyer (who was so because he was a scribe, thus was a specialist in the law, and religiously, he was a Pharisee), saw the truth of what Jesus had said. The Lord saw that he had responded "discreetly" (sensibly, prudently), he told him that he was not far from the kingdom. The lawyer's response "showed a readiness in perceiving the truth, and a promptness in accepting it, which were surprising in one of his class, and the more so from the fact that he had been put forward for the purpose of testing the Master with hard questionsThe man was in a condition to very readily receive the kingdom. It was perhaps also true that he was not far from the kingdom in point of time. It would be strange if such a man did not immediately enter the kingdom when it was preached by the apostles on and after Pentecost" (McGarvey, p.343).
 - d. The point of the Lord's answer to the question is that not one command of God is more important than another, but the important matter is to have a heart which is ready to do anything and everything that God requires, and do so gladly.

E. Matthew 22:41-46: Jesus Poses a Question for the Pharisees.

1. Verses 41-42: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David.*"

- a. Parallel accounts are given in Mark 12:35-37 and Luke 20:41-44. The Lord saw the need to raise this question concerning the Messiah.
 - 1) Mark 12:35-37: "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly."
 - 2) Luke 20:41-44: "And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?"
 - b. He does not ask them if they think that he is the Christ, but what did they think about the lineage of the Messiah—whose son is he? They replied accurately, "The Son of David."
2. Verses 43-45: "He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"
- a. This second question was perplexing to the Pharisees; they were unable to answer it. The Lord pointed out that David had said "in spirit" (by inspiration, cf. 2 Sam. 23:2), that the Messiah was his Lord (the quotation of this is found in Psalm 110:1). The Lord asked, "How could the Messiah be called David's son and at the same time be David's Lord?" The two truths are inconsistent unless Christ is divine as well as human.
 - b. "The reason the Pharisees did not recognize Christ (though some did) was that not all the Messianic prophecies were received by them. In the very nature of God's revelation to humanity of the coming of that Holy One who is both God and man at once, there were necessarily *seeming* contradictions. Thus, Isaiah hailed the Coming One as 'Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,' etc., while at the same time portraying him as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, with no form nor comeliness, a root out of dry ground, bruised, chastised, and suffering death. They did the natural, human thing: they believed the more agreeable prophecies and rejected the others" (Coffman, pp.357f). They had access to Psalm 110:1 but were unable to explain it.
 - c. "It seems in order to further confuse these Pharisees that Jesus added another question, 'If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?' Here was the point for them to explain. They cannot admit it without acknowledging that while he is human as descended from David, so he is divine as the right Messiah sent of God; it shows that his royalty is not on earth, but in heaven. It also shows that the Messiah on earth was to have a twofold nature—fleshly and divine. They were unable to answer him; it is not recorded that they even attempted to answer" (Boles, p.440).
3. Verse 46: "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*."
- a. "They were not able to answer because they believed not in the divinity of the Christ. They supposed that he would be only a man: they were Unitarians. By propounding the question, Jesus gained two important points: he showed that the promised Christ was to be divine, and he showed that his own claim to be the Son of God was in perfect harmony with his claim to be the Christ. If he is the Christ, then he is David's Lord" (McGarvey, p.194).
 - b. "Reasons for the need to expose those men rise from the fact that, as the official representatives of Judaism, their failure to recognize and accept their Messiah would ever afterwards be used by Satan as an argument against the validity of Christ's claim upon all mankind as the true Messiah. If there had been, therefore, the least vestige of anything honorable or upright in the Pharisees *et al*, there could have continued through history some suspicion that since 'good men,' as they were supposed to be, rejected the Messiah, there must have been some reason for their doing it....Any fair-minded person can easily understand *why such men* rejected Christ" (Coffman, p.359).
 - c. Christ had answered the questions so thoroughly and so well that no one dared raise any other such questions. The enemies of the Lord were so vanquished and driven from the battlefield, that they had to resort to lies, illegal judicial procedures, and murder!
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Matthew 23

A. Matthew 23:1-12: Warnings Against the Scribes and Pharisees.

1. Verse 1: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples."
 - a. The Lord was still at the temple, and apparently this whole exchange, recorded in Matthew 21:23 through the present chapter, took place in the same place. The Lord has addressed some pointed remarks toward his enemies and has answered their devious questions. He was able to utterly silence them with his incisive arguments and truth.
 - b. In the passage, Jesus speaks to his disciples and the great multitude assembled there, and in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees, for in verse thirteen he addresses them with a series of severe rebukes.
2. Verse 2: "Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat."
 - a. The Lord affirmed that the scribes and Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat." The scribes were those men who made copies of the Old Testament, and because they were well acquainted with its contents, also served as teachers of the Law. As the leading sect among the Jews, the Pharisees occupied positions of authority.
 - b. As Moses was the recognized teacher in his day, so the scribes and Pharisees served the nation as the acknowledged teachers of the Law at that present time. They were the prime source of education and information in Moses' Law. They had the authority to teach the Law; they did not have authority to add any man-made commands to the Law.
3. Verse 3: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."
 - a. With the foregoing limitation in mind, the people are to give heed to do those things which were taught from the Law by the scribes and Pharisees. As long as they taught only those things which were taught in the Law, without perversion, addition or deletion, they were properly proclaiming God's truth, and the people were to observe and do. But these men were not content to stay with the truth; the Lord accused them time and again of perverting the law by their traditions (Matt. 15:1-14). And the example of these teachers is sadly lacking! They teach but they do not personally follow what they teach.
 - b. "The Pharisees did not practice what they taught, but their failure was no excuse for disobedience by those who knew God's will. The authority of God's word does not derive from the righteous life of the teacher but from the prior authority of God himself; although, of course, the righteous life of the teacher is always a strong encouragement to obedience. The evil and inconsistent life of the scribes and Pharisees was a strong deterrent to the acceptance of God's will in that day; and similar evil on the part of Christian teachers in all ages has the same hindering results" (Coffman, p.361).
 - c. Compare:
 - 1) Romans 2:1-6: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds."
 - 2) Romans 2:16: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."
 - 3) Romans 2:17-23: "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that

- preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"
4. Verse 4: "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers."
 - a. The binding of heavy burdens is a figure taken from the practice of binding the burdens to be carried, and putting them on an animal. The scribes and Pharisees often bound "grievous" burdens and required that they be borne by the Jews, while they would not attempt to bear the same onerous loads.
 - b. These "heavy burdens" were the traditions which they had added to the Law, for "although the law itself was a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear (Acts 15:10), it could not be said of the law that it was a burden which the *scribes* bound and laid on men's shoulders. They avoided the task of bearing these burdens themselves, not moving them with one of their fingers, by introducing a class of subtle distinctions like that of the *corban* (15:4-6), and those in reference to oaths (verses 16-22)" (McGarvey, pp.195f).
 5. Verses 5-7: "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."
 - a. The whole life of these men was bound up in having their own vanity "stroked." Their vanity is exemplified by the case of the prayer of the Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14:
 - 1) "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).
 - 2) "While avoiding all heavy burdens, they performed some works, yet only such as would attract the attention of men and secure to themselves reputation for piety. These they carried to an excess, as is seen in the specifications mentioned below" (McGarvey, p.196).
 - b. They make broad their phylacteries. Phylacteries were pieces of parchment upon which were written certain passages of scripture. The word *phylactery* comes from a word which means to keep, preserve, or guard (Barnes).
 - 1) The phylactery was regarded as an amulet or charm, and was thought to provide its wearer with special protection from evil. There are those today who regard the Bible as some kind of charm, more than a revelation from God describing how we ought to live.
 - 2) The broader the phylactery, the greater spirituality the wearer was thought to have. It was a device which brought to the Pharisee or scribe more praise from his constituents.
 - 3) "In Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18, it was said to Israel concerning the teaching of the law, that they should be bound, 'for a token upon thy head, and for frontlets between thine eyes.' In the interbiblical period, we find the Jews converting this figure into outward fact. They took four passages adjacent to the thrice repeated injunction, viz., Exodus 13:2-10; Exodus 13:13-22; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and Deuteronomy 11:13-22, and writing them on strips of parchment, encased the folded strips in minute leatherboxes. These four boxes were set on edge and fastened upon one leather base, which was placed in the middle of the forehead, and held there by a string tied round the head with peculiar knots which had a mystical meaning" (See Coffman, p.362).
 - 4) The larger the phylactery the more attention it would generate for the wearer. The error of confusing the figurative for the literal is also made by many today, for example in the false doctrine of transubstantiation; also Revelation 20:1-5.
 - c. They enlarge the borders of their garments. The Hebrews were required to make fringes on the borders of their garments and to put on the fringes "a ribband of blue" (Num. 15:37-39). This law was intended to put them in remembrance of the entire Law which God had given them. This fringe would distinguish them from the other nations. The Pharisees had "improved" on the Mosaic edict by making

- the borders of their garments broader than others did, so that they might appear more religious than all others.
- d. They love the uppermost rooms at feasts. "Rooms" here does not carry with it our modern meaning, but rather *reclining places*. "But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi" (Matt. 23:5-7, ASV).
 - 1) "Long couches were provided in their dining-halls, on each of which three persons would usually recline. The first, reclining on his left side, rested his left elbow on a cushion at the end of the couch, his feet thrown back toward the rear so as to allow another to recline just below and in front of him. The third was an equal distance below the second, the head of each being far enough below his neighbor above to keep from interfering with the free use of his hands in eating. The middle position was the position of honor, here called the uppermost room, and the Pharisees are charged with loving to secure it" (McGarvey, p.196).
 - 2) "To recline near to one in this manner denoted intimacy, and was what was meant by lying *in the bosom* of another, Jn. 13:23; Lu. 16:22,23. As the feet were extended *from* the table, and as they reclined instead of sitting, it was easy to approach the feet behind and even unperceived. Thus, in Lu. 7:37,38, while Jesus reclined in this manner, a woman that had been a sinner came to his feet *behind him*, and washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head" (Barnes, p.241).
 - e. They love the chief seats in the synagogues. These were the places which were considered as most prominent and conspicuous. "At the end of the synagogue building, opposite to the entrance, was the chest or ark containing the books of the law, and the seats near that end were the 'chief seats in the synagogue'" (McGarvey, p.196).
 - f. They love the greetings addressed to them in the marketplaces. There were open places in the city which were frequented by those who had something to sell or buy; all kinds of business transactions, judicial proceedings, and social conversations took place here. The marketplace was called the "agora" by the Greeks, and the "forum" by the Romans. There was such a place in every city.
 - 1) "The Pharisees delighted in the formal greetings and salutations which were here lavished on men of distinction by the fawning multitude" (ibid., p.197).
 - 2) "They were little men, puffed up with their supposed learning, parading like peacocks before the admiring eyes of their followers, and inwardly gloating over titles of honor and deference. Such empty superficiality blinded the Pharisees and will also blind all others in all places in all times who become infected with the deadly virus of human pride" (Coffman, p.363).
6. Verse 8: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren."
- a. "The ostentation which showed itself in the dress of the Pharisees and in their greediness for popular applause, was also seen in their fondness for honorary titles" (McGarvey, p.197).
 - 1) The Lord thus forbids here the use of this or some other such terms as a title of distinction, which exalts the one thus called to a position of superiority over his brethren.
 - 2) There were three forms of the term here described: *Rab*, which means teacher or master; *Rabbi*, which means my teacher or master; and *Rabboni*, which means my great teacher or master (see John 20:16).
 - 3) The Lord does not forbid our describing someone as a teacher, if that is what that person does and is; he does forbid the use of the term as a title of distinction which exalts one above another.
 - b. "In the teaching here, Christ struck at one of the great failings of mankind, the reliance upon human authorities for the settlement of religious truth. In apostolic times, the living teachers were called 'rabbis' and the ones who formerly lived were called 'fathers'....Christ taught there is just one authority in religion, namely, God, and that which God has revealed in Christ through the apostles....The sense of Christ's teaching recorded in this place is always violated when men are willing to accept the authority of 'Doctor So and So' instead of the teachings of the word of God" (Coffman, p.363).
 - c. We are wrong if we give to some man the honor of being the authority for our spiritual and religious beliefs and practices; we are wrong if we simply ascribe to him the honor of a title which exalts him
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- above others: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; **and all ye are brethren.**" "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).
7. Verse 9: "And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."
 - a. The Lord also forbids the use of "Father" as a title of religious honor, because there is only one spiritual Father—Almighty God. He does not intend to forbid our referring to our earthly progenitor as "father" since that is exactly what he is. We must identify him by some means. Also, the Bible often uses the term in reference to an earthly father:
 - 1) Luke 16. Lazarus, a physical descendant of Abraham, addressed that grand old patriarch as "father."
 - 2) The Prodigal son called his father, "Father."
 - 3) Paul referred to those male saints having children as "fathers" (Eph. 6:1-4).
 - 4) Paul's reference to Timothy as his "son in the faith" (I Tim. 1:2) does not violate the principle of the present text, for Paul means simply that he had converted Timothy to Christ; he was not exalting himself over Timothy. He also spoke of having begotten the Corinthians through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15). In these cases he refers to his actual relationship with the Corinthians and with Timothy. No honorary distinction was meant.
 - b. Coffman describes the case of Kaiser Wilhelm II, emperor of Germany, allowing to be printed in a circular, on the occasion of his going to church, the following: "The All-Highest paid His respects to the Highest!" (p.364).
 - c. The Catholic system exalts the priest to a position which is superior to others. The title gives glory to the man, not to God. Their man-made system gives to the priest authority (to forgive sins, authoritatively interpret scripture, etc.) which does not belong to any man.
 8. Verse 10: "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ."
 - a. The Lord also forbids the use of "Master" as a title for his people to wear, for it also exalts one above the other. He used three terms (Rabbi, Father, Master) as cases in point in discussing the sinfulness of the proud Pharisees. He is not merely giving this discourse for the purpose of exposing the sin of these men, but to show that such ostentatious display must be avoided entirely if his disciples were to retain his good pleasure. He did not exhaust the titles which must be avoided; all religious titles and honorary distinctive terms are included in his prohibition.
 - b. One of the most common examples of modern day honorary titles of distinction is the term "reverend." Only once is this term found in the Bible (Ps. 111:9), and there it is used in reference to God. Who is so vainglorious that he is willing to be exalted on a par with the Almighty? Reverend is a derivative of "revere" which means "to regard with deep respect, love, and awe; venerate" (Webster). It is a form of the term "reverence" which means: "a feeling or attitude of deep respect, love, and awe, as for something sacred; veneration" (ibid.). Another form of the Hebrew word (*yare*) translated "reverend" is also found in Psalm 89:7, Leviticus 10:30 and 26:2.
 - c. But men are not content to abide with the Lord's word, and unwilling to be merely on a par with other "reverends," some wear the exalted titles of Right Reverend, Doctor of Divinity, etc. Coffman, in a bit of sarcasm, makes this pithy observation: "Could we say, for example, that His Eminence, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Christ, His Holiness Simon Peter, the Pope of all Christendom, was once withstood to his face by the Right Reverend Monsignor Paul, Metropolitan and Bishop of Ephesus!" (p.365). See Galatians 2:11-14.
 - d. It is interesting to observe that while men proudly accept such titles of distinction as those noted above, yet when they speak of one of the apostles, it is without such titles.
 - e. "Even the use of 'Brother' as the exclusive property of the preacher serves to take away from others equally entitled to it; and therefore it should be used for all and not parlayed into a title which, for all practical purposes, takes the place of 'Reverend!'" (Coffman, p.366).
 9. Verses 11-12: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."
 - a. "In these two verses the meekness becoming a Christian is put in contrast with the ostentation of the Pharisees [and their modern brethren], and the consequences of both are stated. The pathway to true

greatness is found in humble service for others, while self-exaltation insures abasement. The results are brought about providentially in this world, and judicially in the world to come" (McGarvey, p.197).

- b. Matthew 20:28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

B. Matthew 23:13-33: Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees.

1. In the passage before us, the Lord pronounces eight woes upon the scribes and Pharisees (in the KJV; the ASV omits verse 14 and thus lists seven woes). This was the last of the Lord's public discourses; it was delivered in the temple, in the presence of the disciples, a great multitude of the people, and the ones he denounces. These woes are the most severe ever administered by the Lord during his public ministry, and stand in stark contrast to the feeble claims of many in our brotherhood who insist on "eliminating the negative."
 - a. "When it is boiled down it is usually found that the ones who cry thusly are the most negative of all. They criticize more under the cloak of love than the very ones against whom they level their caustic objection. The world cannot live without violators being told over and over that if they violate the law they will have to pay the penalty....The price of holding back what people must be told, of compromising vital truths to please people, is the most destructive thing facing the Lord's church today....Where the [civil] law is not forced upon the people when necessary, complete terror reigns. When false teachings in the religious world are ignored, winked at and smoothed over, confusion and chaos exist in religion. This is precisely the situation in the world and in the church today" (Foy Smith, *The Book of Matthew*, p.587).
 - b. Why did the Lord give the scribes and Pharisees such a severe denunciation? It was certainly an extreme situation requiring extreme measures. His Divine Sonship was involved. These men had the reputation of being great, spiritual giants, the most outstanding among the nation at the time. These "great ones" rejected Christ. Later generations, knowing this, might conclude that since these men did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, then they must have rejected him for good reason, never knowing the gross perversity of their true condition. Therefore, Jesus exposed these men for all those present to see, and directed Matthew's recording of the proceedings so that everyone who would read the account could know that these were not the good men they presented themselves to be. He was unmerciful in exposing their hypocrisy, but as indicated in verse 37, he did not seek their hurt; it was and is his desire to save, not to condemn.
2. Verse 13: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."
 - a. **The first Woe.** The word "woe" means "a solemn denunciation of punishment." This one is pronounced on them because they tried to keep precious souls from hearing and accepting the message of Jesus. The Lord's message announced the coming kingdom, but his enemies rejected that truth and sought to keep others from accepting it. The figure the Lord used was one which pictured these evil men standing at the gate and forbidding those who wished to pass through from doing so. "To argue from this passage, as some have done, that the kingdom of heaven must have been already set up, is illogical, because the figure is as well suited to a kingdom about to be established as to one already in existence" (McGarvey, p.198).
 - b. "The kingdom of God was preached in its preparatory stage; it had been presented in promise and prophecy, and now it was presented in its preparatory state, and these scribes and Pharisees, the religious guides of the people, were doing all that they could to keep the people from accepting him as the Messiah" (Boles, p.446).
 - c. Luke 11:52 gives a different figure, that of a key. There the Lord accused his enemies with having taken away the key of knowledge; they had not entered themselves and hindered (forbade) those who wanted to enter.
 - d. These men should have been among the first to accept the truth preached by Jesus, and thus could have encouraged a great many others to believe on him. Instead, they were the cause of many rejecting Christ, a consequence they will have an eternity to sorely regret.
3. Verse 14: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

- a. **The Second Woe.** This verse is omitted from some of the ancient manuscripts, but is found in others. The same thought is expressed in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47 so we know it is good scripture. "Devour widow's houses" is a figure of speech, showing the extreme avarice of these men. "The greed with which they defrauded widows is represented by the strong figure of eating up the houses in which they lived" (McGarvey, p.344).
- b. To keep up the appearance of piety they made long prayers. This pretense, effected as it was by the hypocritical prayers, only added to their wickedness, and thus their condemnation was greater. Unscrupulous and greedy men often use religion as a means to financial gain, and often will swindle, lie, cheat, steal, and even commit murder to reach their unholy aims.
4. Verse 15: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."
- a. **The Third Woe.** "Not a proselyte from heathenism to the worship of the true God, but a Jewish proselyte to the sect of the Pharisees—to the traditionary observances and corrupt practices which they exalted about the word of God. To compass sea and land for the former purpose would have been most commendable, for it would have made men better; but for the latter purpose it was deplorable, because it made men worse" (McGarvey, p.198). A proselyte is one who has been convinced to change from one religion to another.
- b. Under the Jewish system of the time, there were two kinds of proselytes: (1) The proselytes of the gate; these were not circumcised and only accepted a part of Judaism; (2) the proselytes of righteousness, who were true converts. This latter case probably included the centurion of Matthew 8:5. But as McGarvey suggested, the proselytes of the passage were probably Jewish converts to Phariseism.
- c. These proselytes were styled by the Lord as twice as bad as their teachers, "because it is the tendency of corrupt systems to make their adherents worse and worse, generation after generation; and also because the proselyte, having, as a general rule, less knowledge of the law than his teacher, was under less restraint from that source, and was more completely devoted to the traditions of the sect" (ibid.).
- d. "Child (son) of hell" refers to one who is worthy of eternal punishment. These new converts were taught opinions and commandments of men, not the word of God; because they disregarded the truth they would be lost eternally, as would their teachers and students.
- e. "We who stand for the truth and nothing but the truth know that truth is often times very narrow. The way to heaven is very narrow (Matt. 7:13,14). We also know that the very kindest way in which we handle truth is often a real shock to those who hear it for the first time. If they are wrong, truth and its acceptance means a complete revolution of their lives. It means turning their backs on everything they have been previously taught, sometimes on their closest relatives and friends. We must handle the precious truth with the greatest of kindness and humility" (Foy L. Smith, *Book of Matthew*, p.589).
5. Verses 16-22: "Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."
- a. **The Fourth Woe.** Here the Lord describes them as blind guides. One who is blind himself is hardly able to lead another blind person:
- 1) Matthew 15:14: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."
 - 2) Isaiah 9:16: "For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed."
 - 3) Isaiah 56:10: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber."
 - 4) Jeremiah 23:10: "For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right."

- b. One instance of their blindness was in trying to exalt the gold of the temple over the temple itself. Their idea was that if they swore by the temple, the vow was not binding; if they swore by the gold of the temple, "he is a debtor" (is obligated to perform the vow).
- 1) "It is grievous enough that men should be encouraged to think that there are two kinds of *truth*, one of which is important, and the other not; viz, that which is sworn to, and that which is stated without an oath. That leads men to think that unless they take an oath, they may tell lies with little or no blame. But to tell men that, even when they have sworn, they are not bound to tell the truth or abide by the promise, *unless their oath is taken in a certain way*, is far worse, and far more destructive of men's sense of honor and love of truthfulness" (Alfred Plummer, *Commentary on Matthew*, London, Elliot Stock, 1909, p.318; quoted by Coffman, p.369).
 - 2) The Bible teaches that all lying is wrong (Rev. 21:8); that we are not to swear (Matt. 5:33-37); that we must perform our vows (Eccl. 5:4-5). Their distinction between the gold and temple was misguided; it was the temple which sanctified the gold, and not the reverse.
- c. Another misguided distinction was their attempts to exalt the sacrifice above the altar upon which it was offered. They thought that if they swore by the altar the oath was not binding, but if they swore by the gift, it was binding. "This doctrine was as foolish as that of swearing by the gold upon the temple. The great altar of burnt offerings stood before the porch of the temple. (2 Chron. 5:1; Matt. 5:23.) The altar was a place of great veneration, since it was the instrument by which the great idea of sacrifice was preserved" (Boles, pp.448f).
- d. The Lord calls them "fools and blind" because of their misguided attempts to justify their violation of oaths. It was the height of foolish thinking to say that one could swear by the altar and not include the sacrifice on it; likewise with the notion that one could swear by the temple and not by him whose dwelling place is the temple (figurative); likewise with the idea that one could swear by heaven and its great throne, and not by him who occupies that throne.
- e. Very properly and accurately did the Lord describe these men as blind guides, fools and blind. His strong words prove their wickedness; he was warning them of their errors, seeking their salvation (vs. 37); he was also warning future generations that these religious hypocrites did not reject him because he was an impostor, but because they were steeped in sin and error.
6. Verses 23-24: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."
- a. **The Fifth Woe.** The Lord shows their hypocrisy and inconsistency by pointing out their exaltation of small things over weightier matters of the Law of Moses.
 - b. "The articles here mentioned, mint, anise, and cummin, were garden herbs grown in small quantities and used chiefly for flavoring. To pay tithes of these was to be scrupulous to the last farthing, for the tithe was scarcely worth the trouble of removing it from the garden" (McGarvey, p.199). Mint was the herb known to us by the same name. Anise is commonly known to us as dill. Cummin is a plant similar to what we call fennel. They were of little value.
 - c. A tithe was the tenth part. They were required to pay a tenth part of their property for the support of the system. This went especially to the priests and Levites (Num. 18:20-24). If a Jew lived a great distance from Jerusalem he was allowed to convert the property to money and give it in that form (Deut. 14:24-29). The Lord did not forbid their giving tithes of these small, insignificant herbs.
 - d. His criticism of them was in their omission of weightier matters—Judgment, Mercy, and Faith.
 - 1) Judgment—treating their fellowman with justice. This was required of the Israelites (Ps. 82:3; Mic. 6:8). They perverted justice to their own ends, as they were about to do in the case of Jesus.
 - 2) Mercy— forbearance, kindness, and compassion toward others. "These wicked religionists would ignore a sick person, a leper, an outcast; but they were very diligent in taking a tithe of their garden herbs and walking away with a mark of piety and self-satisfaction on their hypocritical faces" (Smith, *Book of Matthew*, pp.592f). (Cf. Matt. 5:7; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12).
 - 3) The third weighty matter is faith. Faith is both the belief of the truth and the habitual manifestation of that belief in the life of the individual (McGarvey). Without faith it is impossible to please God

- (Heb. 11:6). It was not wrong for them to pay tithes of these three common herbs, but they ought to have given greater priority to justice, mercy, and faith.
- e. Calling them blind guides again, he stated that they "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." This may have been a proverb then, as now. As stated in the KJV, the Lord is saying they have great difficulty in swallowing a gnat, but can swallow a camel with no difficulty.
 - 1) The Arabs are said to have had a similar proverb: "He swallowed an elephant, but was strangled by a flea." The Greek word translated "strain," is said however to refer to the action of pouring the liquid through a cloth or sieve in order to remove unwanted objects, such as straining wine to eliminate any gnats that may have gotten into it. Thus, the reading in the ASV is, "Strain out the gnat..."
 - 2) In either case, the application is the same. They would pay the tithes in the minutest of items, but would pervert justice, show no mercy, and ignore what God said. They would connive to bring about the crucifixion of Christ, but would not enter into Pilate's house lest they should be defiled (John 18:28). They were well ready to stone Stephen for telling them an unpopular truth, but would not step on a grave.
7. Verses 25-26: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."
- a. **The Sixth Woe.** This woe "is pronounced upon moral hypocrisy, in which men will show a fair exterior of conduct, while they are secretly practicing the most abominable wickedness. Two forms of such hypocrisy are mentioned here by Jesus; they are the secret commercial dishonesties and secret licentiousness. In describing this practice Jesus said, 'For ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess'" (Boles, p.451).
 - b. "The reference is to their traditionary ablutions, such as had caused them to find fault with him when his disciples ate bread with unwashed hands. (See 15:2; Mark 7:3,4,8.) Their conduct is satirized by comparing it to that of a woman who would carefully cleanse the outside of a cup or plate, and leave the inside unclean; but when he comes to speak of the inside he passes from the figure to the reality, and says, 'within they are full of extortion and excess'" (McGarvey, p.200).
 - c. "They robbed widows and orphans, dealt deceitfully, defrauded in money-changing, and violated wholesale the great moral precepts of the Law; in a genuine moral sense, therefore, their food was contaminated with extortion and excess....Christ did not condemn outward cleanliness, nor even the washing of cups and platters, but made such things secondary" (Coffman, p.371).
 - d. Extortion is the wresting away from the rightful owner property which the extortioner covets for himself. Excess denotes want of strength, hence, want of self-control, incontinence (Vine, p.57). (Cf. 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Tim. 3:3)
 - e. "If one will first cleanse the heart, then all the life will soon be pure and pious; the heart has in it the issues of life. (Prov. 4:23.) The Lord's people should not reverse this law, and hope to reform men by cleansing the outside appearance" (Boles, p.452).
 - 1) Jeremiah 4:14: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"
 - 2) Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
 - 3) Romans 6:17-18: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:22: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."
 - 5) Job 8:13: "So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish."
8. Verses 27-28: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."
- a. **The Seventh Woe.** "Jesus still has his eye on the wickedness of their hearts, but he now contrasts it, not with their care about tithing, nor with their legal cleanliness, but with their pretense of

- righteousness. While they maintained such outward conduct as gave them great credit with the people, like the beautifully whited sepulchres which were 'full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness,' they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (McGarvey, p.200).
- b. "It was a custom there to whitewash the sepulchres, which would be noticed by all; it is like our modern custom of keeping flowers or grass on the graves of loved ones. The graves are beautifully kept and adorned with costly monuments, but within they contain the decomposed bodies and foul odors arising from the decomposition. A sepulchre, or a corpse, was considered by the Jews unclean. (Num. 19:16.) The Pharisees went so far as to mark with lime or chalk the ground under which the sepulchral cave extended. How awful a figure to show the condition of these hypocrites" (Boles, p.452).
 - c. "The implications in such a comparison by the Lord are profound. The Pharisees, with all their pomp and glamour, earthly glory and prestige, outward beauty and ostentation, were, for all that, actually dead in the eyes of Jesus. They were dead spiritually and morally. Although their inward decay was concealed with an attractive veneer of political and social respectability, it was not hidden from the penetrating knowledge and vision of the Son of God, who knew their hearts" (Coffman, p.372).
 - d. Some early writers suggested that graves were whitewashed so that people might be able to see them and avoid coming into contact with them, thus to remain ceremonially clean (Num. 19:16). Others say that they whitewashed the tombs of important people.
9. Verses 29-33: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*"
- a. **The Eighth Woe.** "It has been well said that evil people can honor the names of God's servants after they are gone, for they are no longer present to torment them with the truth! For example, the Roman system claims to honor the martyrs and if you go through some of the catacombs in Rome they will tell you all about how their people suffered during the dark ages" (Smith, *Book of Matthew*, p.597).
 - b. These Pharisees and scribes claimed to honor the prophets which were rejected and persecuted by their Jewish ancestors. They beautified the tombs of these great men of God, and claimed that they would have treated them better had they lived during that time. It is easier to see the sins of another generation, since we have the perspective of time, but it is difficult for many to see that they are doing the same thing. To read the Old Testament prophets is to see a picture of modern society, in the world and in the church.
 - c. "At that very moment, they were plotting to kill him [Jesus]; and, before the week ended, they would commit a crime against the Lord of Life in a manner so revolting and hateful that all succeeding generations would hold it to be the crime of the ages. Whereas others had slain God's messengers, they would slay his Son!" (Coffman, p.373).
 - d. *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.* These men were not only the physical descendants of those who persecuted the prophets, they also were akin to them in their hatred of God's will.
 - 1) "The accumulating iniquity of the nation is represented as a measure which their fathers had provided and partly filled, and which they were now to fill to the brim" (McGarvey, p.201). See Genesis 15:16.
 - 2) "He would have them act out their true spirit, and show what they were, and evince to all that they had the spirit of their fathers.... This was done by putting him to death, and persecuting the apostles" (Barnes, p.247).
 - 3) "Jesus brings to their attention that they, in doing this, confessed that they were 'sons of them that slew the prophets.' They condemned the cruelty of their ancestors; they honored their tombs; but they cherished the hatred that their fathers had toward the prophets and were seeking to do the same violence against Jesus; in this they condemned themselves. It was easier for them to build and garnish the tombs of the dead prophets than to obey their instructions and accept Jesus as the Messiah" (Boles, pp.453f).
 - 4) "By your slaying me, fill up what is lacking of the iniquity of your fathers till the measure is full;
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till the national iniquity is complete; till as much has been committed as God can peaceably bear, and then shall come upon you all this blood, and you shall be destroyed" (Barnes, p.247).

- e. "This is the most fearful passage in the entire speech....What words could depict a more despicable character? And what sentence pronounced in advance of the final judgment can be compared with this....

1) By the figure of erotesis it is asserted with awful emphasis that for them there was no escape. It is well remarked by Alford that in this, the last public discourse of the Lord, he repeats almost verbatim the denunciation pronounced against these parties by John in the beginning of his ministry, 'thus denoting the unchanged state of these men on whom the whole preaching of repentance had now been expended.'

2) He notes one point of difference, however, that John demanded of them, 'Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' while Jesus demanded, 'How can you *escape*?' (McGarvey, p.201).

C. Matthew 23:34-39: The Lord's Final Pronouncement of Condemnation Against Them.

1. Verse 34: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city."
 - a. Notice that despite the severity of their sinful condition, and the equal but just severity of his denunciation of them, the Lord is giving them another chance. He is going to send to them certain prophets, wise men and scribes. These men are the apostles and other inspired servants of the New Testament system. He used titles and descriptions familiar to his Jewish auditors.
 - b. Many of the Jews heard the gospel beginning on Pentecost day, and became followers of Christ. But many, if not all of the evil men described in the chapter, would remain arrogantly opposed to Jesus. Here the Lord predicts their actions against these new prophets and their co-laborers.
 - c. Some of them they would kill and crucify; some would be scourged in their synagogues; and they would be persecuted from city to city. Acts tells of the death of Stephen and James; the Bible does not tell of any who were crucified, but secular history says Peter was crucified upside down. The Book of Acts and the Epistles relate various persecutions suffered by the apostles and other saints. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the saints from city to city, and received the same treatment from unbelievers after he himself became a Christian and an apostle.
2. Verses 35-36: "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."
 - a. The expression "cannot mean that they would be held responsible for it all; for they could not be responsible for what occurred before they were born. But that course of iniquity which began with the murder of Abel, and which, so far as the Jews were as yet concerned, had terminated with the death of Zechariah, was to reach its final consummation in that generation by the crucifixion of Jesus; and the series of earthly judgments which had been visited on the world on account of such bloodshed, was also to reach its consummation by the unparalleled sufferings attendant upon the siege and destruction of Jerusalem" (McGarvey, pp.201f).
 - b. The identity of this Zecharias is debated, some thinking he is the prophet (Zech. 1:1), others the son of Jehoiada (2 Chr. 24:20-21). Coffman thinks he may have been one killed by that generation ("ye slew"). If he was the one of 2 Chronicles, then Jehoiada was also known as Barachias. The point is that they were going to suffer terribly for their rejection of God's word as delivered by his servants, from the first of them to the last. "This generation" would suffer.
3. Verses 37-38: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."
 - a. "The inimitable tenderness and pathos which breathe through this lamentation, following immediately the burning denunciations of the preceding speech, show plainly that the latter were not instigated by malice. They were judicial utterances wrung from a heart full of longings in behalf of the people denounced" (McGarvey, p.202).
 - b. Their house was the temple. It was formerly called God's house, but they had made it into a den of

thieves. It was to be left to them desolate—uninhabited.

4. Verse 39: "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord."
 - a. Some have mistakenly assumed that this statement means that the Jews would ultimately, as a nation, come to accept Christ, basing their conclusion on Romans 11; but the opposite is the case. Paul shows that the Jews will be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles are—by obeying the gospel.
 - b. Romans 11:26: "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." What does the passage actually teach? First, notice the word **so** (Greek, *houtos*) in both English and Greek is an adverb of manner, and means *in this way (manner)*. In the manner or after the way Paul describes, will the Jews be saved. But what is that way?
 - 1) Paul has previously shown that many of the Jews were lost (3:9,23; 9:1-3; 10:1-3, 16; 11:14,21-23). He has also set forth the only means for their salvation: the gospel of Christ (1:16-17; 10:1-3). The majority of the Jews had rejected the gospel, and continued in condemnation (Rom. 8:1ff; 10:1-3). Since the gospel is God's power to save both Jew and Gentile, and since he is no respecter of persons, it follows that the same conditions required of Gentiles for their salvation are also the requirements for the salvation of Jews (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37; 2:38; 22:16; 10:47-48).
 - 2) The gospel is God's final message to mankind.
 - a) John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." [No other Savior is available; no other Savior is necessary].
 - b) Acts 4:11-12: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." [Only Christ can save us; and his way of salvation is his gospel].
 - c) 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." [Everything necessary to bring any person to spiritual maturity has been given in the gospel].
 - d) 2 Peter 1:3: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." [Everything we could ever need is included in the gospel].
 - e) Jude 3: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." [The gospel was "once-for-all-time given; no other revelation is necessary; no other revelation will be given].
 - f) Revelation 14:6: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." [The gospel is everlasting; it will survive the ages].
 - 3) If any Jews are to be saved during the Gospel Age, it will have to be by the gospel! When the Lord returns, there will not be any time or occasion or opportunity for anyone to be saved then; it will be too late for that! Therefore, if any Jew is to be saved, it will be because he obeyed the gospel of Christ in this life prior to the Lord's second advent. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:26-28).
 - 4) Paul's point in this verse is simple: In this manner of obeying the gospel will all Israel be saved, if they are to be saved at all. There is no other method by which they can be saved. If any of them are to be saved, it will be in the same manner by which the Gentiles were saved, and that was by obeying the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3, 13-18; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).
 - 5) This passage simply teaches that the next time they would see Jesus, they would make the

statement he mentioned. That will be when he comes again, and for those who died in unbelief, it will be too late to change. There will be no unbelievers on that day; then they will cry out for mercy, proclaiming their faith in him, but it will be too late! (Rom. 14:10-12; Phil. 2:10-11; Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31ff).

MATTHEW 24

A. Introduction.

1. Matthew 24 is one of the most abused, misused and misunderstood chapters in the Bible. It is largely predictive in nature and spectacular events are discussed. It is a fertile field for those who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16).
 - a. Speculators claim it gives signs of the end of time, and assert that the end is now nigh. But if the passage gives any evidence of the end, why did Jesus say he did not know when that time would be (Mark 13:32-33)? It is argued that only the day and hour of his return is unknown. That implies that one can learn the week, month, year, decade, century, and millennium. But these sensationalists will not commit themselves to any definite time. In Mark 13:32, the Lord said only the Father knew that "day and hour." In verse 33 he warned that his followers must take heed "for ye know not when the *time* is." It is impossible for us to know when the Lord will return; we cannot learn the hour, the day, or the time! Since Christ did not know when his second coming would be, it is certain that the Bible does not reveal that information, unless we are ready to assert that the Lord did not know his own revelation!
 - b. The contents of the chapter are twisted to fit the millennial theories, with no regard being shown the context.
 - c. Certain songs reflect and further enhance a misunderstanding of the chapter among our own brethren: "Jesus is Coming Soon," especially the second verse.
 2. A careful verse-by-verse study is necessary if we are to understand the chapter. We must use the recognized rules of Biblical interpretation. We must start without any preconceived ideas.
 3. Some suggestions to keep in mind which will help us to understand the chapter.
 - a. Mark 13 and Luke 21 should be consulted for additional information, for they also contain some of the same information given in Matthew 24.
 - b. Jesus answers more than one question in the reply he gave the apostles.
 - c. The Lord gave definite signs with which the nearing end of Jerusalem could be known in time for the Christians to flee to safety.
 - d. The full context of verses 1-35 needs to be kept in mind, and the contrast between this section of the chapter and the section beginning with verse 36, should be noted.
 - e. Verse 34's statement regarding "this generation" must be emphasized, taking into consideration the contrasting statement given in verse 36.
 4. Matthew 24 and 25 culminate a series of prophecies directed against the Jewish nation.
 - a. Matthew 3:7-10: John denounces the religious leaders and asks who warned them to flee from the wrath to come. He states that the ax was lying at the root of the tree, preparatory to being used to fell the tree. The tree is figurative, representing the sinful nation of Israel. Matthew 24 gives more specific information on its overthrow.
 - b. Matthew 8:10-12: The Roman soldier's faith is commended, but the faith of the Jews is disparaged, and they are to be rejected.
 - c. John 4:21: Jerusalem was soon to cease to be the proper place for true worshipers to praise God. This implies the removal of the Jewish system. Under Christ there is no special or holy place for the worship of God.
 - d. Luke 13:6-9: The story of the barren fig tree was given to represent the removal of fleshly Israel as God's special people. As the fig tree was slain, so Israel would be replaced as God's people by all those who would become followers of Christ.
 - e. Matthew 21:28-32, 33-46: In the parable of the two sons, the first son represents those in the Jewish nation who had gone into sin, but repented; the second son stood for the rebellious majority among the Jews who refused to repent. The parable of the household shows that the Jews would be removed as custodians of God's spiritual vineyard and it would be given to others.
 - f. Matthew 22: Christ debated with the various sects of the Jews, answered their deceitful questions, exposed their errors, and put them to silence.
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- g. Matthew 23: The Lord gave a scathing denunciation of the religious leaders in which he summed up their many crimes, and pronounced a severe punishment on them (verses 33,36).
- h. Matthew 23:37-39: Christ lamented the unwillingness of Jerusalem to repent. He charged them with having killed the prophets, in the persons of their forebears. He had already shown that they had the same condition of heart which those in previous times had had when they rejected and slew God's prophets, and these were now readying themselves to slay God's Son! They were just as wicked, if not more so since they had greater information, as their evil forefathers.
- 1) Jesus had come with a mission of mercy, inviting the sinful Jews to come under his wing of protection and blessing. The great majority of them utterly rejected his offer. As a result, Christ said their house (the temple) was left unto them desolate (deserted by God, and soon to be destroyed). It was no longer God's house (I Kings 5:1-5), but theirs.
 - 2) In Matthew 21:13, he called it God's house, but now God would forsake it. In a few years it was to be destroyed, and in its place a Moslem mosque (the Dome of the Rock) has been erected and has stood there for about 13 centuries. The Jewish temple was the center of the whole economy of Judaism, and without it the system was null and void.
- B. Matthew 24:1-3: When Jesus left the Temple, his Disciples asked him some Questions.
1. Verse 1: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to show him the buildings of the temple."
 - a. After his concluding public discourse presented in the previous chapter, the Lord departed from the temple, never to enter it again. His disciples sought to impress him with the grandeur of this great edifice. It had required 46 years to erect (John 2:20). The reconstructed temple erected by Zerubbabel was still standing when Herod the Great came to power in Palestine under the auspices of Rome.
 - b. "He tore away the old little by little and lavishly embellished each of the new parts. Work on it continued long after Herod's death. In fact work was still being done on it at the time of the Olivet Discourse and would continue for some years thereafter. Jesus and the surveying disciples might well have observed temple workers on the job as this dynamic discourse of Matthew 24 departed the Master's lips" (Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *Book of Matthew*, p.613).
 2. Verse 2: "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
 - a. The Lord's terse and frightful reply was that every one of these great stones comprising the temple buildings would be thrown down. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:43-44). These buildings are said to have been very impressive, and the stones massive in size, the base stones measuring about 37 feet in length, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high (Boles, p.457).
 - b. The Rabbis asserted, "He who has not seen the temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building" (Coffman, p.381). Josephus described it as appearing from a distance like a mountain covered with snow, "the ungilded parts being exceedingly white. The golden facade reflected the rising sun with fiery splendor" (ibid.).
 3. Verse 3: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"
 - a. Christ's reply was astonishing to the disciples. When they arrived in the Mount of Olives, and after he had seated himself, some of the disciples approached him with certain troubling questions. Mark identifies the disciples as Peter, James, John, and Andrew (13:3).
 - b. "Their question is twofold, having reference first to the time, and secondly to the sign by which they might know that the event was near. He had said nothing about his own coming or the end of the world, but they inferred from the strength of the temple walls that the time when all these stones would be thrown down could not be sooner than the end of the world and the second coming of the Son of man. So much of this inference as was incorrect he corrected in the course of his answer: for he makes a very clear distinction, as we will see, between the time of his final coming and that of the destruction of the temple" (McGarvey, p.204).
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- c. The parallel accounts (Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7) indicate they were thinking of one great event: the end of the world. That they were wrong in this assumption is seen in the fact that the Lord replied to their questions by discussing two great events: the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world.
 - d. Matthew's account gives three questions: When will the temple be destroyed? What sign will forewarn of your return? And what sign will signal the end of the world? Jesus' reply answers two questions: When will these things (the temple's destruction) be? And, what sign do you give for your return (and the resultant end of the world)? He answers the first of these two in verses 4-35, and the second beginning in verse 36 and continuing through chapter 25.
4. The New Testament identifies several "comings" of Christ, with only two of them being literal.
- a. His first literal coming was when he was born of the virgin Mary (Gal. 4:4); the second will be his coming at the end of time (1 Thess. 4:16; Heb. 9:28).
 - b. There are three figurative, or representative, comings:
 - 1) On Pentecost day when he set up his church (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).
 - 2) In human experiences (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:20).
 - 3) When Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. (Mt. 24:30; 26:64; Zech. 14:1ff; Jas.5:8).
5. Further information important to the study of the chapter:
- a. The Lord answered their questions by discussing:
 - 1) Two comings: one in the destruction of Jerusalem; the other at the end of time.
 - 2) Two ends: that of Jerusalem and of the world.
 - 3) Two worlds: the end of the Jewish world and of the material universe.
 - b. There is a very significant phrase in the context: "All these things" (Matthew 23:36; 24:2, 3, 6, 8, 33, 34). In each case, the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem (the entire system of Judaism) is meant.
- C. Matthew 24:4-14: General Signs are given of the Approaching End of Jerusalem.
1. Verses 4-5: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."
- a. The Lord cautioned against any of them being deceived by the claims of false "messiahs." Acts 8:9-11 describes Simon the Sorcerer as one who claimed to have some special greatness, and with his enchantments and tricks he convinced many people into thinking he was "the great power of God." Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived during the first century and witnessed the overthrow of Jerusalem, describes several men who claimed to be "christs" and deceived many of the Jews during the turbulent weeks prior to the fall of the city.
 - b. Other uninspired writers of the ancient past also spoke of these men, these scholars including Justin, Jerome, Irenaeus, and Origen. At the very outset of the Lord's statement he warned against their being deceived. If this deception was not hazardous to the soul, he would not have issued the warning. The Lord did not teach or accept any foolish theory such as the "impossibility of apostasy."
2. Verses 6-8: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows."
- a. The forty years (about) between the time Jesus uttered these words until the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. were filled with warfare and rumors of wars; there were also famines, pestilences and earthquakes. These were all general signs, for such events have pertained to many periods of human history. They are put before the disciples as fairly common occurrences but which would be present prior to the "end" he is discussing in this part of the chapter. When they saw these signs, the end would not be immediately forthcoming; this end would occur only after the details of verse 14 were fulfilled.
 - b. It is significant that peace prevailed in the Roman Empire at the time the Lord spoke these words. But this peace would not be long-lived. The wars Jesus mentioned involved first century kingdoms, not nations of our own twentieth century. "Between Olivet's discourse and Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70 smaller nations warred against Rome. Jewish wars in that period cost numerous lives. In just one battle against the Syrians 50,000 Jews were killed. These were decades filled with wars and war
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- rumors" (Taylor, *ibid.*, p.615). Another 20,000 Jews were slain at Caesarea.
- c. "Not wars in distant nations, but wars particularly affecting the Jews, as appears from the warning, 'see that ye be not troubled' (verse 6), and from the fact that the coming trouble of the Jews was the subject of discourse. The nations and kingdoms which were to rise up against each other were those whose military movements would affect the peace of Judea" (McGarvey, pp.204f). History shows that three threats of war were made against the Jews by three Roman emperors; three uprisings of Gentiles against the Jews are reported (*ibid.*).
 - d. A severe famine is named in Acts 11:27-30, which occurred during the days of Claudius Caesar who died in 54 A.D. "One writer claimed it was the greatest the world had known up to that time" (Taylor, p.616). This famine is mentioned by Suetonius and Tacitus (Roman historians, unbelievers), and Eusebius. Josephus says that the famine was so severe in Jerusalem that many people starved to death. Four times during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) famines occurred in Rome, Palestine, and Greece (see Barnes, p.252).
 - e. Several great earthquakes are reported for that time period by ancient writers. "Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome, and says that in the reign of Nero the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse were overthrown, and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed and almost destroyed by an earthquake...Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, and Samos" (Barnes, p.252). Josephus described in detail an earthquake in Judea during this same time frame.
 - f. The Lord said pestilences would occur. Epidemic diseases often follow earthquakes. Josephus speaks of a pestilence afflicted Babylonia in 40 A.D. (*Antiq.* 18. 9,8). And Tacitus describes one that took place in Italy in 66 A.D. One pestilence in Rome resulted in 30,000 deaths.
 - g. These awful tragedies would not be the end itself, but merely the beginning of sorrows. Worse things were yet to come!
3. Verse 9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."
 - a. Persecution would be brought to bear on the saints. Some of them would be slain, and they all would be hated by the general population of the world. Some of these persecutions are named in Acts 4 (Peter and John), Acts 5 (the twelve), Acts 7 (Stephen), Acts 12 (James is slain and Peter is imprisoned), Acts 8 (the whole church was scattered).
 - 1) 1 Peter 4:16-19: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 4:8-11: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 11:24-27: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."
 - b. Tacitus says the Christians were "a class of men hated on account of their crimes" (McGarvey, p.205).
 4. Verse 10: "And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."
 - a. Many of the saints would stumble, some would betray others, and some would hate the others. Luke 21:16 says that they would be betrayed by parents, brethren, kinsmen, and friends.
 - b. For instances of Christians falling away, see the following:
 - 1) 2 Timothy 1:15: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of

- whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”
- 2) Acts 20:29: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”
 - 3) Romans 16:17-18: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
 - 4) 2 Timothy 4:10: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.”
 - 5) 2 Timothy 4:16: “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.”
 - 6) 1 Timothy 1:19-20: “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”
5. Verse 11: "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."
- a. Many false teachers would arise. There has probably never been a time in which there were so many false teachers as our own time.
 - b. But the New Testament shows many cases of this in that time:
 - 1) 1 John 4:1: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”
 - 2) 2 Peter 2:1: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”
 - 3) 2 Timothy 3:13: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”
 - 4) Jude 4-8: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”
 - 5) 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”
 - 6) Galatians 1:7-9: “Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
 - 7) 2 Timothy 2:17-18: “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”
 - 8) Titus 1:10-11: “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.”
6. Verse 12: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."
- a. Iniquity means "lawlessness, unrighteousness" (Vine, p.260). When iniquity abounds, the love of many grows cold—people are influenced away from their love of God. The song "Jesus is Coming
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- Soon" twists this passage to fit the time just before the coming of Christ, and thus promotes one of the greatest errors of modern times—premillennialism. Since the Lord later taught that there will be no signs warning of the approaching end of time, then this passage could not have application to then; if it did, we would have a sign of the Lord's coming (verses 36-44).
- b. "It is the universal experience of the Church, that when iniquity abounds the love of many grows cold; and it is also true that under such circumstances the love of some grows warmer, thus reserving and concentrating a sufficient amount of warmth to produce a reaction by and by, and to save the body from utter destruction" (McGarvey, p.206). In our day, sin has infiltrated the church, and error has also afflicted many of our members; the result is many others have become confused, discouraged and weak, and some have given up their faith.
7. Verse 13: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."
- a. The "end" the Lord is speaking of in this section of the chapter is limited by the statement in verse 34 to "this generation." While it is true that a Christian must endure to the end of his life if he expects to go to heaven (Rev. 2:10; Matt. 10:22), this is not the "end" being discussed in this setting. It is the end of the Jewish system, for this is the subject he is discussing.
 - b. The salvation is the preservation of their physical lives (cf. verses 15-20; Luke 21:18-24). The end the Lord is contemplating is connected to the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world; it will come only after that great effort has been completed.
 - c. "The persecutions that shall come—unto the end; to the destruction of the Jewish polity, without growing cold or apostatizing—shall be saved, shall be delivered in all imminent dangers, and have his soul at last brought to an eternal glory.
 - 1) "It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus invested the city; and, had he persevered in the siege, he would soon have rendered himself master of it; but, when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, the Christians took that opportunity to escape....
 - 2) "This counsel was remembered and wisely followed by the Christians afterward. Eusebius and Epiphanius say, that at this juncture, after Cestius Gallus had raised the siege, and Vespasian was approaching with his army, all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the river Jordan; and so they all marvelously escaped the general shipwreck of their country: not one of them perished" (Adam Clark, Comments on Matthew 24).
 - d. "But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.
 - 1) "But the number of calamities which everywhere fell upon the nation at that time; the extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea were especially subjected, the thousands of men, as well as women and children, that perished by the sword, by famine, and by other forms of death innumerable,—all these things, as well as the many great sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, and the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety,
 - 2) "[A]nd finally the general course of the whole war, as well as its particular occurrences in detail, and how at last the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets, stood in the very temple of God, so celebrated of old, the temple which was now awaiting its total and final destruction by fire,— all these things any one that wishes may find accurately described in the history written by Josephus." [Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Volume 1, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.].
8. Verse 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."
- a. During the almost forty years from the time of this discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, the apostles and other faithful saints had been busy proclaiming the gospel in their world. Romans 1:8
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speaks of the faith of the Romans saints as having been spoken of "throughout the whole world." Romans 10:18 describes the fact that the sound of gospel preaching "went into all the earth."

- b. Colossians 1:5-6 says that the gospel had been taken into all the earth (cf. Mark 16:15). Colossians 1:23 declares that the gospel had been "preached to every creature which is under heaven." The book of Romans was written about 56-58 A.D. and Colossians was written about 62 A.D.
 - c. The condition of verse 14 was fulfilled prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. About seven or eight years before the end, the condition had been met. This is not something which still lies in the future from our day; it has already been fulfilled.
9. Each of the foregoing signs was present prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. These general signs would presage the destruction of Jerusalem. It is perfectly logical and in full harmony with the text to say that these signs are past, and never were intended to refer to our day or to some day future to our time. This is in keeping with the context and is the only tenable position to take in view of Matthew 24:34-35: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
- a. These signs are generic, and could be misleading because wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are fairly common occurrences. Hence, the words of caution given in several of the preceding verses regarding the possibility of their being deceived. The Lord next gives a specific sign which would be certain, and easily recognized. This would be the real sign for them in knowing the time to flee.
 - b. The end under consideration is not identical with the wars, rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, or earthquakes; it is not identical with the troublesome persecutions the saints would face; they would be able to endure these several difficulties; salvation is promised to those who endure to this "end."
 - c. The end would come after the gospel had been preached in the whole world. Having discussed the generic signs, he next turns to the sign which was specific and which was not apt to be misunderstood or which they would fail to see.

D. Matthew 24:15: The Abomination of Desolation.

1. Verse 15: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." "When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand)" (ASV).
2. Notice that Jesus did not say, "Daniel said," but reported what was spoken "through" Daniel the prophet (ASV). Parallel records of the Lord's statement are found in Mark 13:14-20 and Luke 21:20-24. "This abomination cannot refer to something happening today or soon to transpire. Yet one of the most prominent preachers in the world today, Billy Graham, suggested in 1969, that the defilement of the holy place is certainly one of the sure signs of Jesus' second coming. He listed nine other things which will herald the Lord's second coming, and all ten of the Graham indicators are taken from Jesus' description of Jerusalem's fall and the temple's demolition in A.D. 70" (Taylor, *ibid.*, p.618).
3. Daniel spoke of this abomination of desolation: See Daniel 9:24-27.
 - a. "God, through Gabriel, told Daniel: 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city.' The 70 weeks are divided into 3 sections: 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. The 70 weeks were determined with a view to six things: (1) to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint or consecrate the Holy of Holies. "These six things obviously relate to the Christ—His being, His mission, and His church.
 - b. "He came to deal with the problem of sin, to make possible God's plan for man's righteousness, to establish His church. The 70 weeks would bring to a completion the development of the Scheme of Redemption. Likely, the 'anointing of the Holy of Holies' refers to the establishment of the church. The 7 weeks span the time from the decree of Cyrus to the end of Nehemiah's work. The 62 weeks span the time from the end of Nehemiah's work to the coming of the Messiah. The 1 week clearly is the personal ministry of the Christ. The 62 weeks come after the 7 weeks, and the 1 week comes after the 62 weeks (thus, after 69 weeks).
 - c. "During the final week the Messiah would confirm the covenant with many. In the midst of the week He would cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. In the midst of the week the Messiah would

- be cut off. In this connection the prophecy stresses that '...the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined' (v. 26).
- d. "The Record further says, '...and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate' (ASV, v. 27). It should be pointed out that the prophecy does not say that the city would be destroyed within the span of the one week. Rather, it says that within that week the destruction of the city was determined. One could hardly read verses 26 and 27 without recalling our Lord's words: 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate' (Mt. 23:38)" (Deaver, **Biblical Notes**, June, 1977, pp.24f).
4. That Daniel's prophecy pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is undeniable in view of the Lord's divine interpretation. Further evidence is seen from Luke's inspired description of this same statement:
 - a. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains...for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon **this** people" (Luke 21:20-23).
 - b. Add to this the uninspired comment by Josephus, the Hebrew historian: "In this very same manner Daniel also wrote concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them" (Book X, Chap. XI,7, p.227).
 - c. These facts, taken together with the context of Matthew 24:15, show conclusively that the "abomination of desolation" was experienced when the Roman army surrounded the city of Jerusalem for the purpose of conquering it with force.
 5. "The armies referred to [Luke 21:20] are unquestionably the Roman armies which finally besieged and destroyed the city. They are called the abomination of desolation because, being heathen armies, they were an abomination to the Jews, and because they brought desolation on the country. The 'holy place' in which they were to stand is the holy territory round about the holy city" (McGarvey, p.207).
 - a. The Romans worshiped the ensigns they carried before their armies. All Gentile idols and objects of worship were considered abominable by the Jewish people (Jer. 4:1; 2 Kings 23:13; I Kings 11:5,7). When these ensigns of idolatry were seen by the Jewish Christians, the next verses tell them to flee from Jerusalem. Perhaps most of them would be able to escape when the Roman army was first sighted; but historians record that the Roman army withdrew for a spell, and that during this break in the siege, the remainder of the Christians escaped. The escape was possible in either case only because of the Lord's forewarning given here.
 - b. In Daniel 9:24-27 and 11:31, predictions concerning the cessation of the daily sacrifice and oblation, and the pollution of the sanctuary, are connected with the abomination; and this is connected with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in A.D. 70. The sacrifices legally ended at the cross (Col. 2:14); they literally ended when the temple was destroyed, many of the Jews were slaughtered, many others taken as captives, and the rest of them dispersed—in A.D. 70.
 - 1) Daniel 9:24-27: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."
 - 2) Daniel 11:31: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate."
 - c. Josephus gives an added detail to the pollution of the sanctuary: "And now the Romans...upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings laying round about it, brought their ensigns

to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy" (Wars, Book VI, Chap. VI,1, p.583).

- d. Inspiration inserted a word of caution: "Whoso readeth, let him understand." Thus a warning against being deceived is issued. We are to be careful about jumping to a wrong conclusion regarding Daniel's prophecy and the New Testament's interpretation.

1) We must examine all the evidence given, and take the natural meaning in the light of the clear New Testament information provided, taking into consideration also the historical facts relating to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

2) "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

6. The millennial view requires the restoration of the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, the return of Old Testament priesthood and worship, etc. But John 4:21 says that under Christ's system, the place of worship would no longer be in Jerusalem, and the book of Hebrews shows that the Old Testament system ended forever!

E. Matthew 24:16-22: His Followers were to Flee when the Abomination of Desolation Appeared.

1. The abomination of desolation is described in such vivid detail that it would be clearly recognized when it appeared: The approach of the Roman army (Luke 21:20-24). The information which follows would be useful only if the saints quickly recognized the sign the Lord had just given. Having previously discussed some general signs which would be before "the end" being described, he has now given the disciples a practical sign which would signal the destruction of the temple. This sign (vs. 15) is not a universal sign, but one which would only be locally observable. If reference is to the second coming and end of the world, there would be no need for the flight commanded.
 2. Verse 16: "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains."
 - a. This command never applied to anyone who did not live in Judea; it was limited to a particular place, people, occasion, and time. The Christians in and around Jerusalem were to flee to the mountains, since there they would find greatest safety from the invading Roman army.
 - b. Millennialism ignores these verses. These statements (verses 16-22) simply will not fit into the millennial theory! At the Lord's return, the saints will rise to meet him in the air (1 Th. 4:16-17). There will be no need, no time, and no way for anyone to flee to the mountains at **that** end. The mountains had many caves in which to take shelter, and passing through the mountains, escape to other regions could be effected.
 3. Verse 17: "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house."
 - a. The houses of Palestine were so-constructed that one could walk on the roofs, and even from roof to roof. The roof was a place where one could take advantage of the evening breezes during the summer, and have the sun's warmth during the colder times. If one was on the roof when the Roman army appeared, he was not to take the time to enter his house to get clothing or provisions; he would not have sufficient time. He could escape from the city by walking from roof to roof, at least for a distance, thus avoiding the jammed streets and turmoil below.
 - b. He must trust the Lord for the necessities of life as the journey was made. Modern houses are not constructed as in that day; the situation does not fit our time.
 4. Verse 18: "Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."
 - a. Those addressed are the Lord's people. If the "rapture" theory were true (and it is not true), they would not need to go back to their houses for clothes. There would be no reason for them to flee. They would suddenly be whisked away from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. If this is the end of time, there would be no need to flee for there would be no place to go (2 Pet. 3:10).
 - b. This passage is describing a local event, directly affecting only those who lived in Judea when the Roman army approached to lay siege to the city. There is no such thing as the "rapture" taught in the
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- Scriptures! Farmers of that time would take to the fields only such clothing as were necessary. If the Romans came while they were working their crops, they were to quickly leave the area, trusting God to provide for their necessities, for they would not have time to go home and make proper preparations.
5. Verses 19-20: "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day."
 - a. They were to pray that the day of their flight would be on a weekday and in a time of good weather. The flight would be difficult for those who had small children and women who were pregnant. If they had to flee during winter time, greater hardships would be met, and difficulties in travel would be experienced due to cold and rain. If it were on the Sabbath, they would have difficulty escaping Jerusalem, for the gates of the city were closed on those occasions.
 - b. The Jews could even be expected to offer hindrance to their escape since they still enforced the rules limiting travel on the Sabbath. This detail shows that the time period involved was when the Sabbath would have been a problem for the Christians. Sabbath keeping was officially removed when Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 7:1-7).
 - c. Today, even those who claim to observe the Sabbath do not enforce it on others and even they do not observe the limitations which were followed by the ancient Jews. A Sabbath day's journey was only about a half mile. This detail removes the event described from our day, and places it in the first century. See Nehemiah 13:19. At least part of their prayers was answered for the city fell during the summer (September). The siege began when many Jews were attending the feasts.
 6. We are told that all the Christians escaped from Jerusalem, fleeing to Pella, which was about 100 miles away. When the Romans temporarily withdrew, the rest of the saints were able to escape. The Romans returned, laid siege to the city from April to about September, when the city fell. The Lord had promised in Luke 21:18 that the saints would be preserved, provided they followed his directions: "But there shall not an hair of your head perish."
 7. Verse 21: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."
 - a. Parallel passages:
 - 1) Mark 13:19: "For *in* those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be."
 - 2) Luke 21:23-24: "But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."
 - b. Notice that the time when this great tribulation was to be is the same as when the abomination of desolation came and when the saints were to flee from Judea and Jerusalem. We know that this great tribulation is not something that is to occur at the end of time because of the information preceding its mention and by the limiting statement of verse 34. There is no reason for taking the statement of verse 21 as a figure of speech. Jesus said plainly that the suffering of that period of time was unparalleled in history. It had greater suffering than that which was experienced during Noah's flood (those people died quickly, in a relatively painless way); it was greater than when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (their death was not preceded with any long period of agony); it was greater than the suffering felt by those who died in either of the Atomic explosions in Japan (for those mostly died instantly).
 - c. In fact, when Josephus' record is consulted, we have much reason to understand it literally. Josephus gave the following reports:
 - 1) 1,100,000 Jews died at Jerusalem during the siege and fighting, and another 97,000 were captured and placed in slavery. How foolish the Jewish bravado of Matthew 27:25: "His blood be on up, and on our children."
 - 2) Women ate their own babies, men broke into houses and stole food from children's mouths, and neighbor robbed neighbor for the food they had.
 - 3) Rich Jews swallowed gold, deserted to the Romans, hoping to get away with some of their wealth. When the soldiers discovered the scheme, they began killing those who surrendered, ripping open

their bodies in search of the coins. Thousands died in this fashion, two thousand in only one night.

- 4) Many were beaten and tortured by the Roman soldiers; thousands were crucified in various bodily positions as jests. This was done until all of the wood had been used as crosses, and even places to erect crosses were filled!
 - 5) By actual count, 115,880 bodies were carried through one gate in three months; there were 600,000 in all thus disposed of. When the bodies could no longer be thrown outside the city, they were stored in large houses within the city.
 - 6) Thousands of the captives were later forced to fight beasts and each other in arenas; this for the enjoyment of spectators.
 - 7) Jerusalem was overthrown and the temple was utterly destroyed; Matthew 24:2 was literally fulfilled. When the Romans broke into the city, Josephus said, "...They slew whomsoever they found, without distinction, and burned the houses and all the people who had fled into them; and when they entered for the sake of plunder, they found whole families of dead persons, and houses full of carcasses destroyed by famine, then they came out with their hands empty. And though they thus pitied the dead, they had not the same emotion for the living, but killed all they met, whereby they filled the lanes with dead bodies. The whole city ran with blood, insomuch that many things which were burning were extinguished by the blood" (Wars, Book VI, chap. 8,5; chap. 9,3). He also reports that the city fell to the Romans on the same calendar day that it had fallen to Nebuchadnezzar in 606 B.C.
8. Verse 22: "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."
- a. God mercifully shortened the tribulation.
 - 1) 1 Peter 4:15-19: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."
 - 2) "History records that Titus determined to reduce Jerusalem by famine, a long and destructive mode of conquest, and for this purpose he surrounded it with a wall and ditch. After completing his preparation for this attack on the city, he received news from Rome which urged him to hasten to Rome. He changed his plan and pressed the city by assault, that he might return to Rome, where his presence was greatly needed; hence, 'those days had been shortened.' The overruling providence of God shortened these days 'for the elect's sake.' 'The elect' has reference to the Christians who were among the Jews at that time. This elect group were to be preserved in order that the gospel might be handed down to future ages" (Boles, pp.466f).
 - b. Titus, the Roman general, acknowledged that the speedy overthrow of Jerusalem was to be attributed to the power of God: "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications, for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do toward over-throwing these towers?" (Quoted by Kik, p.120).
 - c. "As it is Jewish flesh alone whose sufferings are the subject of discourse, this passage means that but for the shortening of those days no Jewish flesh would be saved; and it follows that the elect, for whose sake those days were to be shortened were the elect Jews, or Jewish Christians. The Romans made no distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews, but slaughtered all alike. The only safety for Christian Jews, then, was in flight, and even this might not have saved them but for the providence by which those days were 'shortened'" (McGarvey, p.208).
- F. Matthew 24:23-28: Jesus Issues Warnings About Deception During these Frightful Times.
1. If truth is unimportant, why did the Lord issue so many warnings against false teachers? Why so many warnings against being deceived? Matthew 7:15-28; Acts 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 3:16. Sincerity alone, or believing something about Christ, is not enough; we must have and believe the truth.

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- a. John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - b. Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 4:6: "Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not *to go* beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (ASV).
2. Verses 23-25: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before."
- a. In connection with the siege of Jerusalem, deceivers would come. Josephus tells of one who got many to climb atop the temple, claiming God would show a miraculous sign to indicate their deliverance (p. 582). Jewish leaders hired men to say God had spoken to them, promising deliverance. This was done to deter desertion to the Romans (p. 582). Jesus predicted that false Messiahs would arise, claiming great signs and wonders. These would be false wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). So powerful would be the "signs" and "wonders" that the elect would almost be persuaded to believe them.
 - b. "The former reference to these pretenders (verse 5) was indefinite as regards the time of their appearance, but this shows that some of them would appear at the time of flight just preceding the final catastrophe. These may have been either pretended signs and wonders, or real signs and wonders of which these men pretended to give the interpretation:
 - 1) "That a great many such signs and wonders and such prophets did during the siege of Jerusalem, and for some years previous, is attested by Josephus....
 - 2) "The elect are those who would maintain their faith in Christ, and who, however they might be puzzled and distressed by the signs and wonders of the pretenders, could not be deceived into the recognition of false Christs.
 - 3) "The believer in Jesus in all ages and countries had this advantage, that no pretenders can present credentials equal to his, nor give us ground for such confidence in them as we have in him" (McGarvey, pp. 208f).
 - c. "Many persons, impostors, and self-deceived, aspire to fill the places of persons of honor. Many did come claiming to be the Christ. There is still a constant stream of men claiming to be God's chosen servants, leading multitudes into sin and infidelity with pretended claims" (Boles, p.469).
 - d. Christ had forewarned his disciples about false prophets on other occasions, but yet another warning would not be superfluous.
3. Verses 26-27: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."
- a. If someone tells you that Christ is in some desert place, or in some secret room, do not believe him. When the Lord returns, no one will need any announcement from any human about his arrival! As the lightning comes from the east and shines far into the west, so shall his coming be. No one has to tell a man with normal faculties when the lightning has flashed across the sky; he sees it for himself. The description given in verse 27 is offered as a contrast to the claims of the false teachers regarding a secret return of the Lord.
 - b. Charles T. Russell, a prominent false teacher who originated the so-called Jehovah's Witness movement, deceived people just after the turn of our present century with the notion that Christ was returning in 1914; when that year passed with no indication of the Lord's presence known, his successor claimed that Christ did return—but only selected ones were privileged to see him! The Lord's present statement ought to forever put to silence any who think his coming will in any way be secret. Revelation 1:7 says that every eye shall see him, even those who pierced him, and that all the families of earth would wail because of him. The following two verses are from the ASV:
 - 1) Acts 1:11: "Who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."
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- 2) 1 Thessalonians 4:16: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."
4. Verse 28: "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."
- Christ gives a picture of a carcass and the eagles (vultures) gathering around it. Two possible meanings may be indicated: (1) The carcass being a symbolic reference to Israel, with the birds representing the Romans who were about to feast upon it (Cf. Deut. 28:49; Hab. 1:8); or (2) the birds represent the false teachers and the carcass being representative of the Jews, whose bones were about to be picked by the deceivers. The former is more likely the correct picture.
 - "It is claimed that eagles do not feed on dead bodies; this is true, but the Jews and Greeks made no distinction between the word 'eagle' which included the entire species of birds of prey, which included vultures. Some think that the giffon vulture is meant which surpasses the eagle in size and power. Aristotle notes how this bird scents its prey from afar, and congregates in the wake of an army" (Boles, p.469). Note on giffon vulture: "The griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) is a large Old World vulture in the bird of prey family Accipitridae. It is also known as the Eurasian griffon. It is not to be confused with a different species, Rüppell's griffon vulture (*Gyps rueppellii*). It is closely related to the white-backed vulture (*Gyps africanus*)." [Internet Definition].
 - "Strangely enough, eagles were the invariable decorations of the Roman standards under which the veteran legions of Titus gathered to press the siege of the city" (Coffman, p.390).
5. "As sign after sign appeared, they were able to read it in the book as plainly as they saw it with their eyes. We are not slow, therefore, to believe the statement of Eusebius, that the whole body of the church at Jerusalem removed from the city before the final siege began. (Ec. Hist. B.iii, c. v.) Nor can we fail to recognize these fleeing Christians among those persons of whom Josephus speaks when he says that, 'Many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city as from a ship when it was going to sink.' (B. ii, ch. xx, 1.) This flight occurred at the very crisis at which Jesus had warned his disciples to flee to the mountains (verses 15-22); that is, after Cestius Gallus, having laid siege to Jerusalem, with every prospect of taking it, suddenly, as Josephus expresses it, 'retired from the city without any reason in the world.' (Book ii, ch.xix, 6,7.)" (McGarvey, p.210).

G. Matthew 24:29-31: Pictures Are Given of Some Marvelous Events.

- The first word of this context is very significant in understanding the meaning of the statements which follow. If the word "immediately" is interpreted as strictly literal, then the descriptions thereafter given must be understood as figures of speech since nothing of a literal nature as described have happened since then (the first century). On the other hand, if the events pictured are taken as literal events pertaining to the second coming of Christ, then a figurative interpretation must be forced upon the word "immediately." Both cannot be taken literally; both cannot be taken as figures. The context demands that one or the other be taken figuratively.
 - Some ingenious writers try to make the events described throughout the chapter apply to both the destruction of Jerusalem and to the second coming of Christ. Verse 34 shows that all the things of the preceding verses were to take place during the time "this generation" was inhabiting the earth. Since that is so, then the things of the preceding verses have already taken place, thus no dual fulfillment was intended. A stark contrast exists between verses 4-35 and verses 36-51.
 - It is obvious that the former signs apply to the destruction of Jerusalem and the latter to the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Hence, the Lord is answering the disciples' first question in verses 4-35, and the second and third questions (which are equal since the end of time will occur at Christ's second coming) in verses 36-51. Verses 29-31 are the most difficult in the chapter.
- Verse 29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."
 - The Greek word the Lord used (*eutheos*) means "directly, straightway, forthright, at once" (Young's Concordance, p.509; Vine, p.127). Uses of the word help us to appreciate the fact that it depicts events which quickly take place, without any extensive delay.
 - Matthew 8:3: "And *immediately* his leprosy was cleansed."
 - Matthew 20:34: "*Immediately* their eyes received sight."
 - Mark 2:12: "*Immediately* he arose, took up the bed..."

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- 4) Acts 12:10: "And *forthwith* the angel departed from him."
 - 5) Acts 21:30: "And *forthwith* the doors were shut."
 - 6) As used in Matthew 24:29 (as in these other verses), the events described would occur soon after the ordeal previously identified (i.e., the tribulations involved in the destruction of the temple).
- b. **Immediately after the tribulation of those days.** The tribulation was that which was forced upon the Jews when their holy city was besieged and taken by the Romans. The horrible circumstances that occurred there were greater than had ever been (or ever to be) experienced. Nowhere else has a people suffered so much in such a short period of time.
- 1) Notice the plural "days." The coming of Christ, the resurrection, and the Judgment are spoken of in the singular—hour, day. The period of time in which the hardships of this passage occurred was described by the plural "days."
 - 2) Some writers think that the tribulation referred to is some period of severe hardship which will descend upon the inhabitants of earth just prior to the Lord's return. But this is not so because it would constitute a sign of the nearing end of time, a fact which Christ said would not be; there are no signs of the approaching end of time and the Lord's return. Matthew 24:36-39.
- c. The four images presented in the remainder of the verse all have precedents in Old Testament usages. By showing that "immediately" is used in other contexts with the same meaning as our use of it today, and by also showing that the phraseology of the rest of the verse is also used in the Old Testament to describe figuratively the overthrow of ancient cities and nations, it is reasonable to understand the present verse in the same light.
- 1) The same terminology was used in predicting the eventual destruction of Babylon: Isaiah 13:1, 6-11, 13-22.
 - 2) In foretelling the overthrow of Idumea, God used similar descriptions: Isaiah 34:4-5.
 - 3) The same kind of figures are used in the Lord's picture of Egypt's overthrow as given in Ezekiel 32:2, 7, 8, 11, 15.
- d. Since the Bible has already used this language in describing the overthrow of ancient cities and nations, and since the term "immediately" cannot logically be used to describe events at least two thousands years in the future (and possibly many thousands more than that), and since the context makes it difficult to place this passage after the destruction of Jerusalem (vs. 34), it is far more reasonable to apply this verse to the Lord's overthrow of Jerusalem by means of the Roman army in 70 A.D.
- e. Therefore, immediately after the tribulation of the preceding verses, Jerusalem would fall. The sun, moon, and stars represent the Jewish nation, its laws, its rulers, and its influence as a nation. It is a matter of historical fact that Israel ceased to exist as a nation following the Roman victory over her. The Israeli nation of our modern time represents only a small portion of the Jewish race, and there is no certainty of its long existence as a nation. In 1948, when the Jews in Palestine, with the help of other nations, succeeded in establishing a foothold there, Premillennialists thought they saw in this evidence for the Lord's imminent return. Some went so far as to assert that a generation was about forty years, and that within forty years of the time Israel gained a foothold in Palestine, the second coming would occur; hence, Hal Lindsey said that 1988 would be the year! All such date-setters are proved wrong.
- f. The parallel accounts are given in these passages:
- 1) Mark 13:24-25: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken."
 - 2) Luke 21:25-26: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."
3. Verse 30: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."
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- a. If the preceding verse is to be taken as figurative, then this verse and the one following are also figurative. The statement in verse 34 is very clear, and thus limits that which goes before it in the chapter to events which are connected to the destruction of Judaism in 70 A.D. But is there any precedent of such language being used to describe a figurative coming of Deity? Is there a logical interpretation which permits this to be imagery?
 - b. Matthew mentions the sign and the coming of the Son of man; Mark and Luke only speak of the coming of Christ. Mark and Luke's accounts do not give an interpretation of the meaning of the sign. Matthew speaks of the coming plus the sign of the Son of man in heaven.
 - c. Concerning the sign, what is said in the text? The sign of the Son of man (Christ) would appear. Appear is from the Greek *phaino* which means "to be brought forth into light, to become evident...shown to be" (Vine, p.64).
 - 1) This sign was to be brought forth into the light *immediately* after the tribulation of verse 21 (vs. 30). It was to become evident before *this generation* should pass from earthly scenes (vs. 34). The Son of man has not come for the second time as yet (Heb. 9:28; 2 Th. 1:6-9; 1 Th. 4:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:10; John 5:28-29).
 - 2) Therefore, the sign must not be understood as the personal appearance of Christ in the sky. Notice that the location identified is heaven, not the "heavens" (the sky). Something (or someone) was to be in *heaven*. It is the Son of man who is to be in heaven. The sign would be of the Son of man in heaven. The sign would appear (become evident, be brought to light, shown) in connection with the sun being darkened, the moon not giving her light, the stars falling from heaven, and the powers of the heavens being shaken (the overthrow of corrupted Judaism). When this is done, THEN shall the sign be seen. The sign will be on earth; the sign is the destruction of Jerusalem; the sign would show that Christ is in heaven, and is behind all these frightful events, judging the nation which had rejected him as the Messiah.
 - d. "The destruction of Jerusalem would be the SIGN of the coming of the Lord, and would be conclusive evidence that He was reigning IN HEAVEN" (Deaver, *Biblical Notes*, Volume XI, June, 1977, p.27).
 - 1) Matthew 23:36: "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."
 - 2) Matthew 23:38: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."
 - 3) Matthew 24:34-35: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
 - 4) Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
 - 5) Acts 2:33: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."
 - e. All the tribes of the earth shall mourn. Luke's account gives this additional piece of information: "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:26). [In the Greek, "heaven" is in the plural, showing that God's abode is not the location where this shaking will take place.]
 - 1) The mourning would be the outgrowth of the terrible things included in this great tribulation. All the Jewish people, not only those who were present to face the terrible ordeal, but those who were living in many places throughout the Empire (Acts 2:5), would mourn over the evil which was befalling their nation. The consequences of this great tribulation would also have effects on other people and nations.
 - 2) The suffering and the resulting sorrow of such a tremendous tribulation, in which well over a million people died under the most horrible of circumstances during a 3-5 five month span, would certainly cause terrible mourning on the part of many. The word "earth" of this clause can be either earth or land, including the occupied earth in the former case, or the land of Palestine in the latter.
 - 3) Those mourning would include especially those who were enduring the suffering and death, and extend to all the others who were sympathetic to them, or who also had to endure the consequences of Israel's great plight.
 - f. The coming of the Son of man in (on, ASV) the clouds of heaven. Can this be properly construed figuratively? The same terminology is used in Isaiah 19:1 in the prophetic picture of Egypt's
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- punishment: "The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." The Lord said he would come on a cloud against Egypt, but no one understands that coming as literal.
4. Given the context in which the present statement was made, no one should understand the coming of Christ in this instance as a literal coming. In fact, as noted earlier in this study, there are only two literal comings of Christ (at his birth and at the end of time). But there are other representative, figurative comings.
 - a. He came in a representative manner when he established his church (kingdom)—Matthew 16:28 (cf. Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). He did not come literally on that great occasion but the power by which he set up his kingdom was present, working with his handpicked apostles (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5,8; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14; Acts 2:1ff; 2:23, 33). He set up his church (Matt. 16:18), but he was not literally present when he caused it to be established.
 - b. He promised to come in judgment against the saints at Ephesus unless they returned to their first love (Rev. 2:5), against the saints at Pergamos if they did not repent (Rev. 2:16), and into the lives of the penitent saints at Laodicea (Rev. 3:20). These were representative comings, and were not literal. He came into their experiences only in the judgments against, or in bringing blessings for, the people involved.
 - 1) The context of the verse under consideration (Matt. 24:30) indicates that the coming on the clouds of heaven is another non-literal, symbolic, figurative coming. When the great destruction, suffering and loss of life are considered, the Lord's great power was brought to bear in the overthrow of Jerusalem. Indeed, the Roman general admitted that only with the assistance of God could the great walls of Jerusalem have been breached. Zechariah 14:1ff speaks of this coming.
 5. Verse 31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."
 - a. If the conclusions on verses 29-30 are correct, this verse is also figurative. Verse 34 limits the foregoing to events taking place while that generation was on the earth. Verse 33 also limits it to the lifetime of those addressed.
 - 1) Luke 21:31 says: "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." [The Lord is not saying that the kingdom would then be about ready to be established for it came on the Pentecost Day of Acts 2 (33 A.D.), not in 70 A.D.]
 - 2) His meaning is that there would be no need for his people to fear, for the kingdom was with them, thus its protecting influence would be present.]
 - 3) Our conclusions on verses 29-30 fit Biblical usage; this verse must also be figurative, and thus descriptive of events which are long past, not future to our day.
 - b. The Greek word "angelos" is translated "angels" and carries the definition of "messengers." The nature of the messenger must be determined by each context since the word is sometimes used in reference to men. In Mark 1:2, John is called an angel; the same word is used in Matthew 11:10 in reference to John. John's disciples who were sent to speak with Jesus are called "angelos" (Luke 7:18, 24). In Luke 9:52, certain disciples of Christ have this same word used to describe them. James 2:25 uses this same word to describe the two spies sent into Jericho to spy out the city.
 - 1) The Greek word translated "evangelist" means "a messenger of good (*eu*, well, *angelos*, messenger)" (Vine, Vol. 1, p.44). *Angelos* is elsewhere translated "angel." An evangelist is therefore an *angel*, in the sense that he is a *messenger*.
 - 2) It is in keeping with Biblical usage of the word to understand the present occurrence of the word as a reference to human messengers, preachers of the gospel who proclaim the message of Christ to the lost world. This fits the context and is in keeping with the use of the word elsewhere.
 - c. These angels were assigned the mission of gathering the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Heaven is in the plural in the Greek text. The extent of this gathering was from all locations where the elect (the saints) were to be found. "Gathering the elect" is a beautiful way of depicting the great work of preaching the gospel. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to
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- hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10; cf. Acts 13:45-46). God knows the hearts of individuals; he knows whether they will be responsive to the gospel; thus, prospectively, they can be called the elect or God's people. As God's messengers go about proclaiming and teaching the gospel, there are those who will listen, examine it and themselves, and believe and obey the message.
- d. The trumpet was used in ancient days to gather the people together. It was sounded when Israel was called together, especially at the start of Jubilee (Lev. 25:9; Num. 10:2; Judges 3:27). The trumpet of God will sound to announce the return of Christ at the end of time (1 Th. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52). The sounding of the trumpet is used figuratively in the present text to describe the calling of many out of the world into the church of Christ.
 - e. The four winds is a reference to the cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. The statement itself is manifestly figurative, for the elect are not gathered out of the air! From the four winds and from one end of heaven (s) to the other is the two-fold description of the extent the messengers were to canvass in gathering those who obeyed the gospel. See Matthew 24:14; Colossians 1:6, 23; Romans 10:18; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19.
 - f. The fall of Judaism made it easier for the saints to carry out the Great Commission, since they were not confused with the Jews, and ceased to be persecuted by the Jews. "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead" (Acts 14:19).
6. The Bible uses most of the same descriptions in other settings to describe the second coming and the end of the world.
- a. The sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling, and the powers of the heavens shaken:
 - 1) Hebrews 12:26-29: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:4-12: "And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"
 - 3) Hebrews 1:12: "And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."
 - 4) Revelation 20:11: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."
 - b. The people of the earth mourning: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7).
 - c. The Lord coming with the clouds of heaven: Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7.
 - d. The sounding of the trumpet: 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
 - e. The gathering of God's people to be with Christ: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 13:41; 2
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Thessalonians 1:6-7.

7. The interpretation given in the preceding discussion does no damage to any passage, is in keeping with Biblical usages of the same and similar terminology, and fits the context of Matthew 24:4-35.
- H. Matthew 24:32-35: The Parable of the Fig Tree is Used to Show the Nearness of These Things.
1. Verse 32: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh."
 - a. This discourse took place in the spring, at the Passover season, a time when the fig trees were beginning to put forth their leaves or were soon to do so. When these leaves began to appear, summer was near at hand.
 - b. When robins begin to appear, we take that as a sign of the nearness of spring.
 2. Verse 33: "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors."
 - a. In the same way that the appearance of the fig leaves signaled the closeness of summer, so the appearance of the preceding signs were to be taken to mean that Jerusalem was soon to be razed. The marginal note says that "it" could be understood as "he." The American Standard translates it as "he." If "he" is taken as the correct rendering, then the reference is to the nearness of Christ; if the KJV is correct, the "end" (the overthrow of Jerusalem) is soon to be come. In either case, the meaning is the same: Jesus was to be present (representatively) in bringing about the overthrow.
 - b. At least some of the disciples would "see all these things." Because they would see them, they would thereby know of the nearness of the city's destruction, and so could flee to safety. The Lord is getting to the heart of his answer to their questions of verse three.
 3. If Matthew 24:29-33 describes his second coming, notice how shallow and superfluous it would be:
 - a. "When you see the sun and moon darkened, and the stars crashing down, then know that my second coming is at hand! When you see me coming in the clouds, I'm on my way! When you see angels gathering the elect, look for my appearance!"
 - b. Christ never engaged in such trite statements; he never uttered any mere truisms. If so, it would be like the silly truism we often hear: "It ain't over till it's over."
 4. Verse 34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."
 - a. "All these things" is a statement made several times during the discourse and in the context. "Verily I say unto you, **All these things** shall come upon this generation" (23:36). See also 24:2, 3, 8, 33, 34; Luke 21:19-33. The meaning of Matthew 24:34 is so crystal clear that it seems very strange that many overlook its significance, or else try to explain away its obvious point. Mark 13:30 and Luke 21:32 are parallel verses and they express the same truth.
 - 1) Mark 13:30: "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."
 - 2) Luke 21:32: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."
 - b. Premillennialists try to explain away the statement by twisting "generation" to mean the Jewish race. So also does Coffman (pp.394f). This would have the Lord saying that, "All these things will come upon this race, and this race will not pass away until all these things come upon it." But Christ was never redundant, never uttered a mere truism, and was never guilty of speaking such shallow nonsense. "Generation" means here exactly what it meant in these other passages:
 - 1) Matthew 1:17: "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations."
 - 2) Matthew 11:16-19: "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."
 - 3) Matthew 12:38-42: "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days

- and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”
- 4) Matthew 16:4: “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”
 - 5) Matthew 23:36: “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.”
 - 6) The same word that is used in these verses is the word used in Matthew 24:34. The reference is to the whole multitude of men who are living at the same time.
- c. "The true key to the interpretation of this much disputed passage is found in the expression 'all these things,' repeated from the preceding verse. It must here have the same meaning as there; for an identical expression repeated in consecutive sentences always has the same meaning, except when something is introduced in the new connection to force upon it a different meaning. There is certainly nothing of the kind here" (McGarvey, p.212).
 - d. All the things Jesus has discussed in the preceding verses (3-33) will have taken place by the time "this generation" passes from earthly scenes into eternity. These words were spoken in the spring of A.D. 33; Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70, well within the time factor of one generation. The majority of the people who were living when Christ spoke these words were still alive in 70 A.D., even though many had died and many others had been born during that time frame.
 - e. Many people have trouble with verses 29-31, but the same figures had already been used in the Old Testament to describe the overthrow of other nations and cities. Old Testament prophecies used these descriptions, and first century history verifies that events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem fit their similar use in these verses. And in view of the plain statement of verse 34, it would be most difficult to be consistent with its truth and understand the awesome pictures of verses 29-31 as still future from our day. As noted in the discussion of those verses, there are other passages which use similar terms in reference to the end of time, but in this context, they are used to depict the great tragedy of Judaism's demise. To be sure, the Jewish race will remain as a separate people until the end of time (Jer. 30:11; Num. 23:9), but Matthew 24 is not discussing that subject.
 - f. A passage is to be taken literally unless there is clear evidence it is figurative.
5. Verse 35: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."
 - a. The statement here shows at least two things: the earth is not eternal and the Lord's words are unshakable. In nature, the universe and the earth seem to be the most stable and permanent of all. But the Lord affirmed that these would not always be (Cf. 2 Pet. 3:10; Heb. 12:25-29). Paul described material things as temporal and the things which cannot be seen as eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Genesis 8:22 implies that the earth will have a limited history ("while the earth remaineth").
 - b. Just as surely as his words will never have an end, just that certain will the end of Jerusalem come as he had explained. They could depend on his pronouncements regarding the overthrow of the city.
 6. Notice some historical details describing the end of the temple and Jerusalem.
 - a. Titus gave order that the temple was not to be destroyed, but allowed to stand as an "ornament to their government while it continued" (Josephus, p.580). The outer gate had been set on fire prior to the general's order, so he now commanded that the fire be quenched. But the Jews attacked the soldiers who were sent to put out the fire, and a battle raged until the Jewish fighters retired into the inner court of the temple. "At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it" (ibid.).
 - b. Although Titus took desperate measures to make his men put out the fire, they refused his orders. Their intense hatred for the Jews and their lust for the money they expected to find in the temple caused them to plunder and destroy it. Josephus says that Titus entered the Holy Place and found it to be superior to any such place he had seen and that the Jews who boasted about it had not
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exaggerated (ibid., p.580f). Christ had promised that the temple would be leveled; his word was fulfilled completely despite the efforts of the powerful Roman general to the contrary!

- c. Josephus calculated that there were in Jerusalem when the Roman army arrived about two million, seven hundred thousand, and two hundred people that were pure and holy. He did not include those who were diseased or otherwise ceremonially unclean (p.588).
- d. The entire city was destroyed with the exceptions of the three greatest towers and a part of city's wall. The former were left to show the world how greatly fortified and strong the city had been but which the mighty Roman Legions had reduced to ruins. The west wall was left as shelter for the garrison Titus left on the site. "...But for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind" (ibid., p.589).

I. Matthew 24:36: That Day and Hour.

1. Verse 36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."
2. This verse quite obviously marks a turning point in the Lord's discussion. Having said in verse 34 that all the things he had announced beginning in verse 4 to verse 34 would be fulfilled before that generation passed on into eternity, and having given assurance that his word would not fail, he now declares that there was a notable day and hour in earth's history when Christ would return. The contrasting word "but" shows a marked difference between the subject of the preceding section and the one beginning here.
 - a. In the previous statements the Lord spoke of "days" and "these days." But now he speaks in the singular: "day and hour."
 - b. The general and specific signs given in the earlier section pointed to and identified for the Christians in Judea the nearing end of Jerusalem. It was observable and recognizable to them in order for them to be able to escape the area without any harm coming to them. But in this section there are no signs given to identify the nearing end of the world at the Lord's second coming.
 - c. Many could know when Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, but only the Father knew when the end of time would be. "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13:32-33).
3. The phrase "that day and hour" connects with "heaven and earth shall pass away" (vs. 35). While they could know by the signs the time to flee from Judea, no one can know when the time is when heaven and earth shall pass away, i.e., the time of the Lord's return. The great lesson of this section is "watch and pray." If the time had been specified then this great lesson would have been nullified.
 - a. The Bible often speaks of THAT day:
 - 1) Matthew 7:22: "Many will say to me **in that day**, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"
 - 2) Matthew 11:22: "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon **at the day of judgment**, than for you."
 - 3) Matthew 11:24: "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the **day of judgment**, than for thee."
 - 4) Matthew 12:36: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the **day of judgment**."
 - 5) 2 Timothy 1:12: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against **that day**."
 - 6) 2 Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me **at that day**: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
 - b. The second coming of Christ is the time meant; it will occasion the destruction of the heavens and earth and all things material; it will include the resurrection of the dead and the changing of the living; it will result in the great Judgment scene, which will be followed by the eternal destinies of us all.

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- c. The Bible never speaks of the second coming and end of the world in the plural, but uses the singular "day" or "hour." The term "last days" is used in reference to the last dispensation of time between the cross and the second coming. The *last days* are the Christian Age; the *last day* is the end of time.
- 1) Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."
 - 2) Isaiah 2:2: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."
 - 3) Acts 2:16-17: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."
 - 4) 1 John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."
 - 5) 1 Peter 1:20: "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."
- d. When this last day will be is still a mystery (Mark 13:32-33). Christ had perfect understanding of both the Old and New Testaments; since he did not know when that day will be, it follows that the Bible does not reveal when it will be. Therefore, no man on earth today can identify that day. Those who say they know it are false teachers of the first rank.
- e. Some claim that it is only the day and hour that is not revealed. But this implies that we can know the week, month, year, decade, century, and millennium when the Lord will return. Who is willing to be specific in identifying the exact week, or the exact month, or the exact year? It is inconclusive to announce the millennium or century since we would not be alive to see the end of either period. Every person who has announced a time for his return has met with failure! We cannot know the hour, day, week, decade, century, or millennium of his return. Mark 13:32 says we cannot know the day and hour, and verse 33 says we cannot know the time at all! "Day and hour" is used interchangeably with "time."
- f. The various passages which describe the Lord's return to be "as a thief in the night" show that the time of it is hidden in the inscrutable counsel of God. See 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6. While the Savior was on earth, he did not know when that time would be, but now that he has re-assumed the fullness of his Godhead, and is not limited by the flesh in any way, he may know (Col. 2:9; John 5:20).
4. If verse 36 is the same event as that described in verses 4-35, how can we reconcile the fact that Christ knew the precise details of the one and did not know when the other is to be? I once knew a man who became an atheist because he could not see the truth on this chapter. The truth is plain: Christ is answering two questions. In verses 4-35 he responds to the apostles' question about when the temple would be destroyed. In verses 36-51 he answers their questions about the signs of his coming and of the end of the world. It appears that the Lord used the destruction of Jerusalem as a *type* of the end of the world.
- J. Matthew 24:37-41: His Return Will be as the Coming of the Flood in Noah's Time.
1. Verses 37-39: "But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."
 - a. Here the Lord draws a parallel between the second coming and the great flood. The common affairs of life were being conducted as usual until suddenly the deluge came and "took them all away." Marriage ceremonies were being planned and executed; people were eating and drinking; all of the ordinary activities were being conducted; sin was still being practiced. This was not the case during the days preceding the overthrow of Jerusalem, for in the affected areas, there were turmoils, tribulations, fighting, starvation, and confusion. It was truly "a time that tried men's souls."
 - b. The generation that perished in the flood suffered that penalty despite the warnings issued to them by
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Noah. The great patriarch was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). He obviously spoke to his generation, giving them warning about the impending flood. They rejected this message of righteousness (Cf. Ps. 119:172).

- c. The comparisons between the coming of the flood and the Lord's return are clear:
 - 1) The flood came suddenly, there were no outward signs in nature of its approach, and human activities were normal, giving no indications of an imminent flood.
 - 2) Normal human affairs were being pursued right up to the last.
 - 3) No other such event had ever occurred in human history.
 - 4) The only warning given came through the preaching of God's word.
 - 5) "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be." There will be no outward sign in nature to warn of his coming; human affairs will be going on as usual; no other such event has ever occurred in human history before; the only warning given is that which is issued through God's word on the subject.

2. Verses 40-41: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

- a. Here the Lord pictures the affairs of life being pursued when he suddenly makes his appearance. Two people will be working in the field, two women will be grinding at the mill: one of each pair will be taken and the other left. Thus, farmers will be doing their regular work; wives will be tending to their chores; children will be playing, people will be working, sinful conduct will still be practiced—and suddenly Christ will appear! The ancient method for grinding flour usually required two people, one to turn the stone half-way around and the other to complete the cycle.
- b. One will be taken and another will be left. This fits the picture given in other passages describing the Lord's return (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:28-29). The dead will be raised, the living will be changed, the saints will be caught up with the risen saints to meet Christ in the air; the world will be burned up; we all will be taken into the Judgment, with the righteous in one assembly and the unrighteous in another—separated then and forever! The one taken is to be in the gathering of the righteous; the one left is destined for that other group.
- c. Notice that nothing is said here about anyone fleeing. There will be no place to which one may run; and there will be no possibility of escaping from the Lord, even though many will desire to do so.

K. Matthew 24:42-51: Warnings to Watch and Pray.

1. Verses 42-44: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."
 - a. These plain words from the Lord are for his disciples to be watchful; this warning is undergirded with the affirmation that we do not know when his coming shall be. If another statement was needed from the Lord to the end that we might know that we cannot learn when his coming will be, this statement would be sufficient.
 - b. "The exhortation to watchfulness is based on the uncertainty of the day as declared in the previous paragraph and here repeated for the sake of emphasis: 'for you know not what day your Lord doth come.' Unlike the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, there is no sign by which its near approach will be certainly known" (McGarvey, pp.213f).
 - c. "The comparison between the coming of Jesus and that of a thief is the more striking from the dissimilarity between the two characters. There is but one point of comparison—the uncertainty of the time of their coming. As the goodman of the house, had he known what hour the thief would come, would have watched and have prevented his house from being broken into, so we, by watching for the coming of the Son of man, may prevent it from finding us unprepared" (ibid., pp.214).
 - d. Roy Deaver gave the following outline of the statements of this passage (p.34):
 - 1) The fact of his coming.
 - 2) The importance of watching.
 - 3) The unexpectedness of his coming.
 - 4) The suddenness of his coming.

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- 5) The fact that proper preparation can be made.
 - 6) The necessity of being ready.
2. Verses 45-51: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- a. The warning of preparedness is given in the form of a picture of an unfaithful servant. A faithful and wise servant is one who, having been given responsibilities by his master, is found to have been trustworthy in discharging those duties. When the master returns from a journey, and finding the servant busy doing his work, will reward the servant richly.
 - b. But the servant is evil who says in his heart, "My master is long in returning." Thus, thinking he can do what he wills, he begins to mistreat the other servants, and eats and drinks with the drunkards. That servant will be found by his master in that state of rebellion, for he will return unexpectedly and punish him properly.
 - c. "In stating the punishment, Jesus passes from the figure to the reality, and merges the parable in the description: cutting him asunder (51) terminates the parable which has been itself almost a description, and the description begins with appointing him his portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. At this point it may be well to remind the reader that all the warnings in reference to his second coming, given by Jesus in the preceding as well as in the following divisions of this discourse, are equally applicable to our departure to meet him. Whether he first comes to us, or we first go to him, the result will be the same, for as we are at death we will be at his coming, seeing that it is concerning the deeds done in the body that we will be judged. (2 Cor. 5:10)" (McGarvey, pp.214f).
 - d. "The 'weeping and the gnashing of teeth' are expressions used by Jesus to convey some idea of the anguish and despair of the condemned who shall be cast into the outer darkness" (Coffman, p.397).
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MATTHEW 25

A. Matthew 25:1-13: The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

1. Matthew 25:1: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."
 - a. In this parable and the one to follow, Christ illustrated the precept he stressed in the preceding passage: Be ready for you know not when the Lord shall return. The word "then" is a reference to the sudden coming of Christ at the end of time. The parables of verses 1-30 are a continuation of the answer to the disciples' question regarding the sign of his coming. The answer to that question, given beginning in 24:36, is that there will be no sign presaging his return.
 - b. The kingdom of heaven is compared with the ancient marriage customs. "According to Jewish custom the bridegroom went to the house of his father-in-law to receive his bride, leaving at his own house a company of virgins, who were to come out with lanterns or torches to meet him on his arrival, and to escort him into the house. The ten virgins of this parable were to perform this pleasant service" (McGarvey, p.215).
 - c. "The Jewish marriages and feasts which followed them were celebrated at night; the newly married couple went from the house of the bride in procession after nightfall accompanied by attendants bearing torches to light the way; another party went forth to meet them with torches and accompanied them to the house of the bridegroom where a feast was prepared. 'Lamps' were made then like torches; they were made by wrapping up a roll of linen and inserting it in a mould of copper or earthenware fixed to a handle of wood. It contained very little oil, and the linen from time to time had to be supplied with fresh oil from another vessel which was carried in the other hand" (Boles, p.477). The virgins of the waiting party would have to have an extra supply of oil in case the bridegroom was long in coming.
 - d. The comparison between the kingdom and this custom lies in the waiting of the virgins for the return of the bridegroom (one who has newly taken a wife). In other settings the church is said to be the bride of Christ, but in this present instance, nothing is said of the bride; the emphasis is on the virgins who were waiting for the return of the bridegroom. These ten virgins represent members of the Lord's kingdom.
 - e. Jesus and the disciples are still on the Mount of Olives (24:3).
 2. Verses 2-4: "And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."
 - a. Five of the virgins in the illustration were wise and the other five are called foolish. The difference did not lie in the superior intelligence, financial advantage, or any other natural blessing; it was simply and solely in the fact that the wise ones carried extra oil, which the other five neglected to do. There is no particular significance to the number of virgins; neither is the Lord suggesting the ratio of the saved church members to those who will be lost.
 - b. "Under ordinary circumstances the foolish virgins would have been safe with the amount of oil which they had; for it seems that it was the *tarrying* of the bridegroom (verse 5) which led to their trouble. Had he come when they expected him, they would have been ready. The wise virgins, on the other hand, knowing the delays frequently attending the movements of wedding parties, provided so much oil that they would be prepared for the latest possible hour" (McGarvey, p.215).
 - c. Those who reject God, or who are disobedient, or who fail to make preparation for their souls are called "fools" in the Bible (Matthew 25:1-13).
 - 1) Psalm 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."
 - 2) Matthew 7:26: "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand."
 - 3) Luke 12:20: "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"
 3. Verse 5: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."
 - a. Both the wise and foolish virgins slept while they waited. Nothing is said against their sleeping. There
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- is no reason for us to understand this sleeping as death.
- b. "As there were servants on watch who would announce the approach of the bridegroom (verse 6), there was no need that they should remain awake, and a little sleep now would enable them to be wider awake during the festivities of the latter part of the night" (McGarvey, p.215).
4. Verses 6-7: "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps."
 - a. At midnight the cry was raised: "The bridegroom comes!" This was at an hour later than they had expected. They all awoke and trimmed their lamps, an operation which involved cutting away the incrustations on the wicks and re-supplying the oil. The New Testament gives no hint as to how long it would be between the Ascension and the Second Coming of Christ. Second Thessalonians 2:1ff shows that the Great Apostasy would take place first; the parable of the talents says that the lord (who represents Christ) went into a "far country" and returned after a "long time" (25:14,19). But these references do not specify any particular time: he could return at any moment.
 - b. "We may number this among the many hints given by our Lord, that the time of his return might possibly be delayed very far beyond the expectation of his disciples. It was a hint, and no more. Had more been given, had He said plainly that He would not come for many centuries, then the first ages of the Church would have been placed at a manifest disadvantage, being deprived of that powerful motive to holiness and diligence supplied to each generation of the faithful by the possibility of his return in their time. It is not that He desires each succeeding generation to believe that in their day He will certainly return; for He cannot desire our faith and our practice to be founded on a misapprehension, as then the faith and practice of all generations except the last would be. But it is a necessary element of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ, that it should be *possible* at any time, that no generation should consider it improbable in theirs..." (James Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p.256).
 5. Verses 8-9: "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."
 - a. The foolish virgins asked their wise companions for some of their oil, "for our lamps are gone out." The marginal rendering and the original text state literally that their lamps were "going out." It was only now that the wisdom of the one group and the foolishness of the other is seen. Some have criticized the wise virgins for refusing to share their oil. But in the story, the oil represented the preparation this group of saints had made, including their godly lives, their faith, love, works, the entirety of their faithful stance. They did not share with the foolish ones because they could not do so! Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people (John 14:1-3; Rev. 22:11-12; Mt. 24:42,44).
 - b. This does away with the Catholic doctrine of "supererogation," the foolish idea that the ancient "saints" did so many good works that those of lesser spiritual stature may "draw on" this "bank of good works" and thus obtain a supply of righteousness to save their sinful souls (Cf. Ezek. 18:20; I John 3:4,7; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; 22:16).
 - c. The gospel is addressed to individuals, and its blessings are only given to the individuals who personally obey it (Heb. 5:8-9). The wise virgins advised the other group to go and buy the oil. As the story continues, we are told that they did not have time to do so, for the bridegroom came while they were away. This teaches the lesson that if we spurn an opportunity to obey the gospel, we may not have another occasion to obey. And certainly when the Lord returns, there will not then be time to do so!
 6. Verse 10: "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut."
 - a. While the five foolish virgins were gone, the bridegroom came; the five wise girls were ready and entered with him into the marriage feast. The door was shut. What cold finality these words are to those left outside! Consider the song entitled "Standing Outside."
 - b. When God closed the door of the ark, that sealed the doom of those who had rejected Noah's preaching. When the Lord returns, that will seal the doom of those who did not obey his gospel. When those on his left hand in the Judgment are dismissed from his presence, that will spell the doom
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- of all those who did not follow God's word in this life. No second chance will be offered to anyone after death. But the five wise virgins were inside, enjoying the festivities of the occasion; Noah and his family enjoyed the peace and safety and hope given them in the ark; in the church all of God's spiritual blessings are enjoyed, and in heaven the fruition of our faith will thrill us eternally! Those who have followed man-made doctrines and churches will be sorely disappointed and lost.
- c. But the point of this lesson is directed toward those who are members of the Lord's church! Those who reject the gospel or try to climb up some other way (John 10:1) will be lost, but so will those Christians who are lukewarm and unprepared! They cannot enter heaven on the faith of their parents, wives, husbands, children, the preacher, the elders, or of anyone else. The nature of Christianity is such that it must be personally applied. No one can worship God for you; no one can develop the Christians' graces for you; no one can love your neighbor for you! The individual saint must keep himself prepared (Phil. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).
7. Verses 11-12: "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."
- a. The five foolish virgins returned to find the door closed. Even when they knocked and pleaded with the bridegroom to admit them, they were turned away. "I know you not." "In this answer the term *know* is used, according to the Jewish idiom, for favorable knowledge. (Comp. 7:23.) The answer was a refusal to recognize them, as when a man passes an old acquaintance who has given him an offense as if he knew him not. It sent away the poor virgins in bitter disappointment and shame" (McGarvey, p.216).
- b. "It is not that the bridegroom disclaims any outward knowledge of them, but he does not *know* them in that sense in which the Good Shepherd *knows* his sheep, and is known of them" (Trench, p.266).
- 1) 2 Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:12: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you."
 - 3) Psalm 1:6: "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."
 - 4) Matthew 7:23: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
8. Verse 13: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."
- a. "This warning is suggested by the parable, and springs as a conclusion from the analogy between it and the kingdom of heaven. The coming of the bridegroom represents the coming of the Son of man, and the uncertainty as to what hour of the night the bridegroom would come, represents the fact that 'ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.'
- 1) "All of the virgins represent those who are waiting for his coming and are supposed to be ready for it. The foolish virgins are not the unconverted, for they make no preparation; they are not apostates, for they, after waiting at their post for a time, abandon it and go their way; but they evidently represent those who enter the Church and stand at their post until the bridegroom comes, and are then found without sufficient preparation to meet him.
 - 2) "They make the preparation which they are led by their own indolence or indifference to regard as sufficient, and content themselves with that, knowing that they run some risk of being lost" (McGarvey, pp.216f).
- b. "All who allow themselves any questionable indulgences; all who neglect any of the ordinances of God; and all who are indifferent about soundness in the faith as it is in Christ, belong to this class.
- 1) "The wise virgins, on the other hand, are those who make such preparation as to 'make their calling and election sure;' aiming in all things to err, if err they do, on the side of safety. The bridegroom may come before midnight, and if he does, a certain limited quantity of oil will be enough, but more will do no harm; and if he comes at a later hour, that which would have appeared superfluous will save me.
 - 2) "The wise virgins always appear too scrupulous in the eyes of the foolish. The warning, 'Watch

therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour,' bids us imitate the wise and take warning from the fate of the foolish" (McGarvey, pp.216f).

B. Matthew 25:14-30: The Parable of the Talents.

1. Verses 14-15: "For *the kingdom of heaven is* as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."
 - a. The words "the kingdom of heaven is" are not found in the original, but were supplied by the translators. The parable of the Ten Virgins illustrated the importance of making suitable preparations for the Lord's return; this parable illustrates the method of doing so—by working. The situation described was that of a master and slave setting. The master gave certain talents to the slaves, and as the story unfolds, he expected them to properly use those talents for his profit. He had the right to make this demand of them because they were his slaves, and were obligated to do his bidding. However, he did not make requirements of them that were harsh or too demanding.
 - b. The talents were measures of money. Our modern English word "talent" has come to mean the abilities which God has given us. But in the story, the talents were sums of money which the lord expected the servants to use wisely so that he could realize a profit from their efforts when he returned from the far country. In the application of the story the talents represent the opportunities, the privileges, the various gifts which are entrusted to our hands. How we use them, or misuse or waste them, will be carefully considered in the Judgment.
 - c. The talents were distributed among the servants according to their various abilities. The lord did not give them "abilities" in the story, but money; the amount of money each was given depended on the ability each had. The distribution was fair. If the third man had been given five talents he would have been overly burdened, and likely would have blundered even worse than he did. The first man would not have been properly challenged and tested if he had received only one or two talents.
2. Verses 16-18: "Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents. And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money."
 - a. The man who received the five talents went and traded with them, and was able to double the amount he had been given. Likewise, the man with the two also doubled his amount. But the third man buried his talent so as to preserve it to his lord's return. He was honest in that he did not waste what was not his.
 - b. It was common in the past, before the coming of trustworthy banks, for people to bury their money in the earth, and so to secure it. One can only wonder how much still lies buried and lost, or forgotten, after the owner died.
3. Verses 19-21: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."
 - a. After a long time, the master returned and "reckoned" with them, to receive an account of their activities during his long absence. "It is of vast significance that the 'reckoning' with the servants was upon an individual basis and that no group appraisal of their efforts was allowed. This is at strong variance with the habits of men who love to judge themselves and assess their success or failure on the basis of group achievements. In the case of the three servants here, if their lord had followed the plan in vogue today, they might well have presented themselves in a group, saying, 'Look, you left us in charge of eight talents, and we have increased them by 87½ percent!" (Coffman, p.407).
 - b. "In this part of the parable there is a transition to the language of the Lord from heaven when bestowing the everlasting benediction; for the words, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy lord,' are not those of an earthly master when rewarding his servants. The benediction was pronounced on the two servants alike, because, having gained the same per centum on their respective amounts, they had proved themselves equally faithful" (McGarvey, p.218).
 - c. We must give an account of the activities of this life at the end of time in the Judgment (Rom. 14:10-

- 12; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Acts 17:30-31; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:12-15).
- d. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things." At best, we are somewhat short of what we ought to be (Luke 17:10; Rom. 3:12; 1 John 1:7-10). There is no room for any of us to boast about our personal righteousness.
 - e. "...I will make thee ruler over many things." "It was customary with eastern monarchies to have some of their satraps and other officers of provinces to reside at the courts of the kings; it was a great honor to be invited to live with the king. David bestowed such honor upon Jonathan's son" (Boles, p.482). In the story, the ultimate blessing was something akin to this. In the reality illustrated by the story, eternal life with God in heaven, with all the privileges and honors involved, will be given to each faithful saint. The blessing is vastly disproportionate to the obedience rendered.
 - f. "Enter thou into the **joy** of thy lord." What better one-word description of heaven's blessing could be given? Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:34.
4. Verses 22-23: "He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverdst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."
 - a. The same pattern is followed in the case of the man who had been given the two talents.
 - b. As he had been faithful over the talents entrusted to him, so he was blessed after the same fashion of the former character in the story.
 5. Verses 24-25: "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, *there* thou hast *that is* thine."
 - a. This servant tried to place the blame for his slothfulness on his master by saying that it was because he feared the lord's hardness that he hid his talent. He did not fail in his task because it is the inevitable penalty of one-talent individuals to fail. The amount of talents one has does not predispose one either toward failure or success; it is the way he uses them that decides the outcome. "It was because the servant ignored his obligations as a servant that the master appeared a hard man in demanding a return of more than he had given" (McGarvey, p.218).
 - b. This accusation describes the master as one who forces others to sow for him and reap all the benefits for himself—without any thought about sharing the bounty with anyone else. This presentation of the master as one having a demanding, oppressive, and selfish disposition was used by the servant to explain his negligence. He even appears to take pride in claiming that he was able to return the entire sum originally delivered to him. This man's failure is the great point of the parable.
 - c. He made three serious mistakes. Since what is being described is a Christian's responsibilities to God, we can fail our Master in the same ways.
 - 1) He erred in assessing his master's disposition. Men sometimes contend that God is too demanding of us. "We attribute to others what we find in ourselves. Very few people excuse their own sin without blaming God or someone else for it. He gave back all that he had received; he had done no harm, but he had done no good with that which was intrusted to him. He had been in possession of his master's money for 'a long time'; if he had been a free man, he would have owed interest on it; but he had been too slothful to use the talent to any gain for his master. His master had really lost by the indolence of this servant" (Boles, p.483).
 - 2) He failed because he was lazy. "Plain indolence and laziness are at the bottom of widespread neglect of Christian duty. How many are absent, and how frequently, from the worship of God, only because a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, robs them of the energy to serve God" (Coffman, p.409).
 - 3) He had no self-confidence (was fearful). The foolish virgins were over-confident.
 6. Verses 26-27: "His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."
 - a. "In the answer, the right of the lord to the time and labor of the servant is waived, and he is condemned on his own ground. His lord's money had been in his possession for a long time, and even if he had

- been a free man he would have owed interest on it. But he had been too slothful to labor, and he had been too neglectful of his obligations to even loan the money to the exchangers and secure the interest on it: he could not, therefore, truthfully say, 'Lo, there thou hast that is thine.' It was unlawful to loan money to a brother Israelite on interest, but interest could be lawfully exacted from Gentiles, and the Jews of later ages found abundant opportunities to loan at good rates all of their surplus capital" (McGarvey, p.218).
- b. He is called "wicked" and "slothful." He was wicked for making the accusation that his master was too demanding, oppressive, and selfish. He was slothful because he did not do what his master expected of him. In God's sight, one is wicked if he disobeys God's word; this follows because the lord in the story represents the Lord of heaven. One is slothful if he fails to meet his God-given duties.
 - c. "A major problem the one talent man likely has was a temptation to neglect a small gift or talent. So often people will not perform or participate if they view themselves to have few talents while others seem to have many. Many have made the mistake of the one talent man by hiding that one talent. It has often been said that we know little about the apostle Andrew. We do know the great work he was involved in by simply bringing Peter to Christ (John 1:40-42). The Bible is full of information written by and written about this great apostle. Many men like Peter are perhaps left untouched by the Master because someone neglected a small gift that could return great dividends" (Roy Sharp, *Book of Matthew*, Getwell Lectures, p.640).
7. Verse 28: "Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents."
- a. "It is easy to see why the talent should be taken away from him who had it, but not so clear that it should have been given to him who had ten. Why not divide it between him who had ten and him who had four? I see no reason for this, except that the man who had successfully managed the largest amount had exhibited the greatest capacity, and the lord's interests were safest in his hands" (McGarvey, pp.218f).
 - b. "This is no high-handed case of robbing the poor to enrich the rich. This action on the part of the Lord calls for no indignation. It is God's law that neglected gifts perish while improved gifts multiply, and that law is as inviolate as the law of gravity" (Coffman, p.411).
 - c. "In the spiritual sense of the parable it means that they who are faithful shall be rewarded—not, however, that anything shall be taken from the unfaithful and given to them; and it means also that the unfaithful and indolent shall be taken away from their privileges and punished" (Barnes, p.269).
8. Verse 29: "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."
- a. "This statement, though introduced by 'for' does not give a reason for the act just mentioned (28), but presents a general rule of God's government which applies in the case. The man of five talents had—that is, he had profit on what was given him—and to him more was given; while the man of the one talent had not, and from him was taken what he had" (McGarvey, p.219).
 - b. Consider:
 - 1) Matthew 13:12: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."
 - 2) Mark 4:25: "For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."
 - 3) Luke 8:18: "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."
 - 4) Luke 19:26: "For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him."
 - 5) John 15:2: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."
9. Verse 30: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- a. The unprofitable servant was destined to receive the punishment his unbelief, laziness, and indifference deserved.
 - b. "Here again, as in 24:51, there is a transition from the parable to the reality; for there was no such

punishment of servants as casting them out into the dark. The darkness is that which lies outside of all the light and blessedness which the faithful servants are to enjoy with their Lord.

- 1) "The darkness symbolizes the desolation of that state; the weeping, its sorrow; and the gnashing of teeth, its anguish. No picture could be drawn more awful than this.
- 2) "The significance of this parable is clear and striking. The lord of the servants is the Son of man, whose coming is the subject of the discourse....The servants are his own disciples whom he has purchased with his own blood; and the talents intrusted to them are the means of usefulness given by Christ to all that are his.
- 3) "The conduct of the two faithful servants points out the way in which we are to 'watch' (verse 13), and that of the slothful servant, the course to which our indolence or indifference or ingratitude will lead us if we do not watch. The reckoning with the servants is the final judgment, which will take place when the Son of man comes.
- 4) "The transfer of the one talent from the slothful servant to him who had ten, indicates, if it have any significance, that the reward of the faithful servants of Christ will be magnified on account of the failure of the unfaithful; and this is but just, for the faithful ones have to resist not only the temptations common to all, but also the discouragement and hindrance arising from the unfaithfulness of their brethren.
- 5) "The fact that the man who had the least capacity and the smallest amount intrusted to him was the one who proved unfaithful, is worthy of note: for although in actual experience we see many disciples with great possessions and great influence burying their talents in the ground, we also find that those who consider themselves weak and possessed of little means of usefulness, are peculiarly liable to this sin on account of this very circumstance in their condition.
- 6) "The word *talent*, which is the Greek word *talanton* anglicized, and means a certain amount of money, has acquired in English the sense of intellectual endowments from its use in this parable" (McGarvey, p.219).

C. Matthew 25:31-46: The Great Judgment Scene.

1. Verse 31: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."
 - a. The specifications of the case show that the final coming of Christ is that which is described in this passage: He will come with all the holy angels; he will sit on his glorious throne in judgment; the final separation will take place; the destinies given will be eternal. The context which begins in 24:36 shows that the subject being discussed is the second coming and the resultant end of the world, information that is given in answer to the disciples' second and third questions of 24:3.
 - b. The Lord will not at that day *begin* to sit on the throne of his glory, as some false teachers urge. He has in fact been on that glorious throne at the Father's right hand since his ascension. He promised his apostles that during the regeneration, the time frame when the new birth would be operable, that they would sit on their twelve thrones while he is on the "throne of his glory" (Matt. 19:28). The apostles sit on their thrones (figuratively) "ruling" by means of the word given through them—which includes the time from Acts 2 until the second coming of Christ; it is during this same time that Christ is on the throne of his glory. Cf. Philippians 2:5-11. In the Judgment he will be clothed with both judicial and regal authority.
 - c. "The throne of judgment is called the throne of his glory, because by the decisions of that day his glory will be exhibited more brightly than ever before" (McGarvey, p.220). "He is already upon the throne of his glory; but *then* he will be visibly so, and every eye shall see him, and they shall look upon him whom they pierced. His angels even now are diligent in the service of them that shall be the heirs of everlasting life (Heb. 1:14), but *then* shall they *appear*! Now Christ, from his glory throne, intercedes for his own; but *then* he shall *appear* in judgment (2 Thess. 1:8)" (Coffman, p.412). 2 Peter 3:11-14; Revelation 20:11-15.
 - d. When he returns he will have an innumerable host of angels with him (2 Th. 1:7-9; cf. Matt. 13:36-43; 13:47-50).
2. Verse 32: "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats."

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- a. The universal scope of the Judgment is seen in the fact that "all nations" will be assembled before his judgment throne. This is the same phrase as that given in Matthew 28:19, where "all nations" are to be taught the gospel. The parallel account given in Mark 16:15-16 shows that we teach all nations by teaching all individuals. And since the gospel is directed to the individual, so the Judgment will be on the individual level. We will not be judged as part of the American citizenry, but as individuals. All nations will be gathered before him and he will "separate them one from another." He will not separate one nation from another nation, but he will separate the individuals from all the nations who are redeemed from all those other individuals who are not redeemed.
 - b. We will be judged as individuals, with the word of God as the standard of judgment.
 - 1) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."
 - 4) John 12:48: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."
 - 5) Revelation 20:11-15: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
 - c. There is no reason for the faithful Christian to be terrified of the Judgment.
 - 1) 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - 2) 1 John 4:17-18: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."
 - d. Everyone who has ever lived will be present (Matt. 12:41-42; John 5:28-29; Rom. 14:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:14). "The original pronoun is in the masculine gender (*autous*), and its antecedent, nations is neuter, showing that not the nations, as such, but the individuals composing the nations, are to be separated. A similar construction is found in the original of 28:19" (McGarvey, p.220).
3. Verses 33: "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."
 - a. "The figure of the shepherd is introduced here to make the scene impressive and clear; in the language of the East, sheep were emblems of good men, because of their gentle and innocent ways; the goats of bad men, from their wildness and repulsive habits (Psalm 100:3; Zech. 10:3)" (Boles, p.487).
 - b. The Bible often makes a two-fold division using different descriptive terms: wheat and chaff; just and unjust; wise and foolish. Shepherds kept the sheep and goats in separate groups.
 - c. "In the matter of judgment, the right hand is always represented as being the place of honor and preferment, while the left is the place of the less favored or the despised. It is said that when people who were accused of crime were tried by the Jewish Sanhedrin, those who were acquitted were placed
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- on the right hand, while those who were condemned were stationed on the left" (ALC, 1966, p.224).
4. Verses 34-36: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."
 - a. Those on his right hand are addressed first. The invitation is one of great blessing: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."
 - b. From the very beginning, God intended for those who would be righteous to obtain a place in heaven for eternity. This is part of the mystery "which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7; cf. Eph. 1:3-4). Jesus went to prepare this place (John 14:1-3). The kingdom was not fully prepared from the foundation of the world since Jesus said he was going to heaven to prepare it. "The meaning is, that it had been *in course of preparation* from the foundation of the world" (McGarvey, p.220).
 - c. By the time that these events being described actually occur, that place will have been prepared fully. "It had been prepared for just such faithful servants of God as are represented here by the sheep. It was no new plan, no secret decree, no arbitrary election, but the one constant covenant condition of mercy that had extended from the creation of man to the judgment of God at the last day" (Boles, p.488).
 - d. Six conditions are listed as the basis of the invitation into glory: they had given food, water, clothing, they had been hospitable to the stranger, visited the sick, and had befriended the imprisoned. These six conditions represent the various circumstances of physical hardships we may face. The Lord says that the redeemed provided for him the things which these conditions made necessary.
 - e. One of the common errors in biblical interpretation is taking one passage to the exclusion of others. Many have taken the passages which show the essentiality of faith, but exclude those which make baptism essential, when teaching the plan of salvation. Many have the idea, from this passage, that "doing good" to others is what is required to go to heaven. But Christ did not teach the "social gospel!"
 - f. Other passages show that living pure lives, worshiping God in spirit and truth, evangelizing the world, among other things, are necessary in order for one to go to heaven.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
 - 2) Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."
 - 3) 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
 - 4) John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
 - 5) Hebrews 5:8-9: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."
 - 6) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
 - 7) Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 - g. "The acts here specified are all deeds of benevolence; all belong to the category of good works. We are not hence to conclude that good works alone can secure to us everlasting life, seeing that in the midst of our good works we commit sin, and before the beginning of our good works we lived in sin. Forgiveness for these sins must be secured by complying with the conditions thereof, or we will be condemned on their account, notwithstanding all the benevolence which we can perform. The lesson taught in the passage is this: that works of Christian benevolence, as we have opportunity to perform them, constitute one of the conditions of our acceptance in the day of judgment. They are, indeed, but

the outgrowth of faith and love, and their absence proves that our faith is dead, and that love has not been born within us" (McGarvey, p.220f).

- h. No mention of the conditions of faith, repentance, confession, baptism, church membership, worship, godly living, etc., is made. The Lord is simply stressing the importance of helping others. The fact that they did the things he credits them with doing presupposes that these grew out of faith and obedience. He applies the benevolent actions of these people as having been done to him. In the next part of the passage he shows that when they did it to "the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Thus, the actions of kindness being praised and rewarded are those things done by his saints to the other saints (in particular). Acts of kindness done to those who are not saints are authorized and commended (Gal. 6:10).
- i. "That which is set forth in the...paragraph is the principle which will determine our destiny, that is, the principle of godly and practical benevolence; and without it there is no conformity to the will of God, and no fitness of character for the eternal courts of heaven. The acts of mercy which are enumerated by Jesus in the text now before us are given as manifestations of character; and they are specified in order to show the importance which the Lord attaches to them. (Cf. James 1:27.) It should be remembered, however, that good deeds alone will not save any one; the deeds of mercy which are acceptable to God are those which are prompted by faith and love. (Cf. Gal 5:6; I Cor. 13:3.)" (ALC, 1966, p.225).
- j. Cornelius was an extraordinary person, but it was essential that he personally obey the gospel for his past sins to be removed. Acts 10:2 and 22 lists great spiritual qualities possessed by Cornelius, and others are given in the story. In view of the outstanding attributes and practices of this man, it might seem strange to many that he even had the need to be saved. His case establishes the great truth that moral purity does not of itself give salvation. In the corrupt Roman Empire, here was one of its citizens who possessed spiritual qualities which outshine those of many Christians (Mt. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:8-9; Jn. 14:6).
 - 1) **He was a devout man.** He had deep religious feelings; he was pious and reverent. This word is used in description of those who buried Stephen (8:2); of Ananias (22:12); of Simeon (Luke 2:25). One who sincerely worships an idol could also be devout, but in the case of Cornelius, his reverence and piety were toward God. However, he was attempting to serve God by a system which was now out of date.
 - 2) **He feared God with all his house.** Although he was not in fellowship with the Jews, he revered their God. Perhaps he had been long enough in the land to come to know the true God of Israel. Not only did he reverence God himself, but his family (his house) also had this attitude toward God.
 - 3) **With all his house.** He had an outstanding influence on his own household and with his friends. The members of his house also feared God, and he was able to bring many friends to hear what Peter later presented (10:24, 33).
 - 4) **He gave much alms to the people.** This indicates that he possessed a measure of wealth. His benevolence reveals his kindness of heart toward those in need. He gave alms to the Jewish people, an act sure to attract the attention of the Jews and engender admiration for him on their part.
 - 5) **He prayed regularly to God.** His religious life was active, not only in kindness to others, but also in devotion to God (1 Thess. 5:17).
 - 6) **He fasted** (10:30). This is a very personal act of devotion. It is not to be done to be seen of men (Matt. 6:16-18). Fasting, coupled with prayer and Bible study, is able to bring one closer to God and strengthen the individual.
 - 7) **He was a just man** (10:22). He was righteous ("rightwise"); he was without prejudice or partiality; he was upright.
 - 8) **He had a good report among the Jews** (10:22). He had acted kindly toward their poor. Obviously, there was nothing in his character or life which would anger them, but rather there was much to exalt him in their estimation.
- k. But Cornelius needed to obey the gospel: "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). He was a good man who was unsaved; Peter presented the gospel to him

so that he could believe and obey it and be saved.

5. Verses 37-40: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me."
 - a. The Lord, in this picture of the Judgment, describes the astonishment on the part of the redeemed: "How did we do these things to thee?" Jesus accused Saul of Tarsus of having persecuted "me" (Acts 22:7). Saul had done so by persecuting the Lord's people.
 - 1) "What is done to Christ's followers is done to him. What is done to his church is done to him. Those who think they find in these words of Jesus an excuse for making Christianity a mere matter of social charity, should look again. It is not the treatment of all the wretched and unfortunate of earth that shall make up the burden of the Christian's duty (though that must be allowed as desirable), but the treatment of 'these my brethren,' as Christ expressed it, that determines destiny (see v.40)....
 - 2) "What an awful warning this contains for those who set at naught the Lord's true followers, who persecute, harass, mistreat, deny, or neglect them....In view of this, the principal part of every church's budget should be on command for the alleviation, not of the wicked world's abounding woes, but for the legitimate needs and requirements of God's people" (Coffman, pp.413f).
 - b. "When Jesus says that the ones who perform the deeds of mercy which he mentioned are actually doing service to him personally, they will be astonished, for they will not be able to recall having ministered to him; but the idea behind all of this is to emphasize the unconsciousness of merit which characterizes the noblest deeds, when their performance is motivated by faith in and love for God and man. (Cf. Mark 9:41.) During the early days of the church, when the brethren were frequently persecuted, which often included the destruction or confiscation of their property and being driven from their homes, the sympathetic consideration and help of fellow Christians, who were able to assist them, was sorely needed. (Heb. 10:32-34.) But even today, when the most of us are free from such persecution, there are always people in need...(Gal. 6:10)" (ALC, 1966, p.325).
 - c. "It is not necessary to suppose that such a conversation as is here stated will actually take place, for the mass of the saints will already have learned the lesson here taught; but the form of a conversation is probably employed as the best method of presenting the thought. The passage shows that all deeds of benevolence done to the brethren of Jesus are accepted by him as if done to himself. We have the precious privilege of ministering to him in ministering to his" (McGarvey, p.221).
 - d. Visiting those in prison today is not usually parallel with the situation the Lord describes here. It was his people who were in prison and were visited by others who were also members of the church. They were imprisoned, not because of criminal acts, but because of their faith. Hence, the need for visiting them. We visit prisons today primarily as an evangelistic work, although we can also conduct worship services for those thus converted or who were already Christians.
 - e. "No thoughtful person can conclude that Jesus equated salvation with benevolence in the usual sense. It is not mere charity, but help of Christ's followers that is highlighted here. If this principle were more widely understood and accepted, it would revolutionize men's attitude toward the church. In the final essence, what men do to his church, they do to him. To neglect, flout, or dishonor the church is to do the same to Christ who is the head of the church. On the other hand, those who support and provide for the church and extend their concern and constant aid upon behalf of her poor and needy, do the same for Christ whose body is the church"(Coffman, p.414).
6. Verse 41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."
 - a. "That is, primarily prepared for the devil and his angels, though not without anticipation of its use for the punishment of men. The fact that, wicked men must suffer the same punishment as the devil and his angels, shows the enormity of our sins" (McGarvey, p.221).
 - b. The eternal fire the Lord mentioned describes both the means of the punishment and its duration. Fire is probably more feared than any other kind of pain and punishment; its pain is horrible; its scars can

- scarcely be removed; its memory is cruel. God is just in punishing sin.
7. Verses 42-45: "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me."
 - a. The same reasons are given as the basis for the punishment of the "goats." The scene is not depicting a judgment of the church only since in the judgment every knee is to bow and every tongue is to confess (Phil. 2:9-11). "At that great moment when all nations shall have been assembled before the throne of Christ for judgment, infidelity will have finally and eternally disappeared; but the incorrigible sinners who have mocked God's word shall plead in vain before the gates of life. Consistent with this view, applying the passage to all men and not just to the church, is the solemn fact that the Scriptures mention only *one* judgment" (Coffman, p.417).
 - b. "The performance of good works on the one hand, and the neglect of them on the other, constitute the specified difference between the parties. We here learn, that whatever other sins may or may not have been committed, the sin of neglecting to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to minister to the sick and the imprisoned disciple, is enough to consign one to the fate of the devil and his angels. Such neglect proves the absence of that faith and love which are essential to Christian character" (McGarvey, p.221).
 - c. "Let it be observed here that the public ground of their condemnation is the *neglect* of duty, or because *they did it not*. We are not to suppose that they will not also be condemned for their open and positive sins. See Rom. 2:9; Ep. 5:5; Col. 3:5,6; 1 Cor. 6:9,10; Re. 21:8; Ps. 9:17" (Barnes, p.272).
 - d. "Heaven was prepared for man, and hell prepared for the devil and his angels; but some men fit themselves for the companionship of 'the devil and his angels,' and must be assigned to their destiny. Eternal punishment is one of the subjects of which the mind can form but feeble conceptions; the language of man cannot describe accurately such punishment. The punishment of the wicked as given by Jesus in this scene was because they had neglected to do the righteous deeds that the other class had done. Nothing is said about their wickedness otherwise; they are not accused of being notorious murderers and outlaws, but simply had neglected to do that which they had opportunity to do....Their primal and all-comprehensive sin is the rejection of Christ through the ministration to his disciples. From this cause, whatever sins they have committed stand unforgiven; they stand without a cover in all their life's guilt, in complete exposure to the full unrestrained measure of justice without mercy" (Boles, p.490).
 8. Verse 46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - a. "This overwhelming word from man's only Redeemer is shocking. The soul draws back from the contemplation of anything so terrible as eternal punishment. Only a fool could fail to be moved by the dreadful thought that such a penalty as eternal punishment can be incurred. No wonder men have sought to soften this doctrine; and yet, the theological and philosophical grounds for this doctrine are profoundly overwhelming and convincing" (Coffman, pp.417f).
 - b. The two terms "everlasting" and "eternal" are from the same Greek word; so the everlasting punishment is just as long as the eternal life. The translators gave us two different words, evidently, for the sake of variety of expression.
 - c. If there is no consciousness after death for the wicked, as false teachers assert, there could be no punishment. Even human law does not punish those who have no comprehension of the pain of their penalty.
 - d. "Whatever this Greek word [*aionios*] means in the last clause of this sentence it means in the first; for it is an invariable rule of exegesis, that a word when thus repeated in the same sentence must be understood in the same sense, unless the context or the nature of the subject shows that there is a play on the word. There is certainly nothing in the context to indicate the slightest difference in meaning, nor can we know by the nature of the subject that the punishment spoken of is less durable than the life. It is admitted on all hands that in the expression 'everlasting life' the term has its full force, and therefore it is idle and preposterous to deny that it has the same force in the expression 'everlasting

punishment.' The everlasting punishment of this verse is the same as the everlasting fire in verse 41. The punishment is by fire, and its duration is eternal" (McGarvey, pp.221f).

9. Judgment which results in this terrible punishment is necessary.
 - a. Man is a free moral agent; he must give account (Heb. 9:27; Eccl. 11:3; Gal. 6:7-8). God is righteous (Acts 17:30-31; 24:25). There is no other possible way for God to provide and maintain a heaven for his people. Unless the ungodly are separated from the holy, no proper reward for them could be had. Revelation 21:27.
 - b. Objection: "God has changed; he was vengeful in the Old Testament days." The Old Testament days were dark, ignorant, and wicked times; God frequently used direct force in punishing evil, and gave a record of some of that punishment as a warning for us (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1ff). But he also overlooked many sins of that era (Acts 17:30) and was patient with men. For the good of the whole race, he often directly punished the few.
 - c. Objection: "Hell is only a temporary, corrective measure." This is denied by plain statements of the Bible (Rev. 22:11-12; Luke 16:26; Matt. 25:46).
 - d. Objection: "No parent would punish his child so." But no parent is able to do so! Disobedience to God is far worse than disobedience to one's parent. Only God can ascertain the proper punishment for sin. Christ's *death* was necessary for pardon.
 - e. Objection: "If God is good, why doesn't he destroy Satan and all evil?" He will do that very thing at the proper time (Rev. 20:10). He gives man time to repent (2 Pet. 3:9) which gives men time to do more evil. A moral, spiritual battle is to be fought in order to prepare men for heaven. God is not responsible for the evil men do!
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MATTHEW 26

A. Matthew 26:1-5: Christ Predicts His Death; the Jews Plot to Have Him Slain.

1. Verses 1-2: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the passover*, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."
 - a. Other version:
 - 1) American Standard: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified."
 - 2) New King James: Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."
 - b. Following the speech, he gave in answer to the apostles' questions (24:4—25:46), the Lord gave the fourth announcement of his impending death. The other three occasions of this prediction are found in the following:
 - 1) Matthew 15:21-23: "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us."
 - 2) Matthew 17:22-23: "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."
 - 3) Matthew 20:17-19: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."
 - c. He had been very plain and detailed in the previous statements, but had not announced the time of the crucifixion. Here he states that his death will be by crucifixion and that it would occur in connection with the Passover which was only two days away.
 - d. The passover always started at sundown on the 14th day of Nisan. It fell on different days of the week each year. It was on Friday the year of his death.
 - e. "Of great significance is the sharp divergence between Christ's word and that of the chief priests and elders. Christ here placed his crucifixion as an event that would occur 'after two days,' and that it would take place during the passover festivities. Yet at the very time Christ revealed this to the disciples, the chief priests decided otherwise. They decided that he should die subtly...and that it should not be done during the feast (v.5), thus clearly postponing his death for at least a week. However, *they* were not the architects of our Lord's death. As the Master said, he would lay down his life of his own accord; and Christ, not the priests, would choose the hour and the manner of his doing so" (Coffman, p.419).
 - f. The Passover lambs were selected on the tenth day of the month; they were slain "between the two evenings" (Ex. 12), and eaten on the 14th. Jesus made his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; he was slain on the Passover day (Friday, the 14th of Nisan). His body was removed from the cross prior to the sabbath (the 15th). The Olivet Discourse took place on Wednesday (13th); the Lord ate the Passover with his disciples and instituted the Lord's supper on Friday the 14th (Thursday as we count time).
 2. Verses 3-5: "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill *him*. But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar among the people."
 - a. The Lord's enemies, including the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, held a secret council in which they plotted the Lord's death. They decided that they should not arrest him publicly during the feast day lest there be a popular uprising by the people in Christ's favor and against the conspirators.
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At this time Jesus was still popular among the common people. A problem existed for they did not know where Jesus spent his time when not in public activity. They decided to arrest him on the sly but still had to find some occasion and place where this might be done. They were still smarting from the deadly blows Jesus had publicly dealt them in their various debates with him (Matt. 22).

- b. The chief priests were the heads over the twenty-four courses of priests (1 Chron. 24; Neh. 12; cf. Luke 1:5). Caiaphas was high priest and the head over the Jewish Sanhedrin. The high priest was to be appointed for life, according to the Law, but the legal high priest (Annas) had incurred the wrath of Rome and had been removed. Caiaphas was his son-in-law. The Jews still considered Annas, who lived to a great age, as the rightful high priest.
- c. John 11:47-57 gives additional information about this conference. Little did they know that what they were saying and doing in secret would one day be exposed to the full view of the whole world!

B. Matthew 26:6-13: Matthew Recounts the Feast in Bethany (see also Mark 14:3-9).

1. Verse 6: "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper."
 - a. The feast is placed here because of its relationship to the events Matthew is relating in this chapter. He began the chapter by telling of Jesus' prediction of his forthcoming crucifixion; he then tells of the conference held by the Jewish leaders to decide what to do about Jesus; he tells what happened at the feast which had occurred a few days earlier in order to show why Judas betrayed the Lord, which in turn shows how the Lord's enemies were able to arrest Jesus privately. The flow of the story is very logical and precise.
 - b. "This language is indefinite as to time. John mentions the same feast, and dates it six days before the Passover, which fixes it on Sunday night. (John 12:1.) Matthew's indefinite language is entirely consistent with this date. He mentions it here, out of its chronological order, because it is associated in thought with the counsel of the priests and elders to put Jesus to death (verses 3-5), and with Jesus' own prediction just mentioned (verses 1-2). The accounts of the feast, as given by Matthew and John, are too nearly identical to allow the supposition that two different feasts are referred to" (McGarvey, p.223).
 - c. The feast took place in the house of Simon the leper. Since lepers were not allowed to associate with the rest of the population (Lev. 13:45-46), it follows that this man had been cleansed of his disease, most likely by Jesus.
 - d. The feast is noteworthy, in part, because of those who were present: Lazarus (who had been raised from the dead), and Simon (who had most probably been miraculously cleansed of his leprosy by the Lord). Mary and Martha were also present.
 - e. See Coffman, pp.421f, for a quote from A.T. Robertson (*A Harmony of the Gospels*, New York, N.Y., Harper and Brothers, 1922, p.187) which shows why the present feast and that of Luke 7:36ff are different occasions: One was in Galilee, the other in Judah; one involved a woman notoriously wicked, the other a woman of high spiritual qualities.
2. Verse 7: "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat *at meat*."
 - a. Other versions:
 - 1) American Standard: "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and she poured it upon his head, as he sat at meat."
 - 2) New King James: "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster cruse of exceeding precious ointment, and she poured it upon his head, as he sat at meat."
 - b. The unidentified woman anointed the Lord's head with a precious ointment while he was eating. Only John reveals the woman's name—Mary (John 12:1-8).
 - c. John's account adds the details that the ointment was also put on his feet, and identifies it as the very costly spikenard, which was valued at 300 pence. This amount is thought to have been about fifty-one dollars, several years ago.
3. Verses 8-9: "But when his disciples saw *it*, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose *is* this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."
 - a. The disciples were angered over what they considered a waste. Matthew does not identify any particular disciple, but John points out that Judas was the culprit; but it appears that he was joined by

at least some of the others in voicing their objection to this "waste."

- b. John also adds that Judas was not concerned about the poor, but that his aim would have been to steal the money since he carried the "bag" containing the money of the group—he was their treasurer.
4. Verses 10-12: "When Jesus understood *it*, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did *it* for my burial."
 - a. Jesus understood the problem which had developed, and rebuked the disciples for their complaint. The woman had done a good work upon him. The poor will always be present for you to aid; I will not be present for long. She has anointed my body in anticipation of my burial. This last comment indicates the strong spiritual stance of Mary.
 - b. While the disciples had argued with the Savior over his announcements of his death, and had dismissed it from their minds or had been unable to grasp it, this lady who sat at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42) had apparently understood more about his mission than the others.
 5. Verse 13: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."
 - a. As a tribute to this woman's loyalty and love, Jesus included the report of her devotion to him in his word for all the world to see.
 - b. "Persons frequently perform, without the least thought of notoriety, actions which are destined to make them famous. No human being could have foreseen what Jesus here declares concerning the future fame which would attach to Mary and her simple act of love. On the contrary, the act at first appeared reprehensible, and was favorably regarded by none present except Jesus. His divine foreknowledge is demonstrated by the literal fulfillment of his prediction, and as the knowledge of this incident reaches forward into coming ages and spreads abroad still farther in the earth, the demonstration becomes continually more surprising" (McGarvey, p.224).
 - c. Matthew and Mark do not mention her by name, possibly because she was still alive when they wrote; only John (who penned his account later than the others, at a time when this noble lady may have been deceased) names her.
 - d. "This is another fruitful example that what is given to Christ is saved; all else is lost. Of the lifetime earnings and estate of Mary of Bethany, if the sum total of it had been invested in any conceivable way and multiplied a thousandfold, it would have been powerless to achieve for her name even a fraction of the endowment provided by the 300 pence worth of spikenard lavished upon the body of our Lord" (Coffman, p.425).
 - e. As the gospel was revealed in its entirety, Mary's loving sacrifice was included; and as it is preached throughout the world, her story is reported. Who but the Lord is able to know the vast amount of good that has resulted by the wonderful influence of the godly lady's expression of love.

C. Matthew 26:14-16: Judas Makes His Fateful Bargain.

1. Verse 14: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests."
 - a. Judas went to the chief priests with his unholy proposal. It appears, from the placement of the story of the feast in which Judas had exposed his avarice, that he was upset over the stinging rebuke the Lord had meted out. This appears to explain his evil act reported here, which could have also been motivated by his greed.
 - b. At any rate, he knew about the desire of the chief priests to learn of the Lord's secret haunts: "Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him" (John 11:57). Greed, wounded pride, and disappointment were involved in his betrayal.
 2. Verse 15: "And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."
 - a. Judas asked how much they would give for the information he possessed. Luke's account (22:3-6) reports the gladness of the Jewish leaders on hearing from Judas. Luke also reports that Judas spoke with the chief priests and the captains. These captains "were the leaders of a guard of priests and Levites whose duty was to protect the temple and the sacred rites from being interrupted by riotous persons; they were at the command of the chief priests for such a work as this" (Boles, p.498).
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- b. "The pieces of silver were most likely the Jewish shekel, and the amount \$15.00. This was a low price for so base a deed: but Judas anticipated no personal danger; he shut out from his mind the thought of all other evil consequences to himself, and he expected his task to cost him but a few minutes of labor when the time should come" (McGarvey, p.225). He had no way of knowing that his secret covenant with the Lord's enemies would be made part of God's public record for all to see. The covenanted price was the rate for a common slave (Ex. 21:32).
 - c. How could these religious leaders, who supposedly knew the Old Testament intimately, have failed to see the connection between their wicked covenant and what Zechariah (11:12-13) had predicted? The prophecy contains an amazing number of details which were all present in the fulfillment. The sum was 30 pieces of silver; it was weighed out; it was cast unto the potter; it was thrown down ("cast"); the potter would get it; the recipient would do the casting; the transaction occurred in the temple (the house of the Lord); a haggling over the price is indicated by the prophecy: "If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear." (See Coffman, p.426).
 - d. They "covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver," which implies bargaining.
3. Verse 16: "And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."
- a. From that time Judas sought an occasion and opportunity to betray the Lord. The words "deliver him" and "betray him" are used interchangeably (verses 15,16). The opportunity was not long in coming. When evil is contemplated, the devil often quickly provides the means. Jonah ran from his God-given obligation; the ship and passage money were available for a hasty flight (Jonah 1:1-3).
 - b. In the meantime, Judas continued his hypocritical pose as a loyal disciple, but sought opportunity to deliver Jesus to the rulers privately, when he was away from the multitude. His enemies could bring the Lord before the Sanhedrin, manufacture a charge, and put him to death.
- D. Matthew 26:17-25: The Passover is Prepared; Jesus Announces the Betrayal.
1. Verse 17: "Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?"
 - a. On Thursday, the disciples asked Christ where they should prepare the passover. The Passover day was followed by seven days in which unleavened bread was to be used—called the feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:14-20). The term "Passover" came to be used as a designation of the entire eight-day period of holy festivities: "Now the day of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover" (Luke 22:1; Mt. 26:17). A major controversy has prevailed through the ages regarding whether the meal Jesus and his disciples ate on the night of his betrayal, specifically whether this was the passover meal or if it was a common meal, or was the passover eaten a day early. If the only information we had was that contained in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there would be no controversy. But John's account indicates that the Jewish leaders had not eaten the Passover (John 18:28), and the day of his trial and crucifixion is also called "the preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14).
 - b. If Jesus had eaten it a day earlier, his act would have been an act of disobedience to an Old Testament command which specified that the passover feast was to be eaten on the night of the 14th day of the first Jewish month (Nisan, formerly called Abib). An act of disobedience is an act of sin, and Jesus did not commit any sin (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; John 14:30; I Pet. 2:22). Did he have the authority to set aside one of God's commandments prior to his death, when he brought to a conclusion the whole Old Testament system?
 - c. Barnes reports that in that day prior to the invention of modern calendars and more exact methods of determining days, the Jews "placed witnesses around the heights of the temple to observe the first appearance of the new moon; they examined the witnesses with much formality, and endeavoured also to obtain the exact time by astronomical calculations. Others held that the month properly commenced when the moon was *visible*. Thus it is said a difference arose between them about the time of the Passover, and that Jesus kept it one day sooner than most of the people" (p.279). This would be a logical way of explaining the difficulty.
 - d. Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:7 make it very definite that the meal to be prepared was the Passover. But it is a difficult question and one in which we ought not be dogmatic.
 - e. John 18:28 might be explained also by understanding the statement as including the rest of the eight-day period of feasting: "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover"
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- (Luke 22:1). John 19:14 could be understood as pertaining to the preparations made for the Sabbath which was to start that very afternoon at sundown: "And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!"
2. Verse 18: "And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."
 - a. Matthew does not identify how many and which disciples were sent to make the necessary arrangements, but Luke 22:8 tells us that Peter and John were selected.
 - b. Mark and Luke report some detailed instructions by which these two disciples would locate the place where they could eat the meal. They would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water; they were to follow him and ask him about the guestchamber "where I shall eat the passover with my disciples" (Luke 22:7-12; Mark 14:12-15).
 - c. The procedure Jesus followed in locating the place and arranging for the feast would have kept Judas from learning about it, and thus disrupting the meal by having the enemy arrest Jesus prematurely.
 - d. "It was customary for all the residents of Jerusalem to open their houses for guests during this feast, and therefore Jesus might have presumed on the hospitality of almost any one; but the probability is that the man to whom he sent this message was an acquaintance and a friend" (McGarvey, p.225).
 - e. This is another case of the omniscience of Jesus. He could know about the man, that the disciples would meet him, that he would be carrying a pitcher of water, that he had a large upper room suitable for the feast, that it would be prepared with the proper furnishings, and that he would be willing to let the company use it. All of these details require his supernatural knowledge.
 - f. "The normal population of Jerusalem was something like two hundred or two hundred and fifty thousand people; but when the Jewish people who lived elsewhere came to the city for the feast days, the population was raised to some three million souls" (ALC, 1966, p.229). Josephus estimated that there were 2.7 million present in 70 A.D., not counting those who were "unclean."
 3. Verses 19-20: "And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve."
 - a. The disciples did as the Lord directed. Obviously they found the man, he was agreeable to their use of his house, and the proper preparations were made. If they had been doing this on the day prior to the real passover, the priest would not have been receptive to fulfilling his part of the operation on the wrong day (See Num. 23:10-14; 28; 16-25; Deut. 16:1-6).
 - b. These details had been added to the arrangement first given in Exodus 12. Instead of putting the blood on the door openings, it was now put on the altar, something the priest would do. It was after the arrival of "even" (evening) that they gathered for the feast, in keeping with the Old Testament requirement.
 4. Verses 21-22: "And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?"
 - a. As they were eating, he announced that one of them would betray him. He had previously told them that he would be betrayed but had been indefinite as to the guilty party. Now he plainly says it would be one of the twelve. John 13:18-21 reports that when Jesus made this announcement, he was troubled in spirit. Also, that he stated his reason for telling them about the betrayal ahead of time— that when it occurs, you will have greater reason for believing on me (vs. 19).
 - b. The disciples were very sorrowful for this grievous thought, and began to inquire, "Is it I?" They did not try to accuse each other at this point, but each wanted assurance that he was not the culprit. Judas also asked this question (vs. 25).
 5. Verses 23-24: "And he answered and said, He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."
 - a. The answer Jesus gave them was only to say, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." Their method of eating was for several persons to dip bits of bread into a vessel containing the sauce; the container served more than one person. The answer did not identify Judas to the rest of them, but it let Judas know that the Lord knew it would be him. This statement narrowed the field to those who were using the same bowl as the Lord; it is doubtful that all twelve could reach
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the same bowl.

- b. John's account (13:22-30) furnishes some details not given elsewhere. Peter beckoned for John to ask the Lord for the betrayer's name. John asked, and was told that it was he to whom Jesus would give a "sop" which had been dipped into the food bowl. On saying this, Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to Judas, and told him, "That thou doest, do quickly." The others heard what the Lord told Judas but did not understand what he meant. Judas immediately arose and left the room—to complete the evil bargain he had made with the chief priests and captains.
- c. Matthew shows that Jesus admitted to Judas that he was the traitor, a fact which was not heard or understood by the others. With John's report in mind, we can see that only the Lord, John and Judas knew the identity of the betrayer.
- d. "Although it was written of the Son of man, and predetermined by God, that he should go as Judas had covenanted, yet the woe is pronounced on Judas, and it is said of him that it had been good for him if he had not been born. This shows that a man who, by a wicked act, brings about a purpose of God, bears the same guilt as though God had no purpose in it. It is his own act and motive for which he is judged, and not the results which God may have intended to bring out of his act. The statement that 'it had been good for that man if he had not been born,' is a denial of the doctrine of universal salvation; for if a man after any conceivable amount of suffering, shall at last enjoy everlasting life, it is not true of him that it had been better for him if he had not been born" (McGarvey, p.226).
- e. The object of the direction the conversation took was to show the foreknowledge of Jesus and to give Judas ample warning against his evil intentions. "Yet so utterly callous had the conscience of Judas become that with brazen effrontery he asks, 'Master, is it I?' Such hardihood in crime is a more convincing evidence of deep depravity than his previous covenant with the chief priests" (ibid.).

E. Matthew 26:26-30: The Institution of the Lord's Supper.

1. Verse 26: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body."
 - a. Again, John's account gives an additional detail of importance. The Passover meal was over (13:1-2) when the preceding discussion was had. Immediately after Jesus had identified Judas as the traitor, that evil disciple left the room. Hence, Judas was not present for the institution of the Lord's Supper or for the detailed promises the Lord gave regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (13:30). Luke's account may imply, however, that Judas did not leave until after the Supper had been instituted (22:18-20).
 - 1) Luke 22:18-20: "For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."
 - 2) John 13:1-2: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him."
 - 3) John 13:29-30: "For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night."
 - b. The Lord took bread and blessed it. Luke 22:19 says he gave thanks for it. Thus, to bless means to give thanks. The Greek term used is "*eucharisteo*." There is nothing in the statement which implies that we make it holy by our prayer or other action. The bread that was present was without any leavening whatsoever. The Jews were not permitted to have any leavening in their houses during this special time. To say the least, we know that unleavened bread is the kind to be used in the Lord's Supper today because it was the kind the Lord used. Specific mention is made of it as unleavened bread (vs. 17).
 - c. Denominational doctrines assert that when the priest "blesses" the bread, it is miraculously turned into the actual flesh of Jesus. This is called "transubstantiation." Others think that the flesh of Christ is joined with the bread, thus call the process "consubstantiation." Neither of these notions is in the

- scriptures.
- d. When the Lord said, "This is my body," he was merely using a common figure of speech which he used in many other instances. He spoke of himself as a door (John 10:9), the way (John 14:6), the true vine (John 15:1), etc. No one understands these expressions as literal.
 - 1) The bread in the Lord's Supper is no more the flesh of Jesus than he is a literal door, vine, or road. We ought not allow denominational foolishness to drive us to any compromised position. The bread does *represent* the body of the Lord. It is bread before the prayer; it is bread after the prayer; it is bread while we eat it and digest it.
 - 2) "If, as Jesus spoke the words, 'this is my body,' he had suddenly disappeared, and the apostles had seen nothing but the bread, they would have understood that the body had been miraculously transformed into the loaf. But as his body was still there, and the loaf which he held in his hands was also there; and as his body still remained there after the loaf had been broken, and passed around, and eaten up, it is impossible that they could have understood him as meaning that the loaf was literally his body, and impossible that he could have intended to be so understood" (McGarvey, p.227).
 - 3) It is similar to his statement that "the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil (Matt. 13:38-39, 19-20, 22-23; Gen. 40:12; 41:26; Dan. 7:23; 8:21; 1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 4:24).
 2. Verse 27: "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it."
 - a. He took the cup and *gave thanks* (cf. "bless" in previous verse) for it. He told them all to drink of it. Mark 14:23 says that they each drank of it. He did not tell them to drink it all, but for all of them to drink. It seems strange that modern ways withhold the cup from the ordinary folks; this practice directly disobeys the Lord's very plain command.
 - b. The thing they were to drink was the cup, meaning the contents of the cup. Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16. Verse 29 calls the thing drunk "fruit of the vine." In reference to the Lord's Supper, the word "wine" is not used in the sacred text.
 - c. "The particular type of drink at the passover was not specified at the time of our lesson; but Bible students, such as Vincent, Edersheim, and others, say that it was wine, diluted with water, 'generally in the proportion of one part to two parts of water.' There can be no reasonable doubt about the use of unfermented grape juice on the Lord's table; and that should satisfy the most discriminating mind, and especially since Jesus spoke of it as the fruit of the vine" (ALC, 1966, p.231).
 - d. The items the Lord used in the Supper are commonly found around the world. They are very appropriate. The pale, white loaf pictures the lifeless body of Jesus on the cross. The rich color of the fruit of the vine (grape juice), aptly depicts the shed blood of the Lord.
 - e. The Lord's Supper, when properly eaten, gives each participant a backward look to the cross, a forward look to the return of Christ, an upward look to the glorified Christ and an inward look as we examine ourselves. Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:20-30.
 3. Verse 28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - a. The Lord did not mean that the fruit of the vine *was* literally his blood, but as in the case of the bread and his body, representative of it.
 - b. The reference to the new testament is to the new covenant which God had promised in Old Testament time he would establish (Jer. 31:31-34). This indicates a change of his law. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12).
 - c. The fact is stated that the blood of Christ was to be shed. Notice that he speaks of it as if it had already been shed. So certain was the outcome that he could speak of it thusly. Notice further that he did not speak of his blood being "spilled." We often use that term, but it is the wrong word here for it implies an unintentional action. It was foreordained that the blood of Jesus be poured out; there was nothing accidental about it.
 - d. The Greek word "for" (*eis*) is used to show the purpose for his shed blood. He poured out his blood for the purpose of providing for the remission of sins. The same term is used with the same end in view in Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized...*for the remission of sins.*"
 - 1) The blood of Christ is *for* the remission of sins in just the same way that repentance and baptism

are "for" the remission of sins. Putting the two statements together, we learn that the blood of Christ brings about the removal of our sins when the man of faith repents and is baptized by the authority of Christ.

- 2) In other words, we contact the blood of Christ when we repent and are baptized. Acts 2:38 says nothing about faith, but that is because those asking the question (vs. 37) which Peter is answering (vs. 38) were men who already believed on Christ; otherwise, they would not have been "pricked" in their hearts so as to ask their question.
 - e. His blood is said to be shed for "many." It was actually shed for all (Heb. 2:9; Tit. 2:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). However, only those who obey the gospel obtain the full benefits procured by his death. Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 7:26-27, Acts 15:20, and Leviticus 17:11 show that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Our spiritual lives depend on the blood of Christ. The sacrificing of animals throughout the Old Testament ages was for the purpose of furnishing the proper background for the shedding of Christ's blood.
4. Verse 29: "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."
 - a. The Lord declared that he would not drink the fruit of the vine (partake of the Supper) until such time as he did it in the kingdom of heaven.
 - b. The Lord's Supper was intended to be eaten in the kingdom (Luke 22:18,29-30). Since the saints in the first century ate the Supper, the kingdom was present. Our eating the Supper today indicates that the kingdom is here. By virtue of the fact that the Lord's Supper is being eaten, this is absolute proof of the fact that the kingdom has been established. Yet many who eat the Supper deny the presence of the kingdom! If it is not here, neither they nor anyone else has the right to eat it.
 - c. Notice that Jesus calls the contents of the cup "fruit of the vine," a clear statement that it was just that; it was not turned into his actual blood.
 - d. The Lord's statement here is significant to the spiritually-minded. When we eat the supper today, he partakes of it with us. Hence, it is called "the communion of the blood of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16; cf. Matt. 18:20).
 5. Verse 30: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."
 - a. They sang a hymn and then went forth into the mount of Olives. This and all other references to New Testament worship speak of singing, never of playing an instrument.
 - b. John 14-17 should be read in between verses 29 and 30 here; those chapters contain information which only John records, and fits in chronologically at this point.
- F. Matthew 26:31-35: Jesus Predicts the Disciples' Being Offended and Peter's Denial.
1. Verse 31: "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."
 - a. The word offended has the idea of "stumbling." It is used figuratively to describe their fall when they forsook him and fled after his arrest in the garden. When the Lord voluntarily surrendered to the enemy, they fled from him.
 - b. The quotation is from Zechariah 13:7. The Lord's enemies thought that they were the designers of the plot by which Jesus was seized, tried and crucified, but God was simply using them and the circumstances to work out his own plan. Thus, God smote the flock by using the evil men of the situation. The flock of the prophecy was the apostles; the shepherd was Christ.
 - c. This is another remarkable statement which shows the Lord's omniscience which could reveal ahead of time specific happenings which would result from the subjective actions of a group of men who were determined that the thing predicted would not come to pass.
 2. Verse 32: "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."
 - a. Another remarkable prediction which amounts to an appointment to meet the eleven in Galilee *after* he had died and been raised from the dead! No where else in all of history has such an appointment been made and kept! Other references to the appointment are made in Matthew 28:7,10,16:
 - 1) Matthew 28:7: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."
 - 2) Matthew 28:10: "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into
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Galilee, and there shall they see me.”

- 3) Matthew 28:16: “Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.”
 - b. He had just made an unfavorable prophetic statement about them, but here he implies their regained faith by setting up the appointment to meet them in Galilee.
 - c. Underlying the statement is the foreknowledge of his death and resurrection.
 3. Verse 33: "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended."
 - a. Peter, the ever-impetuous one, boldly declares that it may be the case that all of the others may be offended because of him, but he would not stumble! "We can not, for our own good, too frequently reflect on the incident, nor too earnestly pray, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (McGarvey, p.229).
 - b. Coffman points out three failings of Peter in the statement he made here: (1) He contradicted the words of Jesus, (2) he rated himself superior to others, and (3) he was relying on his own mortal strength (p.437).
 - c. Peter honestly thought that no situation could develop in which he would be unable to maintain his faith in the Lord. He was not boasting, but stating the deeply felt belief in his own commitment to Christ. Cf. Mark 14:26-31.
 - d. Luke gives additional information: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (22:31-33).
 4. Verse 34: "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."
 - a. The Lord knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. He knows the real condition of our hearts and lives (Heb. 4:12-13). Jesus announced that before the time of the cock's crowing, Peter would have denied him three times! Mark 14:31 says that before the cock should crow twice, Peter would have denied him thrice. Luke 22:34 says that Peter would deny that he knew Jesus.
 - b. The Jews spoke of the different divisions of the night by using various terms: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning" (Mark 13:35). The cockcrowing was at a time between midnight and morning, probably about three o'clock. Their roosters, therefore, would crow around three in the morning and, in the nature of these fowls, again at dawn. By the time of this second crowing, Peter would have made his third denial. The fulfillment of this wretched denial is described in the latter verses of this chapter.
 5. Verse 35: "Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples."
 - a. Peter maintains his firm conviction that he will not fall victim to this denial, and asserts his willingness to die with the Lord rather than deny him. We have no reason to disbelieve his sincerity. It was only after he had made an attempt to defend Christ that he and the others forsook him and fled.
 - b. The others made similar claims to their own commitment to Christ.
- G. Matthew 26:36-46: Christ's Ordeal in Gethsemane.
1. Verse 36: "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."
 - a. The name of this place means "a place of oil presses." John 18:1 describes it as a garden.
 - b. "The word used by John means not properly a garden for the cultivation of vegetables, but a place planted with the olive and other trees, perhaps with a fountain of water, and with walks and groves; a proper place of refreshment in a hot climate, and of retirement from the noise of the adjacent city....
 - 1) "American missionaries were at the place which is commonly supposed to have been the garden of Gethsemane in 1823. They tell us that the garden is about a stone's cast from the brook of Cedron; that it now contains eight large and venerable-looking olives, whose trunks show their great antiquity.

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- 2) "The spot is sandy and barren, and appears like a forsaken place. A low broken wall surrounds it....A recent traveller says of this place that it 'is a field or garden about fifty paces square, with a few shrubs growing in it, and eight olive-trees of great antiquity, the whole inclosed with a stone wall.'
 - 3) "The place was probably fixed upon, as Dr. Robinson supposes, during the visit of Helena to Jerusalem, A.D. 326, when the places of the crucifixion and resurrection were believed to be identified. There is, however, no absolute certainty respecting the places" (Barnes, pp.285f).
 - c. On entering the garden, he left eight of the disciples at a certain place while he and the other three went farther into Gethsemane.
 - d. After the ravages wrought on Jerusalem and its environs by the Roman army when they laid siege and assaulted the city, the Garden of Gethsemane was most likely greatly changed, if not largely ruined.
 2. Verses 37-38: "And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."
 - a. Peter, James and John accompanied him to a deeper place in the garden; Jesus began to be "sorrowful and very heavy." He stated that he was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The weight he was bearing was almost overwhelming.
 - b. "He felt as if he could not survive the pressure that was upon his soul, and the utter helplessness into which he had sunk is seen in the request to the chosen three, 'Tarry ye here, and watch with me.' He who had been their comforter in every hour of trouble and danger, now calls on them for the help which their wakeful sympathy would give him in the hour of his agony. Wonderful sight! The Son of God longing for the sympathy of human hearts, and leaning in a time of weakness on the arm of human friendship!" (McGarvey, p.229).
 - c. "It is perhaps in vain to attempt an explanation of the extreme agony which Jesus endured in the garden. That it was not an unmanly fear of death is sufficiently proved by the entire course of his previous life, and is demonstrated by the fortitude with which he actually endured his cruel fate when it came upon him."
 - 1) "The natural fear of death, it is true, was saddening to his soul, and the remembrance of the world's cruelty in the past, mingled with the anticipation of their still greater cruelty and their base ingratitude yet to be developed, must have greatly increased the intensity of this sadness; but when we consider all this, and all that we may by imagination distinctly realize, we feel that we are still short of the reality.
 - 2) "There was something in the dual nature of Jesus which gave him an experience when about to die for the sins of the world into which the human heart can not enter. Even when Paul attempts a remark on the subject, he contents himself with these words: 'Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.' (Heb. 5:7,8.)
 - 3) "Here let our attempts at explanation rest, and let us rather direct our thoughts to the everlasting bonds of love with which he has bound us by enduring agony so great in our behalf" (McGarvey, p.231).
 - d. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). The Lord knew full well the awfulness of sin and the blessedness of being in fellowship with the Father. Although he was guilty of no sin, yet he bore the sins of the world as he suffered on the cross. Since God can have no fellowship with sin (Isa. 59:1-2), he withdrew from his precious Son while he suffered alone on the cross.
 - e. In the face of the cruelty of his enemies, and the indifference of the majority of Israel, and the shallow conviction of his disciples, plus the awful prospect of bearing the sins of the world and being separated from the Father during that ordeal, we can clearly see reason for the Savior's extreme sorrow and heaviness of heart!
 3. Verse 39: "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be
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- possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*."
- a. Going a little farther into the garden, he left the three to wait and watch. They were to wait while he prayed, and watch for the approach of the enemy whom the Lord knew to be coming. Luke 22:41 says he went about a stone's cast from the disciples, and kneeled down to pray. Matthew's account says that he fell on his face. Putting the two pictures together we can visualize Jesus first falling to his knees and then prostrating himself upon the ground.
 - b. This is a picture of reverence for God, humility in view of his forthcoming ordeal, and great sorrow over the entire prospect. Since the Savior saw the great need for the strength that can come only through prayer, how much more should we be aware of our need for continual prayer! Likewise with his humility and reverence.
 - c. "If it be possible..." From one point of view, it was possible. He could have given up the rest of his earthly mission, renounced the cross, and thus disobeyed God. He could have called for the twelve legions of angels to deliver him from the enemy.
 - 1) But such was impossible if he intended to obey his Father. "If that purpose, the salvation of men, could have been accomplished without it, the cup both could and would have passed from him" (McGarvey, p.230).
 - 2) It was the Father's will that his Son go through with the plan established from eternity; there was no other way possible for the purposes of God to be fulfilled.
 - d. The devil was not privy to God's long-kept-secret plan of providing a way of escape from sin by the death of his Son. Satan worked feverishly to bring about the Lord's death, only to be thwarted time and again. But now he seemed to be having everything go his way; he later learned that he had been utterly defeated by the omnipotent, omniscient God. But for now he could take delight in the prospect of killing God's Son and gaining even greater ascendancy over the world. If Satan was privy to God's plan, why did God speak of it in such veiled language? Could Satan eavesdrop on the Lord's private conversations with the disciples in which he revealed that he would be betrayed and crucified? If so, why did not the devil work to prevent the crucifixion instead of promoting it?
 - e. The word "cup" is a figurative description of the travail he was facing. In ancient times it was common to execute criminals by forcing them to drink a cup of poison.
 - 1) The famous Socrates of history was compelled to drink hemlock. (See also Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15).
 - 2) Rommel, the famous German general of the Second World War, was forced to imbibe poison, when Hitler thought this great man had been part of the group which attempted to assassinate the Chancellor in July of 1944.
 - f. Christ stated his willingness that God's will be done in all things; in no way, and at no time, did he ever seek to usurp God's authority, or try to make the Father's will null and void (Cf. Rom. 15:1-3; Heb. 10:7,9). His agonizing prayer, followed by his acceptance of the "cup," show that his death was entirely voluntary (John 10:17-18).
4. Verses 40-41: "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."
- a. Finished with his prayer, Jesus returned to the three disciples only to find them sleeping. Luke 22:45 attributes their slumber to sorrow. Adding to that, they had been very busy for several days and had been up all night. They had heard some very disconcerting statements from Jesus, including the fact that the temple would be cast down, that he would be betrayed and crucified, that one of the twelve would be the traitor, that they would all be offended because of him, and that Peter would deny him. Added to that was the unusual sight of seeing Christ in such a sorrowful state of mind. Under such conditions, we may well understand their inability to remain awake and alert. But the Lord had expected them to do so! He rebuked them for being unable to watch with him "one hour."
 - b. "Though sinking under the weight of his own sorrow, he forgets not the danger which threatens his disciples. He exhorts them to watch for it and against it, and to pray that they 'enter not into temptation;' that is, into the power and dominion of the temptation which was coming. They, as they awoken full of self-reproach, he apologizes for them by the remark, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but
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the flesh is weak" (McGarvey, p.230).

5. Verses 42-43: "He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy."
 - a. He returned to his former location and prayed again.
 - b. "It should be particularly observed that Christ did not repeat this triple prayer over and over in rote fashion; but on the other hand, after each heart-breaking petition, he paused, sought companionship, and waited for God's answer....
 - 1) "Repeated' prayers are indeed acceptable, provided they are *prayers*. Furthermore, there is absolutely no precedent for rote prayers, mumbled or shouted over and over, without intermission. Christ did nothing like that; and one needs a strong imagination to find any permission in the Lord's thrice-repeated prayer for any such thing as that exhibited in the Rosary....
 - 2) "There is a definite progression in the prayers, and they were, in each case, separated by intervals of time sufficient for Christ to return to the sleeping disciples. Add to this the significant change in the second prayer from the first, and a probable further change in the third from the second, and this solemn triple prayer plainly refutes the type of glib, rote prayer it is alleged to allow" (Coffman, pp.440-442).
 - c. He found the disciples sleeping once again, "for their eyes were heavy."
6. Verse 44: "And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."
 - a. He offered a similar prayer again, "saying the same words." That is, the tenor of the prayer was akin to those two which preceded it.
 - b. Luke 22:42-46 offers the added information that an angel came and strengthen him, and that his prayers were offered in agony and earnestness, and that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." "Agony" is from the same word used in Luke 13:24 ("strive").
7. Verses 45-46: "Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."
 - a. He returned to the sleeping disciples a third time, telling them to sleep on and take their rest, in view of the awful experiences which they were soon to behold. They would surely need the rest to face the despair and danger of the next several hours.
 - b. Some have supposed a difficulty in these two verses. There is a pause, or at least a change of circumstances, between verse 45 and verse 46. The former contains his statement allowing their rest; the latter reflects the Lord's seeing the approach of the mob sent to arrest him. He tells them to sleep, but then (apparently after a period of time had elapsed), he calls on them to awaken. Verse 47 shows the nearness of the mob.

H. Matthew 26:47-56: The Arrest of Jesus.

1. Verse 47: "And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people."
 - a. At this point, Judas came guiding the mob who had been sent to arrest the Lord. He knew where Jesus could be found at this hour since the Lord often resorted to this place with the disciples (John 18:2). The great multitude came armed with swords and staves, apparently expecting to take him by force from his disciples.
 - b. No doubt they were fearful that he might direct his miraculous abilities against them. John's record (18:4-8) gives a clear indication of this: "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, **they went backward, and fell to the ground.** Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."
 - c. Matthew's record had not noted the departure of Judas from the upper room, so it was necessary for clarity to identify Judas as the one who now came with the mob. Staves were staffs or sticks.
2. Verses 48-49: "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same

is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him."

- a. Since Jesus might not be recognized by the members of the multitude, and since it was dark in the garden, Judas had arranged to identify the Lord to them by means of a kiss. He thought that this token of affection would deceive the Lord, and perhaps give the men with him an opportunity to suddenly lay hands on him before he could resist by fleeing or by use of miraculous powers.
 - b. "Judas forgot the superhuman knowledge of Jesus, and in the act of kissing him gave the finishing touch to the picture of his own infamy. Little did he think that the kiss of Judas would become a proverb in every nation" (McGarvey, p.232).
3. Verse 50: "And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him."
- a. The Lord was not surprised by the appearance of the mob, nor was he deceived by the token of affection which Judas had bestowed. By asking why Judas was there, the Lord was not in doubt as to his intentions. He simply called on Judas for a statement of his purpose. This should have driven home to Judas the awful deed he was transacting. This traitor was fully responsible for his actions.
 - b. Clarence Darrow, and many modern social scientists, thought that no man was any more responsible for his actions than some wild animal is. (See Coffman, p.445). Many who should know better try to lay the blame for crime on the criminal's environment (slums, economic status, racial inequality, etc.).
4. Verse 51: "And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear."
- a. One of the disciples drew a sword and smote off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Matthew does not identify either of these men, but John's account shows that it was Peter who wielded the sword and that Malchus was the injured party: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus" (18:10).
 - b. Luke 22:36-38 shows that there were two swords among the apostles. It appears that the blow delivered by Peter was aimed at the head of Malchus, and had it reached its mark, he would have been slain. But apparently the blow missed the intended aim and struck off the ear instead; this was still a serious injury.
 - c. Neither of the synoptic accounts identifies Peter as the one who used the sword very likely because that apostle was still alive and might have been brought into account for the deed based on the inspired testimony. John's account was written later, after the death of Peter, thus his name could be used without bringing any evil upon him.
5. Verse 52: "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."
- a. The Lord rebuked Peter for this attempted defense. He declared that those who take the sword would perish with the sword.
 - b. "As it is not true in history that all *individuals* who take the sword perish with the sword we must understand this remark rather of organized communities of men, both political and religious. In this sense the statement has proved true, so far as history has had time to test it.
 - 1) "Every kingdom which was built up in ancient times by violence has perished, and doubtless those of modern times will. Popery, also, which established itself by the sword and the fagot, has been compelled at last to succumb to military power, and will probably be eventually overthrown by the same instrumentality. So with Mohammedanism.
 - 2) "It should be further observed here, that the reason for commanding Peter to put up his sword, was not drawn from the circumstances of the case. It was not because the use of the sword would prevent Jesus from dying for the world; nor because its use was wrong in the cause of Jesus but innocent in other causes; but because *'all* who take the sword shall perish with the sword.'
 - 3) "The universality of the proposition made it applicable to the case of Peter. The statement has the form of a prediction, and the force of a prohibition in reference to appeals to the sword, whether by churches, nations, or other organized bodies of men" (McGarvey, pp.232f).
 - c. The Lord never intended for his cause to be propagated or defended by carnal weapons; he never intended that his people avenge themselves on their enemies by the use of such means:
 - 1) Romans 12:17-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all

- men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”
- 2) 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”
- d. But notice that the Lord did not tell Peter to throw away the sword; he simply told him to put it back in its place. This suggests that there is a proper place for the sword:
- 1) Romans 13:1-7: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”
- 2) 1 Peter 2:13-17: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”
6. Verse 53: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"
- a. If it had been God's will that Jesus be delivered from the hands of the evil men sent to take him, and from the evil intent of those who sent them, a more appropriate and decisive means would have been used.
- b. Christ could have asked his Father and he would send more than twelve legions of angels. A Roman legion is said to have numbered about 6,000; thus, the number of angels contemplated could have been in excess of seventy-two thousand!
- c. The awesome power of *one* angel is shown in the Old Testament:
- 1) Isaiah 37:36: “sThen the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.”
- 2) 2 Kings 6:17: “And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”
7. Verse 54: "But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"
- a. The Lord asked the question: If I were to be delivered from my enemies, how could the scriptures be fulfilled which predicted my arrest and death? The fulfillment of God's word was more important than his escape from his enemies.
- b. The scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35). There was nothing that the devil or men could do to prevent his accomplishing his mission which included his arrest, condemnation, death, burial, and resurrection.
8. Verse 55: "In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me."
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- a. Jesus rebuked the guard for coming after him as against a thief; they had done nothing toward arresting him even though he had taught them openly.
 - b. He was not a thief or any other kind of criminal; there was no need for them to use such devious means in taking him into custody. By making this point, Christ called the attention of the posse to the underhanded means the authorities used in his arrest.
9. Verse 56: "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."
- a. The disciples saw that nothing was to prevent his arrest. He had forbidden their defending him by carnal means, and had even healed the ear of Malchus (Luke 22:51).
 - b. "In their alarm the disciples forgot the prediction about their dispersion like sheep when the shepherd is smitten (verses 31,35), or else they thought it was best to fulfill it; and Jesus had himself demanded for them the privilege of retreat, by saying, 'If you seek me, let these go their way.' (John 18:8)" (McGarvey, p.233).
 - c. Notice that Matthew included himself in the report that *all* the disciples forsook him and fled. This is another of the many evidences that the Bible is inspired, for what man would have written a record in which he convicted himself of such a cowardly act? Subsequent records show that Peter and John recovered enough to be near the Lord during some of his forthcoming trials (cf. John 18:15). Mark tells of an unidentified young man who fled this garden scene and eluded the efforts of the guards to apprehend him (14:51-52). It has commonly been postulated that this young man was Mark himself.
 - d. "If Jesus had been put to death after violent resistance, or after exhausting all means within his reach to escape death, he could not have been preached to the world as a voluntary sacrifice for sin; and his cross, if robbed of this element, would have been robbed of the chief part of its power over men. In the preceding section,
 - 1) "Matthew has exhibited more fully than before the fact that his death was voluntary. Again and again, within the section, have we seen Jesus referring to it as an event about to take place; the symbols which are to commemorate it throughout all time had been appointed; the final consent of his soul, after a protracted struggle in prayer, had been given; all aid looking to his release, whether from earth or from heaven, had been declined; and he now extended his hands to receive the bonds which were to be loosed only at the foot of the cross.
 - 2) "The second object of the section is to show that the death of Jesus, which was thus voluntary on his part, was brought about by malice and corruption on the part of his enemies. It shows that the plot for his arrest was instigated by malice and tainted with hypocrisy (3-5); that it was rendered practicable by bribery and corruption, as exhibited in the covenant with Judas; and that its execution was marked by that cowardice which usually attends corrupt transactions. All of these circumstances constitute an argument for his innocence, by proving the malice, the hypocrisy, and the cowardice of his enemies" (McGarvey, pp.233f).
 - e. Our Lord plainly affirmed that he willingly accepted the cross, with all that was entailed in it: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18).
- I. Matthew 26:57-68: The Lord's Trial Before Caiaphas, the High Priest.
1. According to John 18:13-24, Jesus was first taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. The Jewish legal system prohibited a private examination of an accused person lest the accused should become confused and give damaging testimony against himself. They ignored this principle, thus the perversion of justice was continued. Annas had been the high priest until he was deposed by Roman authority; in the eyes of the Jews, he was still the real high priest since that office was held for life (Num. 20:28; 35:25). The Romans had given Caiaphas the position.
 - a. Annas first asked Jesus of his disciples and his doctrine. Christ gave a proper answer: I have taught publicly in the synagogue and temple; ask any of those many people who heard me what my teachings are. Annas was trying to find some cause with which to make an accusation. This was another violation of the legal system.
 - b. One of the officers standing nearby struck and rebuked Jesus (John 18:22). This was also a violation
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- of the system, for a man was presumed innocent until guilt had been properly established. The Lord made a fair request in response to this unwarranted attack: If I have done wrongly, accuse me; or if not, why have you struck me? This is the only time in the course of his several trials that he made such a reply, and in this case he was pointing out their violation of their duly constituted legal procedure.
- c. Following this exchange, Annas sent him on to Caiaphas.
2. Verse 57: "And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."
 - a. The parallel accounts are found in Mark 14:53-56; John 18:24; Luke 22:54. The Great Sanhedrin had already hurriedly assembled in the palace of Caiaphas (Mk. 14:53). Luke 22:66 says that they had come together as soon as it was day (but this is a reference to their second gathering as in Mt. 27:1);
 - b. John reports that it was very early when this trial was over (18:28), so the trial was held in violation of the Jewish legal system since it took place before the morning sacrifice. It was held at a location unauthorized for the Sanhedrin to meet, the palace of Caiaphas. The scribes, elders, chief priests—the entire Sanhedrin was present.
 3. Verse 58: "But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end."
 - a. Peter followed far behind the band which had arrested the Lord; when he came to the palace, he went in and sat with the servants. John 18:15-18 shows that another disciple (John) preceded him into the place since he was known by the High Priest: "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."
 - b. At first, Peter stood outside until John went to the entrance and spoke to the lady at the door, who permitted Peter to enter the courtyard where the servants and officers were gathered. They were all assembled around a fire for it was cold. Peter was convinced that the Lord's end was imminent, but at least he was willing to be in the near vicinity of the trial to see the end.
 4. Verses 59-61: "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."
 - a. The authorities sought for false witnesses to bring some serious charge against the Lord; even in their depravity, they did not try to murder him without a semblance of legal procedure. By their seeking out false witnesses, they admitted that they were merely disposing of an enemy, not seeking justice. But they found no false witnesses *whose testimony agreed* (Mark 14:56). They were looking for some kind of testimony affirmed by two or more witnesses on some charge that would give them the right to execute Jesus.
 - b. The members of this august court were to be defenders of the accused as well as judges, and under no circumstances could they originate charges against the defendant. Yet these men acted more the part of prosecuting attorneys than judges: "The chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death."
 - c. There were many who came to bear witness against the Lord, but their testimony did not agree (Mark 14:56; Mt. 26:60). Finally, two false witnesses were found who twisted the Lord's statement concerning the destruction of the temple, which he would raise up in three days (Mark 14:57-58). John 2:18-22 reports the statement and shows he was not speaking of the literal temple, but his physical body.
 - d. "These two came nearer giving the required testimony than the others: but while their statement, if true, would have convicted Jesus of what might be considered a very boastful speech, it could hardly have been construed as blasphemy; and consequently, though Caiaphas demanded of Jesus, in a tone of triumph, 'Answerest thou nothing,' he was evidently unwilling to rest the case on this testimony"
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(McGarvey, p.235).

5. Verse 62: "And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? *what is it which* these witness against thee?"
 - a. Mark 14:57-59: "And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together."
 - b. But even the witness of these two men did not agree, so could not be used. Caiaphas tried to bluff Jesus by railing on him, saying, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" The chief judge was being the prosecutor.
 6. Verses 63-64: "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."
 - a. Jesus wisely refused to respond to these questions. To have answered would have been to give up his legal rights. The Hebrew legal system said a man could not be required to give evidence against himself. The High Priest demanded whether Jesus were the "Christ, the Son of the Blessed" (Mark 14:61-62).
 - b. Matthew reports his use of the word "adjure." This meant "to strongly demand an oath." The high priest understood correctly that Jesus had made claims about being the Son of God. The demand of Caiaphas made it imperative that the Lord give an answer. If he had remained silent he would be admitting to being an imposter. But to confess the truth would mean to be condemned to death. The Lord courageously confessed the truth.
 - c. What a show the high priest put on! He claimed to be utterly shocked and dismayed over the claim Jesus made, but actually he was delighted to hear the Savior say it.
 - d. Nothing was said or done about the Lord's claim; he could have fully vindicated his statement, but these men had no interest in truth; they had already been given more than ample evidence to prove that Jesus is the Christ, which they had rejected out of hand. They had known of, and probably some of them had personally seen, the miracles of Jesus. By this time in the Lord's ministry, even his avowed enemies did not deny the reality of his miracles; they simply ignored the evidence, or attributed the power behind them to the devil! They have many kinsmen in our generation!
 - e. "Had Jesus answered, and explained what he really meant by the speech about building the temple in three days...it would have made his cause appear no better in the eyes of his judges, and it would have given his enemies a fresh notice, which he did not wish them to have, of his intended resurrection. He wisely chose, therefore, to hold his peace" (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
 - f. The Lord responded first by plainly saying, "Thou hast said." This was the Hebrew way of an affirmative reply. Mark 14:62 has Jesus stating, "I am." He further announced that the time was coming when they would see him sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.
 - g. "Not content with answering the question, Jesus announces another meeting between himself and the assembled elders, in which their relative positions will be reversed; then he will be on the right hand of power, and they will be the prisoners before his bar" (*ibid.*). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7; cf. Acts 17:30-31; Mt. 25:31ff; 2 Cor. 5:10).
 7. Verses 65-66: "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death."
 - a. The high priest quickly changed the charge from sedition (destroying the temple, taking over as king, uprooting the established order) to blasphemy. "Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mark 14:63-64). There was immediate, unanimous agreement that he be put to death. They were perverting justice by going against the legal principle. The Talmud provided that a "simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilty, rendered on the day of trial, had the effect of an
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- acquittal."
- b. They had also originated the charge of blasphemy, and had compelled the Lord to offer testimony that was self-incriminating, both of which violated the Hebrew Law of Jurisprudence. This was not a court of justice, but of injustice. "Here Caiaphas acted the hypocrite. He was glad to hear the statement of Jesus; it was the answer he was trying to extort from him; and yet he pretended to be exceedingly shocked when he heard it" (ibid.).
 - c. "Amazingly, if Christ's claim as the divine Messiah was untrue, that verdict was altogether proper and correct [that he was worthy of death]....Without calling further witnesses, not even Christ; without waiting for an instant, let alone the legally required three days, the judge put the question to the court, and the predetermined verdict was promptly given....In all history, the Hebrews were the leaders in religious thought, and the Romans were leaders in the fields of law and government. How unspeakably tragic that humanity could so wretchedly fail that Roman justice and Hebrew religion should alike concur in sentencing the Son of God to die for testifying under oath to the truth of that sublime fact that he was actually the Son of God" (Coffman, pp.455f).
 - d. "The law under which they condemned him was that recorded in Le. 24:10-16, which sentenced him that was guilty of blasphemy to death by *stoning*. The chief priests, however, were unwilling to excite a popular tumult by stoning him, and they therefore consulted to deliver him to the Romans to be crucified, *under the authority of the Roman name*, and thus to prevent any excitement among the people" (Barnes, p.295).
8. Verses 67-68: "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?"
- a. Their behavior now degenerated to show their true condition of heart: They began to spit upon him, to mock him, and to strike him. What a disgrace by the highest court in the land! To appreciate just how perverse these men were we need only to imagine such conduct by our own U.S. Supreme Court. If not personally done by the Sanhedrin, this cruel treatment of Christ was at least condoned by this haughty assembly.
 - b. Luke 22:63-65: "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him."
 - c. "The spitting and buffeting were done, not by the members of the court, but by 'the men that held Jesus.' (Luke 22:63-65.) Matthew speaks indefinitely, not using the pronoun in close connection with the preceding context. He also omits the blindfolding mentioned by Luke; about his statement that they demanded, 'Prophesy unto us; who is he that smote thee,' implies the blindfolding. Had he not been blindfolded he could have seen who smote him. Here one of the sacred narratives incidentally supplements the other, and furnishes evidence for the truthfulness of both" (McGarvey, p.236).
 - d. To give a semblance of proper procedure, the Sanhedrin held another session in the morning before sending the Lord to Pilate for their sentence to be executed: "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death" (Matt. 27:1; cf. Luke 22:66-71; Mark 15:1). This was the official pronouncement of their verdict, but they did not have authority to execute anyone (John 18:31).
 - e. "The word *prophesy* does not mean only to foretell future events, although that is the proper meaning of the word, but also to declare anything which cannot be known by natural knowledge or without revelation. Luke adds, 'And many other things blasphemously spake they against him'" (Barnes, p.296).
- J. Matthew 26:69-75: Peter Denies the Lord (Mk. 14:66-72; Lk. 22:54-62; Jn. 18:17,25-27).
1. Verse 69: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee."
 - a. "He was without as regards the apartment in which the Sanhedrin was in session, but within as regards the palace; for he was in the open court around which the palace was built" (McGarvey, p.236). John 18:15-18 shows that John was known to the high priest and entered his palace with Jesus; he then got Peter admitted. Mark's account places Peter "beneath" in the palace, suggesting that Jesus was inside the palace perhaps in a higher room. Matthew defines Peter's location as "without." Luke identifies

- the location as "in the midst of the hall" and that it was there the fire had been built. The Lord had earlier in Matthew 27 predicted Peter's denial; this section gives the fulfillment of the prophecy.
- b. "That the fall of Peter is recorded by all the evangelists is high proof of the honesty and candor of our sacred historians. They were willing to mention their own faults without attempting to appear better than they were. An uninspired historian would have omitted the fall of Peter and mentioned only his good qualities. This shows the difference between an inspired and an uninspired historian and is strong evidence that the Bible is from God" (C.E.W. Dorris, *Commentary on Gospel of John*, p.354).
 - c. Inspired writers did not heap any bitter words upon Judas for his betrayal; they did not spend many words in describing the martyrdom of James; and Peter's denial is described in a simple, straightforward manner.
 - d. Matthew says a damsel came to Peter and asserted that he was with Jesus of Galilee. Mark says that a maid of the high priest saw Peter warming himself, looked at him, and stated that he was with Jesus of Nazareth; and that the cock crew when Peter denied the allegation. Luke writes that a certain maid looked at Peter and announced, "This man was also with him." John merely states that some of those around the fire asked Peter whether he was one of the Lord's disciples. John 18:17 shows that the young lady who kept the door was one of those who charged him with being a disciple of Jesus.
 - e. The Lord's prophecy was that before the cock would crow twice, Peter would have denied him thrice (Mark 14:30; Mt. 26:34). All four of the gospel writers give a report of his denial.
2. Verse 70: "But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest."
 - a. Peter stoutly denied the charge. We do not condone the denial the apostle made here, but could see his reluctance, with a full awareness of the circumstances which had taken place in recent hours.
 - b. "Peter might have thought that he was wanted by the authorities for his attack on Malchus; he was frustrated and embarrassed because his plan to attend the meeting incognito had failed, and he had suffered massive psychological shock during the earlier hours of that momentous night. In view of all this, how remarkable it is that none of the gospels offered any extenuation of Peter's lapse. Whatever the reasons or temptations, they were considered subordinate to the sad facts of the denial itself" (Coffman, p.457).
 3. Verse 71: "And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth."
 - a. He removed himself from the location, possibly back into the shadows of the entrance way. This was not a porch in our sense of the word, but "was the arched passage (*phulon*) which led from the street through the front part of the building into the court" (McGarvey, *ibid.*).
 - b. "By comparing the parallel passages the reader will see that after the charge was first made by the portress, it was repeated by quite a number of others, both male and female, and that Peter made various answers, though all amounted to but three denials" (*ibid.*).
 - c. It was not necessarily the case that the young lady was intending to cause him any harm, but to identify him as a disciple of Jesus, possibly wondering at his staying so near to the Lord in his time of trouble.
 4. Verse 72: "And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man."
 - a. Denial number two. He denied with an oath that he knew Jesus. Notice that this accusation (verses 71-72) does not necessarily say that it was a girl who made it. The account in Mark indicates the second one was also from a maid, but Luke's report speaks of it being a man.
 - 1) Mark 14:66-71: "And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak."
 - 2) Luke 22:56-60: "But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I
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- am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.”
- b. Brother McGarvey's comment about there being several different individuals making the charge is doubtless true. At any rate, Peter made three denials.
5. Verse 73: "And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee."
 - a. Matthew says that a little time had passed before this next charge was leveled against Peter; Luke reports that the interval of time was about one hour later. This time the spokesman accused Peter of being a Galilean which he supposed proved he was really a follower of Jesus.
 - b. His speech betrayed him. Obviously, there was a difference in accent which identified Peter as a man of Galilee. The KJV has "bewrayeth" which is an old word for betray.
 6. Verse 74: "Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew."
 - a. Peter began to curse and swear. Mark's account uses the Greek word *anathematizo* which is translated "curse." This word means "to declare anathema, i.e., devoted to destruction, accursed, to curse (Mark 14:71), or to bind by a curse (Acts 23:12,14,21)" (Vine, p.262). Matthew's account uses *katanathematizo*, a strengthened form of the word Mark used. This word "denotes to utter curses against" (ibid.). To swear (*omnumi* or *omnuo*) is used of affirming or denying by an oath (cf. Mark 6:23; Luke 1:73; Heb. 3:11,18; 4:3; 7:21). (Vine, p.98).
 - b. It does not necessarily follow that he was using profanity, but was very strongly denying his knowledge of Jesus. His denial constituted sin: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 10:32-33).
 - c. Perhaps Peter had now become angry; he was certainly desperate and fearful. One can only wonder why he did not remember the words the Lord had spoken to him just hours earlier about his forthcoming denial.
 7. Verse 75: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."
 - a. Peter remembered the Lord's words now, but a statement in Luke 22:60-62 gives the reason for his sudden remembrance—after the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at him. Obviously, the Lord was now visible, and perhaps during the whole trial before Caiaphas, had been visible to Peter and the others in the courtyard. At any rate, the Lord was where he could see Peter now. How this look, no animosity or reproof is suggested by Luke's description, must have pierced the soul of this apostle. It was sufficient to drive home the full extent of his cowardly acts.
 - b. Luke 22:60-62: "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.”
 - c. Matthew and Luke report that Peter then went out and wept bitterly. These bitter tears indicate the deep penitence he now experienced. The conversion story of Saul of Tarsus does not specifically say that that man repented, but it is obvious that he did because of his fasting and praying and by the divine dictate that no impenitent person shall be saved (Luke 13:5).
 - d. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry [*elupathate*], but that ye sorrowed [*elupathate*] to repentance [*metanoian*]: for ye were made sorry [*elupathate*] after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow [*lupa*] worketh repentance [*metanoian*] to salvation not to be repented [*ametamelaton*] of: but the sorrow [*lupa*] of the world worketh death." The Greek word in Acts 2:38 is *metanonsats*. Acts 17:30 has *metanoein*.
 - 1) Metaneo: "to perceive afterwards (*meta*, after; *noeo*, to perceive); to change one's mind or purpose; always, in the N.T. involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3,4, of repentance from sin." (Vine, pp. 279f).
 - 2) Lupe: "grief, sorrow, is translated 'sorrow' in Luke 22:45; John 16:6,20-22; 'heaviness' in Rom.

- 9:2). (Vine, Vol. 4, p.53). Under *grief*, "Signifies pain, of body or mind" (Vine, Vol. 2, p.178).
- 3) *Metamelomai*: "to regret." (Vine, p.268). This is the word used in Matthew 21:28-32.
- e. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow; repentance is a decision to alter one's life from that which is wrong to that which is right; it is followed by a reformed life (cf. Matt. 21:28-32; 2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 26:20; Matt. 3:8). There is a difference in worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. It is evident that Judas was afflicted with worldly sorrow when he returned the 30 pieces of silver and then hanged himself. It is just as evident that Peter was moved by godly sorrow to weep bitterly and thus repent in that process.
8. "The wonder is that he did not remember the words of Jesus the moment he began to fulfill them; but the excitement of the moment rendered him oblivious of every thing except the present danger, until a cock, perhaps at roost in the very court where he was, rang out his clarion notes on the morning air, and brought back the entire speech of Jesus to Peter's memory.
- a. "A glance from the eye of Jesus at the same moment helped to bring him to consciousness. Overwhelmed and forced to tears, he went out, that he might hide his bitter weeping.
- b. It is surprising that Peter was capable of such a denial, but there are several considerations that help to account for it. When he said, the night before, that he would follow Jesus to prison and to death, he spoke his real sentiment; and that he would, under ordinary circumstances, have been true to his pledge, is proved by the fact that when the guards appeared he was ready to fight the whole band single handed. But when Jesus commanded him to put up his sword, and then allowed himself to be bound and led away, Peter foresaw the result; his hope of the coming kingdom expired, his faith in Jesus as the expected Messiah wavered, and with the loss of faith and hope he lost all courage.
- c. "Then, having denied once, he was driven to desperation, and plunged headlong into guilt, and until the reproachful glance of Jesus accompanying the shrill signal of the cock roused again the man that was in him, and brought him to repentance. His speedy recovery attests the nobility of his character: for the good man is not he who never sins, but he who quickly repents of sin and makes all possible atonement for it.
- d. "The honesty and candor of the sacred historians are strikingly exhibited in the fact that they all mention Peter's denial. When the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke were published, Peter was in the midst of his career as chief of the apostles to the Circumcision; and when John's was published he had ended his career, and his memory was embalmed in the hearts of millions. His reputation was a large part of the reputation of the entire Church, and while he was still alive it would be supposed that undue mention of so discreditable an incident in his history would be offensive to him.
- e. "Yet, without regard either to the feelings of Peter or to the good name of the Church, they all mention it. They mention it, too, after having omitted many things, in preference to which we would suppose that they would have omitted this. An uninspired historian would have been certain to omit it, or to give the most ample apology for it" (McGarvey, pp.236f).
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MATTHEW 27

A. Matthew 27:1-2: Jesus is Taken to Pilate for the Final Disposition of His Case.

1. Verse 1: "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death."
 - a. Parallel accounts of these verses are found in Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; and John 18:28.
 - 1) Mark 15:1: "And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate."
 - 2) John 18:28: "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."
 - b. Mark and John report that it was early in the morning when these events took place. The trials before Annas and Caiaphas had occurred previously during the night, and when daybreak came, they assembled the Sanhedrin for formal deliberations. However, they had already decided on the fate of Jesus; this present consultation was for the purpose of deciding just how they should approach Pilate to obtain his agreement to execute the Lord.
 - c. According to John 18:31, the Romans had taken away from the Jews the power of execution; that power was retained by the Roman authorities. Thus, they must convince the Roman governor Pilate that Jesus ought to be executed.
 - d. The pagan Romans would not recognize their charge of blasphemy against Christ; another charge must be manufactured. When they first approached Pilate, and he inquired as to their grievance against the accused, they asserted that he did not have to trouble himself with the details: "We wouldn't have accused him and brought him before you unless he was guilty of death" (cf. John 18:29-30).
 - e. The charges they finally decided on are set forth in Luke 23:1-2: Perverting the nation, forbidding the Jews to give tribute to Rome, and claiming to be a king. They knew that Pilate would execute Jesus if they could show that he was guilty of sedition against the government of Rome. But the burden of proof was on them, and they were unable to sustain any of these charges. "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him" (Matt. 27:18).
 2. Verse 2: "And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor."
 - a. It appears that they had loosed him for a time and then re-bound him before taking him to Pilate; however, it might be that they tied him more securely before going to the governor. He had earlier been bound when he was arrested in the garden. McGarvey says it is more likely that he remained bound the whole time and that his bonds were made more secure before taking him to Roman court, lest his friends try to set him free during the trip. The earlier movements of those who arrested Jesus had been in the darkness.
 - b. Pilate held both civil and military authority. He was primarily required to collect taxes, and in certain cases, to rule in special legal cases. Paul was later brought before two different governors.
 - c. John 18:28 describes this trial taking place in Pilate's judgment hall, located in the governor's palace. He also reports that the Jews would not enter lest they be defiled and be unable to participate in the religious festivals in progress. So Pilate would speak with them a while, enter the palace to speak with Jesus, and go back out to the Jews. Apparently he was aware of the Jewish thinking, and conceded them this point, for no mention is made of any confrontation about the arrangement.
 - d. Pilate had been appointed by Tiberius Caesar to be governor, or procurator, of Judea about six years earlier. He served in this capacity for about ten years. "Pilate was described by King Agrippa who knew him well as a man naturally inflexible and obstinately self-willed. He frequently defied the Jewish people until the clamor against him succeeded in effecting his disgrace with the emperor Caligula. He was banished to Vienne in Gaul, where he is said to have died by his own hand" (Boles, pp.524f).
 - e. God used both Judas and Pilate's natural tendencies to bring about certain aspects of his great plan. Both went down in history as weak, misguided, and evil individuals. Pilate's story is given in some
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detail by Josephus; see also Smith's Bible Dictionary. "A 52' pyramid stands at Vienne on the Rhone which purports to mark the place of his suicide. He was also supposed to have drowned himself in Lake Lucerne, where an adjacent mountain is called Pilatus. It is known that he was summoned to Rome to face charges; but when he arrived, Tiberius had been succeeded by Caligula, and Pilate was deposed. Eusebius affirmed that soon afterwards Pilate, 'wearied with misfortunes, killed himself'" (Coffman, pp.461f).

B. Matthew 27:3-10: The Death of Judas.

1. Verse 3: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders."
 - a. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, he tried to return the money he had earned by betraying the Lord. The reason stated for this action is attributed to his having "repented himself." There have been certain sectarian preachers who have claimed that this action achieved salvation for Judas. Only one or two have made this claim to the knowledge of this writer, and these were trying to uphold the notion that salvation is obtained by repentance and faith, without baptism.
 - b. Judas could know that Jesus was condemned only after his case had been disposed of by Pilate. Matthew included the account of Judas' actions here but they are out of exact sequence, chronologically. When he returned the money, the chief priests and elders were in the temple, but they were at Pilate's palace until judgment against Jesus was pronounced. Luke 23:1 shows that the whole multitude of the Sanhedrin had gone to Pilate's judgment hall; they remained there until they obtained their quest. "It was now time for them to be at their posts in the temple to execute the morning service, and there Judas found them. The incident is introduced in advance of its chronological order so as not to interrupt the subsequent narration" (McGarvey, p.238).
 - c. Judas repented himself. The word translated "repented" (*metamelomai*) means "to regret." The regret was extreme in his case; so remorseful was he that he took the drastic step of suicide. It is impossible for us to follow the tortured thinking of this remorseful wretch. Boles (p.525) sums up five possible motives for his betrayal of Jesus:
 - 1) Anger at the public rebuke given him by Jesus in the house of Simon (Matt. 26:6-14).
 - 2) Avarice, covetousness, the price of thirty pieces of silver (John 12:6).
 - 3) A much larger covetousness, an ambition to be the treasurer, not merely of a few poor disciples, but of a great and splendid temporal kingdom of the Messiah; he would hasten on the coming of that kingdom by compelling Jesus to defend himself; he began to fear that unless he did something desperate there was to be no kingdom after all.
 - 4) Perhaps he abandoned what seemed to him a failing cause, and hoped by his treachery to gain a position of honor and influence in the Pharisaic party.
 - 5) Anger and spite at the goodness which continually condemned him awakened his conscience, and called him to a life he was determined not to live. In the New Testament he is termed a thief (John 12:6) and a devil (John 6:70), meaning that his prevailing passions were avarice and malice.
 - d. "His repentance was only horror and remorse at the effect of his anger and covetousness; it was not that deep repentance which seeks God's mercy and forgiveness" (Boles, pp.525f).
 - e. "Judas is not repenting himself as in the sense of *metanoes*, to change one's mind for the better morally as Peter in the imperative mood instructed his listeners to do so on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Nor does the text say that he repented in the sense of *metanoia*, which is a real change of mind and attitude toward sin itself and the cause of it and not just the consequences of it. Judas is not repenting in the sense of having a godly sorrow for sins committed in his heart resulting in a changed life; on the contrary, he merely exhibits a regret or remorse over the consequences of his action. This word for repentance occurs six times in the New Testament and does not refer to a genuine sorrow for sin and a turning from sin toward God but simply regret and remorse over a terrible sin committed" (Jim Laws, *Book of Matthew*, 1988, p.668).
2. Verse 4: "Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou to that." "Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' And they said, 'What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*'" [Matt. 27:3-4, NKJ].

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- a. He openly confessed to the chief priests and elders that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood. The article "the" is not in the original, which simply says "innocent blood."
 - 1) "This confession has been rightly regarded as forcible testimony in favor of Jesus. If Judas could have named as an excuse for himself any wrong-doing in the life of his victim, he would surely have done so, and have saved himself the mortification of making this confession. But Judas had enjoyed every possible opportunity of knowing the private life of Jesus, and if he pronounced him innocent he must have been so. It is the unwilling testimony of an enemy whose every interest prompted him to withhold it. The only escape from the argument would be to deny the credibility of the story; but this is prevented by the naturalness of the description, and by the exceeding improbability that just such a story could have been invented" (McGarvey, pp.238f).
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 7:10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (ASV).
 - b. The extreme remorse of Judas, referred to as the sorrow of the world in 2 Corinthians 7:10, drove him to suicide. Paul further said that godly sorrow produces salvation. The example of Judas is an illustration of the former; the example of every penitent believer is an illustration of the latter.
 - 1) The utter indifference of the religious leaders is demonstrated in their response to this distraught man: "What is that to us? See thou to that." They had used Judas to accomplish part of their evil intent: to find and arrest Jesus on the sly. Now they had no further use for Judas. His remorse did not affect them.
 - 2) "The reply of the priests was both hypocritical and cruel. If Jesus was innocent, it concerned them as much as it did Judas, and now that they had used him as a tool, it was the extreme of meanness to try to throw the entire responsibility on him" (McGarvey, p.239).
2. Verse 5: "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."
- a. Having the blood money refused by the priests and elders, and being filled with remorse, Judas threw the money down in the temple, and went out and hanged himself. We are not told which part of the temple his exchange with the religious leaders took place, nor are we informed as to the place or the means by which he hanged himself. His thirst for money disappeared; the thirty pieces of silver were of no importance to him now; the remorse he felt for what he had done overwhelmed him.
 - b. "Bad as Judas was, there is one point in which he compares favorably with many men who consider themselves his superiors. How many there are possessed of ill-gotten gain who never think of returning it, but cling to it with desperation until death loosens their grasp! But Judas could not do this: he offers to return it, and when the offer is refused he dashes it to the ground as a thing that he hates. While in pursuit of that money it glittered in his eyes; but now that he has it he spurns it as a thing accursed" (McGarvey, p.239).
 - c. His casting the thirty pieces of silver down in the temple fulfilled Zechariah 11:12-13: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD." We have no reason to believe that he knew he was fulfilling prophecy; his purpose for returning the money was to obtain a measure of relief from the horrible pangs of conscience. The conscience is a valuable tool to urge us to do right. Pity the poor wretch who so sears his conscience that its voice is stilled! Judas had not advanced into sin that far.
 - d. "The extreme remorse of Judas is hardly reconcilable with the idea that he had been moved by malice toward Jesus, and it shows that in all probability he had not expected a fatal result. He had seen Jesus escape from death too often to think that he would now allow himself to be slain. He had been instigated to the foul deed of betrayal by love of money alone, and never has that overmastering passion displayed its power more strikingly.
 - 1) "Jesus had said every thing to him that had a tendency to shake his purpose. He had told the disciples that one of them would betray him, and by the announcement had drawn from them an expression of horror against such an act. He had then pointed out Judas as the man, and had said
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- in his hearing that it were better for him that he had never been born than that he should do the deed.
- 2) "At last, when he was about to depart from the supper to fulfill his contract, Jesus had said with reproachful sadness, 'That thou doest, do quickly.' Deaf to all these warnings, and untouched by sympathy for his unresentful victim, he had doggedly and stolidly maintained his purpose. It was not until his purpose was gained, and consequences against which he had deliberately shut his eyes began to show themselves, that he realized how worthless was his prize and how villainous the means by which he had won it.
 - 3) "So it is with every man who comes under the dominion of this base passion: it blinds his eyes and blunts his sensibilities while in the pursuit of gold, only to show him at last that he has bartered his soul for a price which, even while he holds it in his hands, becomes an object of loathing and disgust" (McGarvey, p.239).
- e. Acts 1:16-20 must be considered in order to see the whole picture of his demise. Luke reports there that Judas purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, that he fell headlong and burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out (Acts 1:18). Critics are quick to point out that the reports given by Matthew and Luke are contradictory. But actually there is perfect agreement between the two.
- 1) Luke does not deny that Judas hanged himself; he simply says that he fell in the midst of the field and his body was burst asunder. It cannot be denied that Judas hanged himself, and that this was the means by which he committed suicide. It is entirely logical that he hanged himself on a tree on or in the near vicinity of the potter's field.
 - 2) There is a precipice near where the field was located, with trees growing near the edge. It is possible that Judas hanged himself on such a tree, and in process of time, the tree limb or the rope broke, allowing his body to plunge down into the valley where it burst asunder. His body could have hanged there for only a little while or perhaps for several days.
 - 3) Barnes reports this statement from Hackett:
 - a) "For myself, I felt, as I stood in this valley and looked up to the rocky terraces which hang over it, that the proposed explanation was a perfectly natural one. I was more than ever satisfied with it. I measured the precipitous, almost perpendicular walls in different places, and found the height to be, variously, 40, 36, 33, 30, and 25 feet.
 - b) "Trees still grow quite near the edge of these rocks, and, no doubt, in former times were still more numerous in the same place. A rocky pavement exists, also, at the bottom of the ledges, and hence on that account, too, a person who should fall from above would be liable to be crushed and mangled as well as killed.
 - c) "The traitor may have struck, in his fall, upon some pointed rock, which entered the body and caused 'his bowels to gush out'" (see Barnes, pp.300f).
 - 4) Further, when Luke says that Judas purchased the field, he does not necessarily mean that he personally bought it. Matthew says that the priests used the money they had paid Judas (it was now his money) to buy the property. Neither statement contradicts the other: Judas furnished the money which the priests used in buying the field. Both parties can logically and correctly be said to have purchased it.
3. Verse 6: "And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."
- a. The priests and elders perceived that it would be unlawful to put the money into the treasury since it had been used as blood money.
 - b. "It would be almost incredible, did not thousands of other examples present themselves, that men could be as blind and inconsistent as these chief priests and elders; too conscientious to put this blood money into the Lord's treasury, but not at all scrupulous about paying it out as the price of innocent blood. Well did Jesus charge them with straining out gnats and swallowing camels. In the present instance, too, the gnat was one of their own making; for it was their own tradition and not the law which forbade the putting of such money into the treasury. They are not the only men in history who have been less scrupulous about shedding innocent blood than about the observance of their own traditions" (McGarvey, pp.239f).
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4. Verses 7-8: "And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day."
 - a. They consulted with each other and decided to use the money to buy the potter's field which could be used as a burying place for strangers who died at Jerusalem. The definite article (the) shows that a specific field is under consideration. The price paid suggests that it was not a valuable piece of property even though near to Jerusalem. It is spoken of as the potter's field because, likely, it had been depleted of so much clay by those making pottery that it was valueless for anything but a cemetery, thus of small value.
 - b. At the time Matthew wrote (42—58 A.D.), this field was still known as "the field of blood." The story the soldiers told about the disciples stealing the Lord's body was not widely believed, and the report of what the chief priests had done with Judas' returned money was commonly known. Acts 1:19 also tells of this common name for this field—Aceldema ("the field of blood").
5. Verses 9-10: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."
 - a. The quotation is attributed to Jeremiah, but is found in Zechariah 11:12. Did Matthew make a mistake? Did some copyist mis-write the name? It is said that the Jews often abbreviated names and words; the difference between the abbreviated names of Jeremiah and Zechariah is only in one letter; thus, some scholars assert that a copyist made a mistake.
 - b. But there is another explanation which does no violence to the integrity of the text: "Anciently, according to the Jewish writers, *Jeremiah* was reckoned the first of the prophets, and was placed first in the Book of the Prophets, thus: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve minor prophets. Some have thought that Matthew, quoting this place, quoted the *Book of the Prophets* under the name of that which had the *first* place in the book, that is, Jeremiah: and though the words are those of Zechariah, yet they are quoted correctly as the words of the Book of the Prophets, the first of which was Jeremiah" (Barnes, p.302).
 - c. Some have thought that Jeremiah 32:6-8 is alluded to by Matthew: "And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD" (Jer. 32:6-8).
 - d. Others think that the quotation is from some statement given by Jeremiah, which had been handed down orally but had not been made part of the sacred written record. But the best explanation is the one cited by Barnes.

B. Matthew 27:11-23: Jesus Before Pilate.

1. Verse 11: "And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." [See Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:29-38 for parallel accounts].
 - a. These self-righteous men would not deign to enter the Judgment Hall of Pilate lest they be defiled and thus made unfit to participate in the festivities of this holy season (John 18:28), but they were fully ready to condemn an innocent man to death and violate many principles of their legal system to bring about his death.
 - b. Since they would not enter Pilate's Judgment Hall, the governor went out to speak with them (John 18:29). They tried to get Pilate to agree to execute Jesus without their providing him with the charges (John 18:29-30). Pilate asked why they did not condemn him according to their law, to which they replied that they did not have authority to put anyone to death (John 18:31). The charge they had used to condemn him was based on Jewish law, not Roman law. They had judged him worthy of death, and since they had authority only to administer scourging and excommunication, they had to get Pilate to agree to their death sentence.
 - c. John assigns another reason, unknown to the Jews and Pilate, why Jesus was brought before Pilate:

"That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die" (John 18:32). The method of execution administered by the Jews was to stone the victim to death; the method employed by the Romans was crucifixion; Jesus had predicted the manner of his death to be by crucifixion (John 12:32; Matt. 20:19).

- 1) The Jewish authorities knew the Old Testament curse placed upon anyone hanged on a tree (Deut. 31:23; cf. Gal. 3:13). Quite naturally they would reason that if they could arrange to get Jesus crucified, that would place a taint forever on the Lord in the minds of Jews.
 - 2) But God was able to use the curse to the advantage of his great plan, making the cross of Christ the most powerful drawing power to attract thoughtful people to the Savior. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:32-33).
- d. Despite their assertion (John 18:29-30) that Pilate did not need to concern himself with the details of the case, the governor pressed them to identify the charges. To this they replied in Luke 23:1-2 that he had been found guilty of perverting the nation, forbidding the Jews to give tribute money to Caesar, and claiming that he was himself Christ a King. On hearing these charges, Pilate entered the Judgment Hall where Jesus was being held and made inquire of him (John 18:33; Luke 23:3).
- e. Matthew's account takes up at this point with Pilate asking the Lord whether he was the king of the Jews. John's account now adds some more information.
- 1) Before giving a direct reply to the question, the Lord asked Pilate a question: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" It was vitally important that the record be set straight as to the originator of this charge: If the Jews had made the charge, he must answer affirmatively for he was the regal head of spiritual Israel; if Pilate as a Roman authority originated the charge, his answer would be in the negative for his kingdom "was not of this world," thus his kingship was of no threat to the throne of Caesar.
 - 2) Pilate (18:35) says that it was the Jews who had made the charge. "Thou" is in emphatic position in the Greek text (John 18:33), thus signifying, "Thou, one so humbled, the king of the Jews?" Such a lowly person being thought of as king was not worthy of serious consideration!
- f. It was at this point that the famous exchange between Pilate and Jesus occurred: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:36-38).
- g. In his statement, Jesus announced that his kingdom was not of this world; it was a spiritual kingdom, not of the temporal sort; hence, his kingdom was not a threat to Rome. Verse 37 shows that Jesus plainly stated that he was indeed a king. Matthew's account has Jesus answering simply, "Thou sayest" (an affirmative response). Paul later referred to this confession in 1 Timothy 6:13.
2. Verses 12-14: "And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly."
- a. John 18:38 then shows that Pilate left the hall and returned to speak to the Jews who were still outside. He announced to them that he had found no fault with Jesus. The chief priests "were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke 23:5).
 - b. In response to these charges, Matthew shows that Jesus answered nothing. Pilate had probably seen many men facing serious charges who were verbose in arguing their innocence. He was greatly amazed when the Lord offered no reply to the charges. Jesus knew that he was entirely innocent; he knew the burden of proof was upon his accusers; he knew that they had no evidence to prove his guilt on the charges; thus, he answered them with the dignity of complete silence. Pilate was convinced that Jesus was guilty of nothing; he would therefore expect the Lord to give some denial of guilt and offer some argument to indicate his innocence; he was filled with wonder at his silence.
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- c. On hearing the statement that Jesus had taught in Galilee, and knowing that Herod, who was at Jerusalem for the festivities of the occasion, had jurisdiction over Galilee, Pilate thought he could evade personal responsibility in the case by sending Jesus to stand trial before Herod.
 - d. "And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time" (Luke 23:5-7).
 - e. Before he sent him to Herod, he first determined that Jesus was a Galilean and thus subject to Herod's authority. This decision made good political sense.
3. Matthew does not discuss the trial before Herod; only Luke does so in Luke 23:8-12: "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."
- a. This pleased Herod greatly for he had for a long time desired to see Jesus in order that he might see him perform some miracle: "And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him" (Luke 9:9).
 - b. But when questioned by Herod, Jesus made no reply. The accusers were present and "vehemently" pressed their unfounded charges against him.
 - c. Herod, with his soldiers, mocked him, arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate. To "set at nought" means "to treat with utter contempt, to despise." "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:3).
4. Verse 15: "Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would."
- a. Pilate was determined to set Jesus free, but somehow he must mollify the Jews. His next attempt to set the Lord free was in offering to chastise him and release him. This was a severe beating and Pilate thought that this punishment might satisfy them. He made the offer by first stating that neither he nor Herod had found any fault in him; he was guilty of nothing worthy of death.
 - b. "I will therefore chastise him, and release him" (see Luke 23:13-16). "There was nothing mild about the horrible Roman flagellation. In this brutal suggestion, the moral crevasses in the character of Pilate were plainly visible. This proposal to subject a man he had just declared to be innocent to the shocking and bloody chastisement practiced in those days showed plainly enough that Pilate actually had no moral scruples against crucifixion, and that proposal was probably the first indication to the Jewish leaders that they would be able to have their way with Pilate in regard to Christ" (Coffman, p.467).
 - c. His next plan was to release Jesus under the customary practice of a Jewish prisoner being set free during the Passover. How or by whom this practice was started is unknown. It was a means used by Rome to help keep the rebellious Jewish population appeased.
 - d. "Judea was a conquered country, and the Jews naturally sympathized with their own countrymen who were prisoners in the hands of the Romans, even when the imprisonment was just; and especially was this the case in regard to political prisoners. It added, therefore, to the general good feeling prevalent during the Passover, and rendered the governor himself more popular, to release to the people such a prisoner as the majority of them would call for; hence the custom here stated" (McGarvey, p.341).
5. Verses 16-17: "And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"
- a. There was a notable prisoner in Roman custody at that time. "Notable" means that this prisoner was distinguished. The prisoner was named Barrabas who had been convicted of sedition, robbery, insurrection, and murder:
 - 1) Mark 15:7: "And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection."
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- 2) Luke 23:19: "Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison."
 - 3) John 18:40: "Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."
 - b. His plan quite naturally assumed that they would rather release Jesus than a murderer and robber. He gave them the choice, plain and simple. But he had not reckoned their hearts to be so callous and their hatred of Jesus so fervent.
 6. Verse 18: "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him."
 - a. Pilate knew the real motive behind the hatred of the Jews for Christ was envy. We are not told how he knew this, but probably he had had enough experience with them to learn of their zest for prominence, and knowing of the popularity of Jesus among the people (the triumphant entry into Jerusalem would hardly have missed his attention), he could conclude that they were envious of Christ.
 - b. That they were envious is shown in John 11:47-51.
 - 1) "Nothing had transpired during that morning to convince Pilate that they were moved with envy toward Jesus, except as he connected it with what he had known of their feelings before. This shows that he was familiar with the issues between the parties" (McGarvey, p. 241).
 - 2) Being aware of their true motive, Pilate was under moral obligation to release the Lord. But had he done so, the plans, prophecies, and purposes of God would have come to nought.
 - c. "The word 'envy' in ancient writings implies somewhat more than it does now. It signified all those hostile feelings which are included under the general term 'unpopularity.' Fear of his power with the people, jealousy at his purity, his wisdom and miracles, a mean desire to crush a good and great man, with all the wicked, malicious feelings of a fickle multitude are ranked under the word 'envy' as used here" (Boles, p.532). "...Behold, the whole world is gone after him" (John 12:19).
 7. Verse 19: "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."
 - a. The only person to make intercession for Jesus before any of his judges was the wife of the pagan Pilate. We know nothing else from the Bible about this woman except this brief reference. There is a tradition that his wife became a follower of Christ as a consequence of his having healed her son of lameness. Her name is given as Claudia, and she is honored as a "saint" by the Greek Orthodox Church and the Copts (Coffman, p.468f). There is no reason for us to believe such a story. We have no reason to believe she had so much as seen Jesus at all.
 - b. "The statements concerning Barabbas, and the people's preference for him, are interrupted in order to mention this message from Pilate's wife, and from this we infer that the message was received at this juncture. He had probably left her in bed, and the early arousing of her husband to hear the case of Jesus had caused her, when falling asleep again, to have the dream in question. She, too, it seems, was already convinced that Jesus was a 'just man'" (McGarvey, p.241).
 - c. It is obvious that the dream she had received was genuine, and that God was behind it. "It is significant that Pilate, a pagan, should have received just such a warning as a pagan would have been most likely to heed. Thus, just as Judas was warned by the Lord, God gave Pilate his warning also" (Coffman, p.469).
 - d. She called on her husband to have nothing to do with this just man; that is, do not find him guilty. Her reason: something in her dream frightened her about the case.
 8. Verses 20-21: "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas."
 - a. The chief priests and elders *persuaded* the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas when the governor called for their choice (Mark 15:11).
 - b. We are not told just how the religious leaders moved and persuaded the people to call for the release of Barabbas. They likely circulated through the crowd, arguing and cajoling them to do so. Perhaps some of them were strategically placed among the people and raised a chant which the multitude joined. When one person laughs, others are moved to laugh with him even if they see nothing funny. Rabble rousers are able to manipulate a crowd to do their will. Consider the "Popular Pentecostal Perverters" of our day and their ability to "work an audience."
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- c. "The common people who had by this time assembled about Pilate's pretorium, were not of themselves so disaffected toward Jesus as to prefer Barabbas: on the contrary, Pilate made the proposal to them in the expectation that they would call for Jesus, and that he would thus get rid of the case; but 'the chief priests and elders *persuaded* the multitude,' and their persuasions prevailed.
- 1) "They doubtless represented to the people that Jesus had been guilty of blasphemy, and that he had already been tried and convicted by the highest tribunal of their nation. This story strongly supported by the most influential men of the city, produced a sudden revolution in public sentiment, so that the multitude whose friendship for Jesus had two days ago made the Pharisees afraid to arrest him (25:4,5), were now persuaded to cry out for his crucifixion.
 - 2) "This was doubtless a part of the plan agreed upon at the counsel before they brought Jesus to Pilate. (Verse 1.)" (McGarvey, pp.241f).
- d. Pilate asked the multitude which of the two they willed to be released: Jesus or Barabbas. The chief priests had done their work well, and the multitude is about to give its unholy answer. Barabbas is their choice! This illustrates the persuasive power of false teachers (cf. 2 Tim. 4:4).
9. Verses 22-23: "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified."
- a. "Pilate's question was pertinent and demanded an answer; but in the response we see nothing but the unreasoning spirit of a mob; no argument; no answer to objections; no patience with opposition; no attention to entreaties; nothing but an insane clamor for the one thing desired" (McGarvey, p.242).
 - b. The question of verse 22 is one which everyone must sooner or later, directly or indirectly, answer for himself. The reality of Jesus Christ is so manifest that we all are faced with the decision of, "What shall I do with him?"
 - c. Pilate's second question (verse 23), raised in response to the roar of the mob to crucify Jesus, was raised three times (cf. Luke 23:22). But the unthinking mob was in a frenzy beyond reason. They cried out all the more, "Let him be crucified!"
 - d. There was a similar case at Ephesus: "And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 10:33-34).
- C. Matthew 27:24-33: Jesus is Condemned and Led out to Golgotha.
1. Verse 24: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."
 - a. Pilate had tried several ill-fated plans in his attempt to release Jesus and still keep peace in his province. He had tried to shift the responsibility to Herod; he had offered to chastise him and release him; he tried to get the people to agree to release Jesus under the "Passover Pardon Plan." He failed in all of his attempts. In his failure he vainly tried to disclaim any responsibility for this perversion of justice by washing his hands. Washing hands was practiced in related cases in the Old Testament.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 21:6-7: "And all the elders of that city, *that are* next unto the slain *man*, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen *it*."
 - 2) Psalms 26:6: "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD."
 - b. Jesus was an innocent man; the only sinlessly perfect accountable person ever to live on earth. "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away..." (Acts 8:33). Though he was innocent, yet was he pronounced guilty; with violence and hatred, justice was denied him.
 - c. "Pilate could have done nothing to more forcibly declare the innocence of Jesus. If the people had not been frenzied, when they saw him solemnly washing his hands, and declaring himself free from the innocent blood about to be shed, they would surely have been deterred from their purpose.
 - 1) "But while Pilate's act had this significance, it also displayed his own weakness and hypocrisy. He was there with his men of war to execute justice among the people and to restrain them when tempted to deeds of lawlessness; but instead of this, he consents to the murder of a man in the same
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- breath in which he pronounces him innocent, and hypocritically pretends to wash away a responsibility which rested more on him than on any other man.
- 2) "For this act his name must ever stand intimately associated with that of Judas Iscariot, and the world scarcely knows which to look upon with greater loathing the time-serving politician, or the money-loving traitor" (McGarvey, pp.242f).
 - d. He could not evade personal responsibility in this tragedy by simply declaring his innocence and washing his hands as a shallow show of non-responsibility.
2. Verse 25: "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children."
 - a. The people foolishly cried out their glad acceptance of the responsibility. If they could only have known the significance of their statement! Their rash and foolish statement involved such suffering and hardship that none but the Lord could know and comprehend beforehand.
 - b. "This evil prayer was answered; thus men receive what they ask. All the subsequent sorrows that came upon Israel were then and there invoked by a multitude that included the highest official representatives of the nation.
 - 1) "Of all rash things, the rashest is a rash prayer; nor was this the first time that Israel had prayed and received the answer of so rash a petition. Their ancestors had cried in the wilderness, 'Would God we had died in the wilderness' (Num. 14:2).
 - 2) "Of course, that is exactly what that generation did; they died in the wilderness. A similar thing happened when Rachel prayed, 'Give me children, or I die!' (Gen. 30:1). She died in childbirth when Benjamin was born. The petition recorded here, 'His blood be on us and our children,' was also answered in the most dramatic and overwhelming manner when, according to Josephus, 30,000 young Hebrew men were crucified upon the walls of Jerusalem by the soldiers of Titus when the city fell during the summer of A.D. 70; but the full tragedy of that tragic prayer and its tragic aftermath shall never be known until eternity.
 - 3) "Through the long centuries, the persecutions, blood-purges, and pogroms directed against Israel must surely be classed among the most astonishing social phenomena ever known; and it is not too much to say that all of them head up to a single fountain in this awful prayer" (Coffman, pp.473f). To this could be added the case of Jephthah in Judges 11:30-40.
 - 4) Jeremiah 30:11: "For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."
 - c. "To this day, also, the curse has remained. They have been a nation scattered and peeled; persecuted almost everywhere, and a hissing and a byword among men. No single nation, probably, has suffered so much; and yet they have been preserved. All classes of men, all the governments of the earth, have conspired to overwhelm them with calamity, and yet they still live as monuments of the justice of God, and as proofs, going down from age to age, that the Christian religion is true—standing demonstrations of the crime of their fathers in putting the Messiah to death, and in calling down vengeance on their heads" (Barnes, p.306).
 - d. In ignorance, ungodly men were instrumental in causing Christ to be put to death.
 - 1) Luke 23:34: "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...."
 - 2) Acts 3:17: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers."
 - 3) Acts 13:27: "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*."
 - 4) 1 Corinthians 2:8: "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."
 3. Verse 26: "Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified."
 - a. Barabbas was released from custody, and disappeared from history. What were his thoughts on learning of this reprieve? What became of him? We know nothing of these matters, and speculations are useless.
 - b. "The sentence of death pronounced against Jesus released one man from a similar death, and the

- execution of the sentence opened for every man a way of escape from death eternal. The innocent suffered that the guilty might go free, Barabbas being the first man saved by the death of Jesus" (McGarvey, p.243).
- c. The Romans commonly scourged those who were destined for the cross. This was a way of adding to their torment. This scourging was a horrible ordeal, often causing the death of the victim.
 - d. "The scourge was a whip with leather thongs, the ends fastened to lead balls or sharp spikes. The victim was usually bound to a stake naked and made to bend over thus tightening the skin which usually split open at the first blow. When it was over often the sufferer was unconscious, a bleeding mass of torn flesh. It is quite possible that the reason Jesus was unable to bear up under the weight of his cross was due to the terrible beating he had but recently suffered" (Woods, *Commentary On John*, p. 391).
 - e. After the soldiers had further afflicted and mocked him, and placed a crown of thorns on his head, Pilate set him forth before the people with this introduction: "Behold the man!" (John 19:5). He was making an appeal to their sense of sympathy: "Just look at this man; has he not suffered enough?" Isaiah 52:14 was probably a prophetic description of his present condition: "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." The Jews felt no pang of conscience; no sympathetic chord was struck in their hearts; they remained filled with bitter hatred toward Jesus. This final attempt by Pilate to get Jesus released also failed.
 - f. "The evidence which the foregoing section furnishes in behalf of Jesus is very striking. It shows that a court organized to convict, and resorting to the most unscrupulous measures to effect their purpose, utterly failed to find in his conduct any thing worthy of censure, much less any thing worthy of death. His condemnation was based on his confession of that which he had always openly proclaimed, and which he had substantiated by his life and his miracles. The man who betrayed him into the hands of his enemies declared him innocent, and the judge who pronounced the sentence of death declared him, in the same breath, a just person.
 - 1) "Never did such circumstances attend the death of any other man. They attest with a force which no honest mind can resist, the unspotted character of Jesus, and thereby they attest the truthfulness of his claim to be the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 - 2) "Moreover, his demeanor throughout these iniquitous proceedings, so perfectly in harmony with his exalted pretensions, affords no mean support to the argument in his favor" (McGarvey, p.243).
4. Verses 27-28: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band *of soldiers*. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe."
- a. The soldiers took Jesus into some part of the great palace where they began to "set him at nought" in certain inhuman ways, using certain well-practiced methods. Remember that the Lord had already undergone the cruel scourging, and to that awful ordeal was then added this devilish treatment.
 - b. "The place of the mockery was the praetorium, so named from the barracks of the emperor's personal guard in Rome, being presumably, therefore, the common hall where the soldiers held their drill and other exercises, adjacent to the governor's residence and perhaps a part of it" (Coffman, p.475).
 - c. What follows is a description of the unholy and brutal abuse the *whole band* of soldiers heaped upon the Lord. Their attempts centered around their rejection of his regal standing. A band of Roman soldiers is said to have numbered into the hundreds, depending on the size of the legion to which they belonged. The band was a *cohort*, the tenth part of a legion, and was commanded by a tribune (Vine, pp.95f). The number of a cohort could be as many as 600 soldiers. To this band of men the lowly Lord of heaven was given. As the vicious treatment was meted out against him, one can imagine seeing several sadistic soldiers taking the lead in the abasement of Christ, to the delight of the rest of the band.
 - d. Their first act was to strip him of his own clothing, and knowing that the Jews had charged him with falsely claiming a regal standing, they placed on him a robe which was of the type worn by men of exalted position (kings, governors, etc.). It was intended as a mockery.
 - e. "The 'scarlet robe' mentioned in this place was called 'purple' by Mark (15:17). Perhaps part of the garments placed upon him in derision were purple, the whole attire being topped off with a scarlet robe; for it is significant that Mark does not actually refer to the robe as purple, but to his clothing.
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- 1) "However, there is another possibility which is even more attractive to this writer, and that is that the robe had both colors, and possibly even a third. This presumption derives from the following: Christ's flesh was symbolized by the veil of the temple which hung just in front of the Holy of Holies. Now that veil, as described in Exodus 26:31, had three colors, blue, purple, and scarlet. Those three colors appropriately symbolize the heavenly nature of Christ (in the blue), the earthly nature (in the scarlet), and the perfect blending of the divine and human in Christ (in the purple).
 - 2) "How appropriate that during the dark drama of the crucifixion Christ should have worn the very colors of the symbolical veil. It is through the veil that is to say his flesh, that the new and living way is opened up (Heb. 10:19-22).
 - 3) "In view of this, one cannot resist the speculation that the robe was probably three colors, blue and scarlet, with a commingling blue and scarlet to form purple in the center, after the manner of the veil of the ancient tabernacle....
 - 4) "Far from being a contradiction, the New Testament mention of two different colors opens a wide vista in which men may see Christ, throughout his passion, wearing the very colors (and surely *two* of them) of that veil which is called his flesh (Heb. 10:20)" (Coffman, p.475).
 - f. As Mark describes the color as purple and Matthew says scarlet, some Bible critics see a contradiction. Brother Coffman suggests one possible solution. Of a more practical nature is the solution offered by Barnes: "The ancients gave the name *purple* to any colour that had a mixture of *red* in it, and consequently these different colours might be sometimes called by the same name. The *robe* used here was the same kind worn by Roman generals and other distinguished officers of the Roman army, and also by the Roman governors. It was made so as to be placed on the shoulders, and was bound around the body so as to leave the right arm at liberty. As we cannot suppose that Pilate would array him in a new and splendid robe, we must suppose that this was one which had been worn and cast off as useless, and was now used to array the Son of God as an object of ridicule and scorn" (p.307).
 5. Verses 29-30: "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head."
 - a. They continued their mistreatment and mockery by plaiting a crown of thorns and putting it on his head and by placing a reed in his right hand. This was in keeping with the "theme" of their abuse—taunting him because of the truth he had taught about his kingdom. The Jews had been enraged at his teachings, but the pagan soldiers found occasion for black humor in it.
 - b. Thorn bushes were common in Palestine we are told. Perhaps some were growing nearby. Some evil mind devised the plan to weave thorn branches into a crude crown and put it upon the Savior's head. For a scepter, they placed a reed in his hand. No doubt to uproarious laughter, they then bowed in mock submission.
 - c. They greeted him with an insincere salute, "Hail, King of the Jews!" This false homage will have turned into genuine worship by the Judgment when "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14:11).
 - d. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-12; cf. 1 Tim. 6:14-15).
 - e. They then spat upon him and smote him on the head with the reed, causing the thorns to injure his head. "The scene which commenced in sportive mockery terminated in more serious feeling and more contemptuous conduct. Exasperated, perhaps, by the meek demeanor of Jesus, the soldiers turned their mockery into indecency and violence. Next to the crucifixion itself, here was the greatest extreme of the world's cruelty to its Maker and its Benefactor. This was a strange sight to the angels. It can not be contemplated by men without a shudder" (McGarvey, p.244).
 6. Verse 31: "And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him."
 - a. When they had sated their sadistic pleasure, they removed the robe and put his own garments on him again, and led him out to be crucified.
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- b. "Hebrew Old Testament executions by stoning were conducted outside the city (see Num. 15:35-36; Acts 7:58). Jesus is led away outside the gate (Heb. 13:11-12). Crucifixions did not take place in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word TALA means 'to hang.' Bodies were at times hung on a tree as a warning (Deut. 21:22-23; Josh.10:26). Such bodies were considered as accursed (therefore Gal. 3:13). Such Old Testament background accounts for Jesus' cross being at times referred to as a tree (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; I Pet. 2:24), a symbol of shame" (Jim Laws, *Book of Matthew*, p.679).
 - c. "Before leading him away to the crucifixion they restored to him his own raiment, but not till Pilate had led him forth to the people wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and said, 'Behold the man" (John 19:5)" (McGarvey, p.244).
 - d. See John 19:1-5. The scourging was a horrible ordeal, sometimes causing the death of the victim. The Lord was a horrible sight to behold following the scourging, but even more so after the evil treatment at the hands of the soldiers. Pilate, in this last appeal to the Jews, presented Jesus to them in making an appeal to their sense of sympathy. But it was to no avail: they could find no place for any tender feeling toward Jesus.
 - e. John 19:6-16 gives details omitted by the other gospel writers. The multitude raised a chant that Jesus must be crucified. When Pilate asked why; they replied, "he made himself the Son of God." All the other charges were overruled; he was ultimately condemned to die because he claimed to be the Son of God! He was not guilty of the other charges; he was condemned for the truth that he is Deity. He was crucified for blasphemy but it was the Jewish leaders themselves who were guilty of this sin because they denied his messiahship.
 - 1) When the Jews made this statement about Jesus, Pilate was filled with terror. He returned to the judgment hall and asked the Lord, "Where are you from?" (19:8-9). Pilate realized that this was no ordinary prisoner! He had already heard Jesus say that he had a kingdom "not of this world."
 - 2) When Jesus did not reply, Pilate pressed him with the assertion that he had the power to crucify him (John 19:10). Christ replied to this by saying that the Governor would have no power at all except by God's will (cf. Rom. 13:1). Pilate's efforts were more in his own interest than in freeing Jesus, so the Lord made no reply to the first question. Pilate had all the information at hand to determine justice; indeed, he had already pronounced Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing which was punishable by death: he simply lacked the courage to turn down the demands of the Jewish leaders. Jesus did not absolve Pilate of sin but ascribed greater sin (guilt) to those who had accused him.
 - 3) He sought to get the Jews to agree to a release of Jesus but they said, "If you release him you are not a friend to Caesar!" They pretended to object to Jesus again on the grounds that he tried to usurp Caesar's authority by making himself a king. Pilate saw that a riot was in the offing and that he could not prevail in his present attempt to release Jesus; so he conceded to release Jesus (Matt. 27:24; Mark 15:15).
 - 4) He feebly tried to absolve himself of any wrongdoing by washing his hands in the sight of the people. In their ignorance and stupidity, the Jews agreed to take upon themselves and on their children the blood of this enemy (Matt. 27:25; 1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 3:17; 13:27; Luke 23:34). Many of these same people would later repent their part (Acts 2:36-42).
7. Verse 32: "And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross."
- a. The Bible does not say why the soldiers leading Jesus out to the crucifixion site forced Simon of Cyrene to bear the cross. John 19:17 shows that he started out bearing his own cross, as was customary.
 - b. In virtually the same location, about two thousand years earlier, Isaac had borne the wood which was to be used by Abraham in sacrificing his son of promise.
 - c. The way to Golgotha is known by the term, "Via Doloroso" ("the sorrowful way"). It is common practice for sectarians to walk with their priest surrounding an old wooden cross up this narrow passage in ceremonial display. Other equally sincere individuals will travel the roads of our country bearing a cross. However, this entirely misses the point in the Lord's command that we take up our cross and follow him. To bear a **literal** cross is as foolish as it is sinful. We are required to bear the obligations he gave us to do (including carrying the gospel to the lost, remaining faithful, etc.), and
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humbly to bear the persecutions which come to us because we serve him.

- d. The Lord began the journey to Golgotha bearing his cross, but due to his weakened condition, he either could not bear up under its weight, or could not travel fast enough to suit the soldiers. The Roman soldiers, wishing to expedite the proceedings, seized a man in the crowd, Simon of Cyrene, and forced him to carry the cross after Jesus (Luke 23:26). Jesus trudged on with the procession (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21).
 - e. Luke 23:27-31 relates that a great multitude of people followed him, and a company of women lamented him: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"
 - f. Despite the ordeals and lack of rest and sleep, our Lord could still muster the strength to them the the proper reply.
 - g. "Cyrene was a flourishing city in the north of Africa, but Simon, as his name indicates, was Jewish. They compelled him to carry the cross merely because he was a stranger, and they met him at the moment that a man was needed for the purpose, Jesus himself having borne it thus far (John 19:17), and being in all probability exhausted by the effort. Simon, like all of us when called on to bear the cross, took it up reluctantly, no doubt, but like us when we have borne it faithfully, he was brought to Calvary and to the blood of atonement.
 - 1) "There were many Cyrenians afterward engaged in spreading the gospel (Acts 2:10; 11:20; 12:1), and we may indulge the thought that in all probability Simon was one of them" (McGarvey, p.244).
 - 2) Mark 15:21 says that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. A Rufus is named in Romans 16:13 as being a Christian, but this does not prove he was the Rufus mentioned by Mark. Alexanders are also named in later portions of the New Testament.
8. Verse 33: "And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull."
- a. The great company came eventually to a place known in the Hebrew language as Golgotha, which means "Place of a Skull" (John 19:17). Luke 23:33 identifies this place by the name "Calvary" which has the same meaning. Luke uses the Greek equivalent (*kranion*) for the Hebrew word "Golgotha." From the Latin equivalent our English word "Calvary" is derived. The Greek word gives our word "cranium."
 - b. We are not told why the location was so-named. It could be named this because so many crucifixions took place there; it could be because skulls were found there; or it could simply be because the place resembled a skull. It was located outside the city of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12), and was "nigh to the city" (John 19:20).
 - c. The traditional site is now marked by the "church of the Holy Sepulchre." But this location would be within the walls of ancient Jerusalem. Another place, located to the northwest of the city, more accurately fits the picture. It is a rocky eminence, an extension of the hill the temple was located on; it is rounded, and has large holes in the side which cause it to resemble a skull when viewed from certain angles (Coffman, pp. 478f). Ken Beard and other missionaries to Italy made a trip to Jerusalem in the early 1960s and took some color slides of this place; it truly resembles a skull.
- D. Matthew 27:34-38: The Lord is Crucified: John 19:15-18; Mark 15:22-28; Luke 23:33-38.
1. Verse 34: "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink."
 - a. On arriving at Golgotha, they crucified him. In those days, executions were done by stoning (Acts 7), by beheading (Mark 6:24-29; Acts 12), and by strangulation. The Jews did not crucify and the Romans did not execute by stoning. While it was the Jewish leaders who insisted on the death of Jesus, it was the Roman governor who sentenced him to die, and it was Roman soldiers who actually executed him. These soldiers were simply doing their gruesome duty; Pilate put politics before justice and principle; the Jewish leaders put jealousy and hatred of the Lord before Truth. And each sinful person had an indirect part in his crucifixion because of our own sin (1 Cor. 15:3; Matt. 26:28; 1 John 2:2).

- b. Having arrived at the site, someone offered Jesus a drink of vinegar mingled with gall (Mark describes it as wine mingled with myrrh, 15:23). Gall and myrrh are words describing something very bitter; vinegar was a sour wine. The combination was a potion which had the ability to deaden the sensibilities and to alleviate some of the suffering. He declined this offer after he had tasted it and saw what it was. The offer was one conceived in a sympathetic heart.
 - c. This is a different drink from that which John reports. He accepted a drink in the latter case (19:28-29). This was given to him after he had been on the cross for a good while; the former apparently was offered to him when they first arrived at Golgotha, perhaps even before he was nailed to the cross.
2. Verses 35-36: "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there."
- a. Only a sketch of the crucifixion is given here, an indication of its inspiration. Crucifixion was unanimously considered the most horrible form of death, even worse than burning. [We are told that when a person is burned, the sensory nerves in the skin quickly are destroyed]. Aside from the physical agony, it denoted an awful shame: among the Gentiles, it was reserved for slaves and criminals; the Jews had a revulsion for it since the Law placed a curse on one who was hanged on a tree (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).
 - 1) Crucifixion usually began with scourging, a terrible ordeal of itself. Jesus underwent this dreaded punishment (John 19:1-5; cf Isa. 52:14). Pilate's intent in the scourging inflicted upon Jesus was an attempt to evoke sympathy in his accusers toward the Lord so that they might agree to his release (cf. Luke 23:22).
 - 2) The victim was usually forced to carry his cross, and sometimes even goaded and beaten on the way. The execution site was in some public place, often along a prominent road, or on a hill where the victim could be easily seen. The victim was stripped naked, with perhaps a loin cloth being allowed.
 - 3) The cross was in the usual shape we envision, or formed as a "T," or in the form of an "X." The victim was laid upon the cross and nails were driven through his hands and feet. Sometimes thongs were also used to prevent the body from slipping from the cross if the flesh should tear. The cross was erected so that the feet of the subject was only a foot or two above the ground.
 - 4) A large nail was driven through each hand, and another through each foot or one nail through both feet (Psalm 22:16; Luke 24:39; John 20:24-28). A wooden rod was inserted between the legs as support for the sagging body to prevent the nails from tearing from the hands and feet.
 - 5) One of the very few acts of mercy attendant to crucifixion was the practice of giving the subject a drink of medication, wine mingled with myrrh (gall), which would induce grogginess, and deaden the pain. Christ refused to accept this drink so that he might fully taste death (Mark 15:23; Matt. 27:34; Heb. 2:9). He later was offered a drink of vinegar in a sponge (John 19:28-30). This was a mixture of sour wine and water which was used by the soldiers. The hyssop stalk (reed), on which the sponge was raised to the Lord, grew from one and a half to three feet in length.
 - 6) The wounds of crucifixion did not result in a great loss of blood, and were not directly fatal. The causes of death are given as follows:
 - a) The unnatural position and violent tension of the body caused great pain from even a small movement. The great agonies experienced contributed to death. The nails were driven through the hands and feet where a great number of nerves are located, thus great agony resulted.
 - b) The exposure of the many wounds and lacerations, including those from the scourging, brought on inflammation which tends to become gangrene; the pain thus increases moment by moment.
 - c) "In the distended parts of the body more blood flows through the arteries than can be carried back into the veins: hence too much blood finds it way from the aorta into the head and stomach, and the blood-vessels of the head become pressed and swollen. The general obstruction of circulation which ensues causes an internal excitement, exertion, and anxiety, more intolerable than death itself" (*Smith's Dictionary of The Bible*, p.515).
 - d) The gradually increasing and lingering agony, and unbearable thirst, and the difficulty in breathing, eventually brought about death. Depending on the constitution and condition of the

- subject, death might be several days in coming. McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia reports the case of a young Turkish slave named Mameluke who lasted from Friday to Sunday during his crucifixion, and he was noted for being an exceptionally rugged individual.
- e) Woods described the process of crucifixion with these words: "As unspeakably inhuman as this mode of execution was, it stopped just short of producing merciful death and delivery from its agony and those thus executed often lingered for days on the cross unable to live, unable to die. The wretched position made every movement one of agony; the pierced hands and feet soon became inflamed and then infected, arteries were distended and blocked, fever shot upward, intolerable headaches often drove those thus being put to death into insanity. It was to such a death that our Lord was condemned, and this by men who affected to be the guardians of the truth and the favored of Jehovah!" (*Commentary on John*, p.402).
 - f) The Romans often left the body hanging on the cross until it decomposed or was devoured by birds. In the Lord's case, the Jews besought Pilate that the legs of Jesus and of the two thieves be broken so that death might be hastened. They were unconcerned about the length of suffering these men were under-going; they merely wanted their bodies to be out of sight when the Sabbath came! (John 19:31; cf. Dt. 21:23; Josh. 8:29). The breaking of the legs would hasten death, according to some scholars, because it would make it impossible for the victim to push himself upward in order to breathe. The legs were broken by a strong blow with a hammer or mallet.
- b. The soldiers parted the Lord's garments. This was in payment for their "services." They divided the clothes into four parts (John 19:23-24), but cast lots to determine who would get the seamless coat. Each crucified person was under the control of four Roman soldiers who in turn were supervised by a centurion. Thus, it appears that there were twelve soldiers on hand, with four assigned to each of the three people being executed on this occasion, plus a centurion who was in charge of the overall operation. The soldiers divided the Lord's smaller garments among themselves in keeping with custom. The articles of clothing commonly worn were the sandals, the girdle, the outer robe, the headdress. "The tunic, or undergarment, made of linen or wool, was without seam, being wholly woven and thus not of parts sewed together, a rule the priests followed. (Woods, *Commentary on John*, p.405; Vine, pp.198f).
 - c. It was for this garment that the soldiers cast lots. Matthew informs us that the soldiers thus fulfilled the prophecy given in Psalm 22:18. "Here again Matthew states a fact needing explanation, and John incidentally furnishes the explanation needed. There appears from Matthew's account no reason why they should have cast lots in order to divide the garments; but we learn from John that the coat, which was the principal garment, was seamless, so that the goods in it could not be divided, and that it was on this the lots were cast" (McGarvey, pp.244f).
 - d. After attending to their business of nailing Jesus to the cross, and raising it and positioning it in the ground, the soldiers next sit down to watch him there. This suggests their indifference to his suffering, and indicates that they were guarding the victim lest some of his friends should remove him from the cross and nurse him back to health.
3. Verse 37: "And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."
 - a. It was customary to place a placard above the victim's head which gave the reason for his execution. This would not only inform the public what the charges were, but also serve as a strong warning against anyone else committing the crime indicated. Each of the four accounts give a slightly different wording for this sign:
 - 1) Matthew: This is Jesus the King of the Jews.
 - 2) Mark: The King of the Jews (15:26).
 - 3) Luke: This is the King of the Jews (23:38).
 - 4) John: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews (19:19).
 - 5) Full account: This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.
 - b. Bible critics assert that the different wording indicates that the writers were not inspired, and that their accounts conflict. Some well meaning people, in trying to explain away the "difficulty," assert that what is seen here is the common matter that different witnesses to a certain scene usually give reports
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that differ; some seeing a hit-and-run accident might claim that the car was red, blue, green, and white. But such cannot be the case in the Bible for each of the writers was inspired. If there is a difference in their reports, the difference is not real, only apparent. When a logical explanation resolving the apparent problem is given, the problem disappears.

- c. One explanation is suggested by Luke's account (23:38) in which he reports that the sign was written in three different languages: Hebrew (the language of the Jews), in Greek (the language of the educated), and in Latin (the language of the Romans). It is possible that the wording in each of these languages varied from the others.
 - d. Matthew was writing initially to the Jewish people, thus would have quoted from the Hebrew version; Luke wrote initially to those of a Grecian background, thus would have quoted from the Greek version; Mark wrote initially to the Romans, thus would have cited the Latin version. (See Introduction).
 - e. If the three languages used worded the information differently, this would explain the differences in the synoptics; and John's wording would be a compilation of the three.
 - f. Another explanation is to simply say that neither of the four gospel writers gave the full inscription. Nothing in either of the four versions contradicts anything given in the other three accounts. But if we put the information contained in all four of the accounts together, the full inscription is obtained: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.
 - g. The statement was also intended to be a rebuff to the Jewish leaders who had hated Jesus so much that they forced Pilate to condemn him. They tried to get the governor to change the wording of the statement (John 19:19-22). They wanted it to read, "I am the King of the Jews." Pilate abruptly denied their demand, saying, "What I have written, I have written."
4. Verse 38: "Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left."
- a. Matthew adds the information that two thieves were also crucified with the Lord, with Jesus between the two. It is possible that the center position had been intended for Barabbas and that the two thieves were compatriots of Barabbas, but this is uncertain. Whether or not intended, his being crucified between two thieves was an insult; it was likely intended to be so.
 - b. These two malefactors are called "thieves" in the KJV, but "robbers" in the ASV. The original bears out the latter rendering. Vine says it (*lestes*) means "a robber, brigand...one who plunders openly and by violence" (p.301). "They had been condemned to death for robbery, and were executed at this time probably to save the trouble of a separate execution..." (McGarvey, p.245).
 - c. Another prophecy was fulfilled in these events. "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death..." (Isa. 53:9; cf. Mark 15:27-28). The word "wicked" in the original Hebrew is plural (thus there must be at least two malefactors), and the word "rich" is singular (there being only one Joseph of Arimathaea, in whose tomb the Lord's body rested three days).
- E. Matthew 27:39-44: Jesus is Mocked as he Suffers on the Cross; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35.
1. Verses 39-40: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."
 - a. As he suffered, those who passed by (either entering or leaving the city, or coming out from the city to view him), wagged their heads as they reviled him with certain unholy, hateful statements.
 - b. To wag the head was an insulting gesture (2 Kings 19:21; Job 16:4; cf. Psalm 22:7-8). There was no sympathy for Jesus. How hard indeed must the heart be which could look upon him in this wretched condition and not feel a pang of conscience or be touched by his plight.
 - c. "It is strange how tenaciously the minds of the people clung to the old slander that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple and build it again in three days. The remark from which it sprang was made during his first visit to Jerusalem after his baptism (John 2:18-22), and yet it is now thrown in his teeth while he hangs on the cross, as though it were the most boastful speech that he had ever made" (McGarvey, p.245). Their meaning was that he made a boastful statement which he could not fulfill—a statement they grossly misunderstood.
 - d. They challenged him to come down from the cross and they would then believe him. But one who has rejected the obvious miracles which he had done on many occasions would not likely be willing to

accept the significance of any new miracle. There is a limit to divine patience; they had had their chance. He would offer no further miracle to convince them of the truth.

2. Verses 41-43: "Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God."
 - a. His enemies were unwilling for him to die without tormenting him further with these evil words. Little did they know that they were actually killing the Lord of Glory, a crime for which they themselves would later receive unspeakable punishment. No doubt some of his enemies later became his followers when they learned more (Acts 2:37; 6:7).
 - b. But self-willed men being what they are, we expect that most of them continued to reject the Lord. These chief men of Israel no doubt had fears, knowing of his many miracles, that he would come down from the cross; but seeing he did not do so, they now berated him for not coming down. This appears to be bravado. Had he removed himself from the cross they would not have fulfilled their promise to believe on him.
 - c. They felt sure that if he had been the Messiah, God would have delivered him from the cross; but seeing that he had not, they were hardened in their unbelief. They taunted him with his profession to be the Son of God, assuming that since God did not intervene to deliver him from the cross, he was not God's Son. "All of these revilings are indicative of guilty fear mingled with cruel exultation" (McGarvey, p.245).
 - d. "The shameful behavior of the rulers of Israel in this instance has no parallel or precedent. Their blasphemous quotations from the sacred Scriptures, being then and there fulfilled before their very eyes, only emphasize the moral blackout of their nobler natures. The taunting promise that they would believe on him if he then came down from the cross was, of course, a lie....As a matter of fact, Christ did a more marvelous thing three days later by coming forth from the tomb, though they had it sealed and guarded, and yet they did not believe on him even after that" (Coffman, p.484).
 - e. "They knew he performed the marvelous works of God (he raised the dead, restored sight to the blind, had healed the lame, etc) yet they refused to accept the implication (that he was the Son of God, as he claimed) of that fact" (ALC, 1973, p.162).
3. Verse 44: "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth."
 - a. Obviously, both of the robbers felt hard toward Jesus because he did not save himself and them from the horrible ordeal they were suffering. "If you are the Son of God, why don't you save yourself and us from this fate?" We learn from Luke 23:35-43 that one of these men later repented, and rebuking the other robber by saying that they deserved this penalty, but that Jesus was innocent of wrongdoing, asked the Lord to remember him when he came into his kingdom.
 - b. It is obvious by the Lord's reply that this man was saved: "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." There can be no contradiction between Matthew's report and Luke's; it is simply that one of the robbers later repented after initially joining his fellow criminal in reproaching Jesus.

F. Matthew 27:45-49: The Lord's Final Three Hours on the Cross.

1. Verse 45: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."
 - a. From the sixth to the ninth hour would be from noon to three o'clock in the afternoon in our terminology. "This darkness cannot be attributed to an eclipse because of the great length of time it prevailed upon the land, and because at that time of the year, the moon was full as it always was on the first day of the Passover" (McGarvey, p.246).
 - b. "Whether the darkness was over 'all the earth,' in our sense of the terms, or only over the small portion of it to which the Jews often applied these words, is uncertain. It came suddenly at noon, and passed away at three o'clock; consequently it prevailed during the three hours in which the sun has usually its greatest heat and brilliancy" (McGarvey, p.246).
 - c. It cannot be explained by attributing it to a dense fog, mist, or dust storm, for this would have caused no consternation among the people, and would hardly have been worthy of mention by the inspired writers. Luke's account states that the "sun was darkened" (23:44-45). In some miraculous way, God caused the sun to cease giving its light, or did not permit its light to reach at least this part of the earth!

- d. "Appropriately, while the Sun of Righteousness was suffering humiliation and death, the literal sun refused to shine....Tertullian said, 'In the same hour, too, the light of day was withdrawn, when the sun at the very time was in his meridian blaze. Those who were not aware that this had been predicted about Christ, no doubt thought it an eclipse. You yourselves have the account of the world portent still in your archives!'
- 1) "In that quotation, Tertullian appealed to Proculus, a Roman senator; and it is certain Tertullian would not have made such an appeal to Roman records if it had not been true.
 - 2) "Pontius Pilate sent the following report to Tiberius, emperor of Rome, 'And when he had been crucified, there was darkness over the whole earth, the sun having been completely hidden, and the heaven appearing dark, so that the stars appeared, but had at the same time their brightness darkened, as I suppose your reverence is not ignorant of, because in all the world they lighted lamps from the sixth hour until evening. And the moon, being like blood, did not shine the whole night, and yet she happened to be at the full.'
 - 3) "From these two quotations, to which many others might be added, it is plain that one of the strong arguments used by early Christians in urging the truth of the gospel was their appeal, again and again, to persons in highest authority, to whom they invariably imputed the universal knowledge that such a wonder had indeed occurred.
 - 4) "This manifestation of God's power should cause the soul to tremble. Only the true God and Creator of the universe could step forth and lay his hand upon the established routine of the natural creation and bring to pass such a darkness as that which enveloped the world during three full hours of the crucifixion.
 - 5) Why did God do it? It was a singular witness to the power and godhead of him who was crucified. It was a signal that even the most brutal and depraved could understand. The sneers and jibes of the mockers froze on their evil faces at the onset of that supernatural gloom; and as the somber hours dragged on, the awful fact must have occurred to many that, for all any of them knew, the sun would never shine again!
 - 6) "That awe-inspiring darkness was God's seal upon the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ's identity and mission upon earth. It was a sign of God's personal presence in the crucifixion. 'Thick darkness was under his feet' (Ps. 18:9)....
 - 7) "The darkness symbolized the magnitude and effect of Jesus' sufferings. It clothed the Saviour's humiliation with decent privacy. No man could have gone home that night and said, 'I saw the whole thing.' That darkness also marked the summary end of the sabbath day. Amos 8:9; Isaiah 13:10; Jeremiah 15:9 and Micah 3:6 are OT scriptures bearing on this significant truth. That was the day that the sun 'went down at noon, and the earth was darkened in a clear sky,' as Amos prophesied. That termination also extended to the dispensation of the prophets and the entire religious economy of the Jews. It was likewise a fitting symbol of God's wrath upon all who reject the world's only Redeemer" (Coffman, pp.487-489).
 - a) Amos 8:9: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day."
 - b) Isaiah 13:10: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.
 - c) Jeremiah 15:9: "She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD."
 - d) Micah 3:6: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them."
- e. "Darkness was typical of the powers of darkness which seemed to be prevailing; it was also typical of the great sufferings of the atoning for sin and the dark hour of sin and depravity that could crucify God's beloved Son; it could also typify the darkness of sin over all the earth, which was to be dispelled by the cross of Jesus and by his resurrection from the dead, when he brought light and life by his resurrection" (Boles, p.543).
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- f. This was significant and miraculous. It was at a time of a full moon because the Jews' lunar month started with the new moon, and the Passover was observed on the 14th (Num. 9:3). An eclipse at high noon cannot occur when the moon is full; and an eclipse cannot last three hours! (see Hamilton, p.191). This apparently fulfills Amos 8:2-9. It signified a dark day for Israel for she had been judged and found wanting, and her Law was taken away. It signified the sadness felt in heaven in the suffering of its Prince. It signified sadness to humanity for the pure One was suffering for the sinful.
2. Verse 46: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
- a. At about the ninth hour, the Lord cried out with a loud voice, raising the wonderful question, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Some have thought that the Lord was merely quoting from Psalm 22:1, which is a Messianic prophecy. But if so, why did he speak the line in such a loud voice? Perhaps so that those who heard him could know that he is the Messiah. But it is more likely that he was actually living out the anguish of which the statement speaks.
- b. "The depth of meaning contained in this bitter outcry can never, we suppose, be fathomed by human thought, yet the word 'forsaken' directs our thought in the right channel. If a good man who has long trusted in God and delighted in his favor could suddenly realize that God had *forsaken* him, he would enter, at least partly, into the Savior's feeling. But the peculiar relation which Jesus sustained to the Father rendered this feeling more intense than human hearts can experience, and at the same time it renders most mysterious to us the forsaking itself. It is enough to know that in it lay the chief bitterness of the Savior's death" (McGarvey, p.246).
- c. Although Christ was utterly sinless, yet he suffered as a sinner—separated from God. But this statement is beyond human comprehension; it enters into the eternal, and has to do with such deep considerations that we are not able to fathom them. This is the only statement of the seven statements from the cross, recorded by more than one writer.
- d. "The cry is the result not only of His suffering body, but also from the fact that Jesus is the sin-bearer of the world. God in his holiness could not have fellowship with sin and therefore is removed from the Son (Ex. 33:3; Josh. 7:11-12; Ps. 66:18; Isa. 59:1-2; Isa. 64:7; Hos. 5:6).
- 1) "The Greek verb translated in English translation '*forsaken*,' is in the aorist tense. Therefore, indicating the forsaken state had taken place in that time period in the past (the three hours of darkness), and had now reached its climax, thus the Lord's loud outcry.
 - 2) "Paul states that Jesus, by His death had redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). Jesus was our sin offering (II Cor. 5:21). Therefore, Jesus died in our place, that He might bring us near to God" (Laws, *The Book of Matthew*, p.685).
- e. Barnes offered the following thoughts on *My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me*:
- 1) This expression is one denoting intense suffering. It has been difficult to understand in what sense Jesus was "forsaken by God." It is certain that God APPROVED his work. It is certain that he was innocent. He had done nothing to forfeit the favor of God. As his own Son—holy, harmless, undefiled, and obedient—God still loved him. In either of these senses God could not have forsaken him. But the expression was probably used in reference to the following circumstances, namely:
 - 2) His great bodily sufferings on the cross, greatly aggravated by his previous scourging, and by the want of sympathy, and by the revilings of his enemies on the cross. A person suffering thus might address God as if he was forsaken, or given up to extreme anguish.
 - 3) He himself said that this was "the power of darkness," Luke 22:53. It was the time when his enemies, including the Jews and Satan, were suffered to do their utmost. It was said of the serpent that he should bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, Gen 3:15. By that has been commonly understood to be meant that, though the Messiah would finally crush and destroy the power of Satan, yet he should himself suffer "through the power of the devil."
 - a) When he was tempted (Luke 4), it was said that the tempter "departed from him for a season." There is no improbability in supposing that he might be permitted to return at the time of his death, and exercise his power in increasing the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.
 - b) In what way this might be done can be only conjectured. It might be by horrid thoughts; by

- temptation to despair, or to distrust God, who thus permitted his innocent Son to suffer; or by an increased horror of the pains of dying
- 4) Martyrs, under the influence of strong religious feeling, have gone triumphantly to the stake, but it is possible that those views might have been withheld from the Redeemer when he came to die. His sufferings were accumulated sufferings, and the design of the atonement seemed to require that he should suffer all that human nature "could be made to endure" in so short a time.
 - 5) Yet we have reason to think that there was still something more than all this that produced this exclamation. Had there been no deeper and more awful sufferings, it would be difficult to see why Jesus should have shrunk from these sorrows and used such a remarkable expression.
 - 6) Isaiah tells us (Isa 53:4-5) that "he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; that by his stripes we are healed." He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Gal 3:13); he was made a sin-offering (2 Cor 5:21); he died in our place, on OUR account, that he might bring us near to God. It was this, doubtless, which caused his intense sufferings.
 - 7) It was the manifestation of God's hatred of sin, in some way which he has not explained, that he experienced in that dread hour. It was suffering endured by HIM that was due to US, and suffering by which, and by which alone, we can be saved from eternal death. [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved].
- f. "Christ as the Beloved Son in Whom God Was Well Pleased Could Not Be Really Deserted by God. Not only is God physically near to all men, because he is omnipresent, but he is spiritually near to his own people to sustain and save them, even when they are not conscious of his presence. The vision of God is one thing, and his presence is another.
- 1) "We may miss the first without losing the second. Our real state before God does not rest on the shifting sands of our moods of feeling. In the hour of darkness Jesus prayed.
 - 2) "This is enough to show that he knew that he was not really and utterly abandoned by his Father. In spiritual deadness, when it is hard to pray at all, the one remedy is in prayer. Our cry can reach God through the darkness, and the darkness will not last forever; often it is the gate to a glorious light. - W.F.A." [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved].
3. Verse 47: "Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias."
- a. "I am constrained to think, notwithstanding various opinions of commentators (see Lange and Alford), that the persons who made this remark misunderstood Jesus, and took the word *Eli* for *Elias*. The mistake arose, not from ignorance of the language, but from the indistinct articulation of Jesus. He had now been on the cross about six hours, and the feverish thirst produced by his intense suffering and some loss of blood, together with the great strain on the muscles of his chest, which resulted from hanging on his outstretched hands, must have rendered articulation difficult and indistinct" (McGarvey, p.246).
 - b. There is a close similarity between the *Eli* and the Greek name for *Elijah*.
4. Verse 48: "And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink."
- a. According to John 19:28-29, Jesus also said, "I thirst." In response to this statement, which apparently came in connection with the statement of Matthew 27:46, someone gave him a drink. It was offered to him in a sponge, extended on a reed (a stalk of hyssop, according to John's account). The drink was called vinegar.
 - b. "This was the common drink of Roman soldiers. It was a light wine, turned sour and mixed with water. John says (19:29) there was a vessel set full of vinegar, probably for the use of the soldiers who watched his crucifixion" (Barnes, p.313).
 - c. "The drink of vinegar was to remove the painful dryness of the throat which his articulation betrayed" (McGarvey, p.246).
5. Verse 49: "The rest said, Let be, let us see whether *Elias* will come to save him."
- a. Others who were present told the one offering this merciful drink to "let be, and let us see whether
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Elias will come to save him." John reports that the Lord received the drink (19:30). This is a different case from the offer of the other drink soon after arriving at the crucifixion site, which the Lord refused.

- b. McGarvey says in commenting on Mark 15:36 (a parallel report of this verse), that the comment of the rest "is not intended as an objection to giving him the vinegar; for the man who used these words had already given it to him. He gave Jesus the vinegar to moisten his tongue and lips, and the remark, 'Let alone,' is an indefinite expression addressed to the bystanders, and meaning that they should be quiet and patient to see the result. In the same way must we construe the remark addressed by some of the bystanders to the man who gave the drink, as reported by Matthew. He says, 'The rest said, Let be (*aphes*, in the singular number), let us see whether Elias will come to save him.' They made the remark to him, and he to them; but neither had reference to the drink of vinegar" (p.363).

G. Matthew 27:50-61: Other Events in Connection with His Death.

1. Verse 50: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."
 - a. The expression, "gave up the ghost" is an "obsolete expression for 'gave up the spirit.' It contemplates the body as the man, and the spirit as being released that it may depart. The thought is utterly inconsistent with Materialism" (McGarvey, p.247). Luke reports that he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and having said that, "he gave up the ghost" (23:46). John 19:30 reports: "He said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (19:30).
 - b. The time of his death was about three o'clock in the afternoon, after suffering on the cross for about six hours. Despite the horrible amount of agony he experienced during that period of time, this interval shows his death came much sooner than was usual in death by crucifixion. Sometimes the victim lingered for several days before finally expiring.
 - c. The Jews were in a hurry to get the bodies off the crosses (John 19:31). The Romans customarily left the victim on the cross until the bodies were eaten by birds or disintegrated by decay. The Old Testament forbade leaving the bodies unburied over night (Deut. 21:22-23).
 - 1) They requested that Pilate order the legs of Jesus and the two thieves be broken to hasten death, and thus enabling their bodies to be removed and buried. The reason for this request is that they did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses during the Sabbath.
 - 2) The "Preparation" was on Friday, the day prior to the Sabbath; this Sabbath was the first day of the week of unleavened bread, an important Jewish feast. This Sabbath was a "high day" because of its double significance: the Sabbath plus the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These Jewish religious leaders were not above lying and conniving in order to kill an innocent man, but the rituals and rites must be carefully observed (Matt. 23:23-24).
 - d. They were positive that Jesus was dead before the removal of his body (John 19:32-37). To break a crucifixion victim's legs would hasten death: some say it would make it impossible to breathe since they had to push with their legs and pull themselves up with their arms against the nails in order to inhale and exhale. And the shock of having two major bones harshly broken, especially in addition to the horrible agony the victim had already endured, would certainly hasten death.
 - e. They found Jesus already dead, and did not break his legs; this fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Psalm 34:20 (cf. John 19:35-36). Jesus fulfilled all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament that pertained to him. He was typified by the Passover Lamb which was not to have any of his bones broken (Ex. 12:46; cf. 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29).
 - f. The soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with a spear. This wound would have killed him had he not already been dead. The fact that blood and water came out shows that he was dead. This piercing of his side also fulfilled prophecy (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37).
2. Verse 51: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."
 - a. The veil was the heavy and beautiful curtain that separated between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the Temple. "By shutting out from the most holy place all persons except the high priest, who alone was permitted to pass through it, and this only once in the year, it signified that the way into the holiest—that is, into heaven was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing. (Heb. 9:7,8). But the moment that Jesus died, thus making the way manifest, the veil was appropriately rent in twain from top to bottom, disclosing the most holy place to the priests who were at that time

- offering the evening incense in the holy place" (McGarvey, p.247).
- b. "The miracle in this instance, other than its timing which is a feature of all these wonders, was that a veil untouched by human hands should have fallen into two equal pieces, in a progressive rending from top to bottom, the force which parted it coming, not from beneath as if violent hands had been laid upon it, but from above as though some unseen hand had passed down the center of it.
 - 1) "The event occurred at three o'clock in the afternoon, at a time when the priests would have been busy with the evening sacrifice, going about their tasks with lighted lamps, with a very large number of them present; and it is from this group of eyewitnesses to that remarkable wonder that we may suppose is the explanation of why such a large 'company of the priests believed' (Acts 6:7), being later converted to Christ.
 - 2) "One may only imagine the fear and awe which attended the rending of that veil, witnessed by so many priests, busy with their lanterns, apprehensive of the enveloping darkness, and eventually associating the event with the final cry of Christ as he perished on the cross" (Coffman, pp.489f).
 - c. Those priests involved in the daily offerings had never had the opportunity of entering the Most Holy Place. It is unlikely that any of them had ever even seen what lay behind the veil. Thus, to them the rending of the veil must have been a truly shocking and astounding event, one that would make an even greater impression on them when they learned how this event coincided precisely with the death of Jesus, and that this same Jesus was raised up from the dead three days later. Josephus says that the Most Holy Place was empty of furniture; the ark of the covenant had disappeared centuries earlier.
 - d. The rending of the veil signified several significant things:
 - 1) The abrogation of the Old Covenant (Matt. 27:50-51; 2 Cor. 3:14-16; Heb. 9:7-10). It also abolished the office of the Old Testament high priest, and lesser priests.
 - 2) The mysteries of God's eternal plan, which were unrevealed until the New Testament was given, were now to be opened to man's understanding (Eph. 1-11; Rom. 16:25-26; Matt. 13:17).
 - 3) It symbolizes the separation between God and men, and the need for a mediator which role the Levitical high priest filled. The rending of the veil proclaims that all men are on equal standing with God and need no human priest as mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Peter 2:5,9; Matt. 23:8; Rev. 1:6 (ASV)).
 - 4) Its rending symbolizes the fact that Christ, our High Priest, was about to enter heaven, and offer the atoning sacrifice for us (Heb. 9:6-17).
 - 5) The veil being rent pictures the fact that the way into heaven has now been opened. Hebrews 9:8; 10:19-22.
 - 6) The veil itself represents for us death by which we leave this world and enter eternity. Its having been rent depicts the great truth that Christ, by his death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven, has won victory for us over death (Heb. 1:14-15; Isaiah 25:7-8; 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 55-57).
3. Verses 51b-53: "...[A]nd the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."
- a. Another astonishing sign accompanying the death of Christ is here related. The latter part of verse 51 shows that at his death there was an earthquake which rent the rocks. Graves of certain dead saints were opened by this earthquake, and these arose and went into Jerusalem and appeared unto many. Notice that the text says that their resurrection took place after the Lord was raised up from the dead. But the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, and the opening of the graves occurred at the instant of the Lord's death!
 - b. Brother Coffman gave the following incident:
 - 1) "Matthew chooses to mention the last event here because of its association with the rending of the rocks, which opened the rock-hewn sepulchers in which the saints had slept. There has been much speculation as to what became of these resurrected saints. We have no positive information, but the natural presumption is that they ascended to heaven. The fact that this very singular incident is mentioned by Matthew alone, does not detract from its credibility" (McGarvey, p.247). Whether these risen saints went on to heaven is unknown; it may be that they lived on for a period of time, and died again, with perhaps their attestations of the Lord's identity giving additional proof of his
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divine Sonship.

- 2) "Why was this earthquake a miracle, seeing that earthquakes are ordinary events? First, even the most ordinary of earthquakes would in this case, due to its timing, have been strongly suggestive of the supernatural; but this was far more and utterly different from any ordinary earthquake. The peculiar violence of the quake was sufficient in the vicinity of Calvary to rend the rocks, yet the great buildings of Jerusalem, not more than a mile away, were left undisturbed. Insinuations of skeptics and even some commentators that no earthquake occurred are dissolved in the plain light of the New Testament words that 'the earth did quake' (Matt. 27:52) and that the people who witnessed it 'feared exceedingly' (v. 54).
 - 3) "There is a historical occurrence of just this type of earthquake within very recent times. Three-quarters of a mile northeast of the village of Novice, Texas, during the 1950s, a violent earthquake took place in the center of a corn field at three o'clock in the morning, while the village was asleep. My brother, David E. Coffman, was living there at the time, and I have seen the devastation wrought by that earthquake in which several hundred thousand tons of rocks, some of them ten feet in thickness, were rent and cast up from the earth in a very grotesque geological disturbance covering many acres in the heart of that field. Seismometry teams from a number of universities and colleges examined it and diagnosed it as an earthquake, having a very high epicenter, with the focus only a couple of hundred feet beneath. The strange story of that little earthquake received widespread newspaper coverage throughout the United States, especially in scientific journals; and there are many pictures of it, some of which were made by this writer, and which show the corn-rows leading directly into it.
 - 4) "Now this is related, not that it is thought to add anything to the Holy Scriptures, but because it dramatically refutes the allegations of some that an earthquake at Calvary would invariably and necessarily have wrecked the temple. As a matter of comparison, none of the houses in Novice was damaged by that violent little earthquake so near to it, although the shock was sufficient to rouse people from their slumbers for many miles in all directions....Any traveler to Golgotha needs only to consult his eyes to see that it happened. Alford took note of this, saying, 'To this day, Golgotha is a proof of it, where the rocks were rent on account of Christ.'
 - 5) "Note that the earthquake did not disturb the cross, that it discriminated among the graves of Calvary, opening those of the righteous but not the others; and, from these considerations, one would be hard pressed indeed to explain it as an ordinary earthquake, however timed!
 - 6) "The meaning of the earthquake does not lie solely in the opening of the grave but bears an independent testimony of its own. It was Calvary answering to Sinai. There was a great earthquake at Sinai (Ex. 19:18) when the Law was given; and that Law, so long associated with sin and death (Rom. 8:2), was being removed and replaced by the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. Appropriately, the earth itself should have borne witness to the event....Also, there was prefigured and symbolized the earth-shaking consequences of Christ's redemptive death and the gospel which would be preached and which was destined to shatter ancient empires and destroy the power of the devil himself (Heb. 2:14)" (Coffman, pp.492-494).
- c. The resurrection of the saints following the Lord's own resurrection carries with it some wonderful significance. It of course means that God knows the location of the graves of his people. It means that he is able to raise from the dead anyone he chooses; in fact, at the end of time, all that are in the grave shall come forth (John 5:28-29). So this event is a pledge and promise that all will be raised. The nature of the resurrection in the last day is shown to be a bodily resurrection. More than the spirits of these departed saints came forth.
 - d. "The opened graves had to be left open over Passover, since it would have been unlawful for anyone to have filled a grave during that holy week; it would have been unlawful even to touch one. While the graves were exposed for three days and nights, a period was provided during which the identity of the graves as belonging to 'the righteous' could have been made and verified. No record is left of the awe and wonder that doubtless accompanied the events connected with so strange and supernatural a phenomenon" (Coffman, pp.495).
 - e. There are several records of resurrections named in the Scriptures:
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- 1) The son of the widow of Sarepta (I Kings 17);
 - 2) The son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4);
 - 3) The man raised by the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13);
 - 4) The daughter of Jairus (Matt. 9);
 - 5) The son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7);
 - 6) Lazarus (John 11);
 - 7) Dorcas (Acts 9:41);
 - 8) Eutychus (Acts 20:9);
 - 9) The case of these saints (Mt. 27:52-53); and the greatest of all, the resurrection of Christ.
4. Verse 54: "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."
- a. "From the fact that the centurion was of heathen education, and that the words Son and God are without the article in Greek, some have understood him as meaning,
 - 1) "“This was a son of a god....But the expression Son of God, with both words anarthrous, occurs frequently in connections which show that it means the same as when the article is used. (Verse 43; Luke 1:35; John 19:7.)
 - 2) "It must be remembered also that these Roman officers, while resident in Judea, made it a part of their business to study the peculiarities of the people with whom they had to deal, and that sometimes, as in the case of Cornelius and the centurion of Capernaum (8:8-10), they became converts to the Jewish religion.
 - 3) "This man lived in Jerusalem in the midst of the excitement about Jesus; he had this very day heard him charged with blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God; and he had heard the same idea expressed concerning him since he was suspended on the cross (verse 43); and therefore he must have been stupid indeed if he did not know what was meant by the expression. It is almost certain that he knew what Jesus claimed to be, and that when he saw the miracles accompanying his death, he was convinced that the claim was just" (McGarvey, pp.247f).
 - b. The very wording of Matthew's report of the centurion's statement and why he made it, is sufficient to show that the man fully believed that Jesus was whom he claimed to be. The reasons for his affirmation are stated as being the earthquake and the other things done in his sight, including the three hours of darkness.
 - 1) The result of having seen these impressive miraculous events caused these stalwart men to fear greatly. Notice that these were not men who were easily stampeded into such a statement. They were used to violence and turmoil; they were pagans by religion and upbringing; they did not have any special attraction to the Jews or Jesus, in fact they had reason to be suspicious of the whole nation since they were subjugated to Rome and had often raised insurrections against their conquerors.
 - 2) Jesus was being crucified on the charge of being king of the Jews. But the supernatural darkness and the earthquake, coupled with the meekness and control of Jesus moved these hardened men to make the good confession.
 - c. Many people who knew about Jesus confessed him to be greater than a mere man.
 - 1) Angels confessed him—Luke 2:10-11.
 - 2) Demons—Matthew 8:29; Mark 1:24, 34; 3:11.
 - 3) The Father—Matthew 2:15-17; 17:1-5; John 12:28.
 - 4) Simeon—Luke 2:30.
 - 5) Nicodemus—John 3:1-2.
 - 6) Anna—Luke 2:36.
 - 7) Nathaniel—John 1:49.
 - 8) John the Baptizer—John 1:29.
 - 9) Peter—Matthew 16:16.
 - 10) Pilate—Matthew 27:4.
 - 11) Pilate's wife—Matthew 27:19.
 - 12) Judas—Matthew 27:4.

13)The centurion and his men—Matthew 27:54.

5. Verses 55-56: "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children."
 - a. A large group of women beheld the crucifixion from a distance. This group was comprised of the women who followed the Lord from Galilee. Among this group were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. These women are said to be standing "afar off."
 - b. "This accounts for the fact that the mother of Jesus, though present, is not mentioned among them; for she, with the apostle John, was standing nearer, near enough for Jesus to point her out by a look (his only way of doing so) as the one whom John was henceforth to regard as his own mother. (John 19:25-27)" (McGarvey, p.248).
 - c. These godly women did not desert the Lord in his hour of trouble. But they did not have as much to fear from the Lord's enemies as did his apostles. Women were at the cross to the last, and the first to his tomb on the resurrection morning.
 - d. Mary Magdalene is described by McGarvey in his comments on Mark 16:1:
 - 1) "The recorded history of Mary Magdalene is almost entirely confined to her connection with the cross and the sepulcher. Only two other facts in her life are known. She was one of the women who in Galilee followed Jesus and ministered to him out of their substance (Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:41), and out of her, as we see in this verse, the Lord had cast seven demons.
 - 2) "Magdalene means a woman of Magdala, and indicates that the town of Magdala, on the western shore of the lake of Galilee, was her native place. There, perhaps, Jesus had first met her, and bound her to himself in bonds of everlasting gratitude by casting out the seven demons. Her possession by these demons was a fearful calamity, but it implies nothing derogatory to her character....neither is there anything else in the sacred narratives to justify the popular conception that her character had been bad.
 - 3) "The supposition that she is identical with 'the woman that was a sinner,' spoken of in Luke 7:37,38, is without a shadow of foundation. In reality, all of the indications of her character and position which are furnished by the Scriptures point to a woman in easy circumstances, with a benevolent disposition, tender sensibilities, and commanding influence. Her name stands first among the female attendants of Jesus at almost every mention of it, and on her he conferred the peculiar honor of making her the first human witness of his resurrection from the dead.
 - 4) "It is a shame on the Christian world that a woman of virtue so pre-eminent has come to be commonly regarded as a reformed harlot; and that her cognomen which served only to distinguish her from other Marys by indicating her birthplace, has become, in the contracted form of Magdalene, the name of societies and institutions for the reformation of abandoned women.
 - 5) "This is an illustration, however, of the corrupting and degrading tendency of human tradition when it dares to tamper with the sacred narratives. It is Rome that has given Mary the false and low repute in which she is erroneously held" (pp.369f).
 - e. It is likely that these women named in Matthew 27:56 and John 19:25 later approached the cross, for the group includes the Lord's mother in John's record (Mt. 27:56,61; 28:1; Mark 15:40,47; 16:1-19; Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1-18).
 - f. Mary the mother of James and Joses. She was the wife of Clopas (*aka* Alphaeus—Matt. 10:3; Mark 15:40-41; John 19:25). In John's account, the husband's name is given as "Cleopas" but the marginal reading has "Clopas." The ASV also has the latter. Woods says that Clopas and Cleopas were different individuals (*Commentary on John*, p.406), and refers to Luke 24:18. Mark identifies the Mary as the mother of James the Less and Joses (Mark 15:40). James is said to be the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3).
 - g. The mother of Zebedee's children is identified in Mark 15:40 as Salome. The sons of this lady were James and John (Matt. 4:21).
 - h. It appears that a fourth lady is referred to in John 19:25—the sister of the Lord's mother. Some scholars think that this sister is identified in the next clause as Mary the wife of Clopas, but that would

- have two sisters with the same name. This sister (whose name is not given) is very likely Salome, the mother of James and John. If so, then Jesus and these two apostles were relatives (cousins). John the Baptizer was the son of Mary's cousin, Elizabeth (Luke 1:36), making him a second cousin to Jesus.
6. Verses 57-58: "When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered."
 - a. "It was seldom that persons who were crucified had friends to care for their remains; but Pilate knew too well the popularity of Jesus to be surprised that even a man in Joseph's position should propose to give him a decent burial, and having no malice to gratify, he readily granted the request" (McGarvey, p.248).
 - b. "In the common version, the word 'rich' in Isaiah's prophecy (53:9) would appear as either singular or plural, but it is in reality singular, as evidenced by the more accurate translation in the RV..." (Coffman, p.500).
 - c. Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled in Joseph burying the Lord's body in his own unused tomb. This man followed Jesus, but secretly because of the powerful Jewish leaders. Mark 15:43 speaks of him as an honorable counselor; Luke 23:50-51 describes him as a good and righteous (just) man. He and Barnabas are among the very few who are called "good" in the Scriptures.
 - d. The importance of what he did here is shown by the fact that all four gospel accounts record his hand in burying the Lord's body. "In times of distress and danger, God has frequently raised up a Joseph. When Israel was threatened with famine, when Herod would have slain the infant Christ, and then again when the helpless body of our Lord was upon the cross, there stepped forth upon the stage JOSEPH. The awful storm was at the full, the enemies glorying in their triumph, supposing Christ was out of the way forever; but in that hour came Joseph!" (Coffman, p.501). The name Joseph means "adding" (Gen. 30:24, mg.).
 - e. He was a rich man; a good man; just and honorable; a counselor; he waited for the kingdom; he had not consented to the death of Jesus; he was a secret disciple of the Lord. See Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38. Arimathaea was a city of the Jews (Luke 23:51), but its location is unknown. This man went boldly (Mark 15:44) before Pilate to beg the body of Jesus for burial. The apostles had forsaken the Lord in Gethsemane and fled; Joseph had not openly revealed his faith before, but now his faith shines brilliantly! It was evening when he made his request of Pilate (Matt. 27:57). The time would have been before the beginning of the Sabbath, but was very near that time.
 - f. Pilate did not take Joseph's word that Jesus was dead; he was astonished to hear that the Lord was already dead. Pilate asked the centurion whether Jesus was dead, and on learning that he was, Joseph's request was granted (Mark 15:43-45).
 7. Verses 59-60: "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."
 - a. He took down the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb. He rolled a great stone into place at the entrance to the seal the sepulcher. Since he was a rich man, he likely had servants along to assist him.
 - b. Nicodemus had assisted him in this good work. Nicodemus had brought a hundred-pound weight of myrrh and aloes with which to use in the Lord's burial (John 19:39). He had approached the Lord by night (John 3:1ff), and is mentioned as defending the Lord in John 7:50-52. This great amount of material was used in the embalming process then practiced; it was placed next to the body and wrapped with a linen cloth; possibly a layer of the spices was also put under the body, on the resting place (2 Chronicles 16:14). John says the Lord's body was "wound" in the linen clothes (19:40).
 - c. Faithful women also attended the burial (Luke 23:53-56). Because of the nearness of the beginning of the Sabbath, these women returned home to prepare additional spices and ointments for the completion of the burial process. These faithful friends still loved the Lord, still believed him to be a great one, but their hope had turned into despair.
 - d. The tomb was hewn out of rock; the opening was low; a great stone was rolled into place at the entrance (John 19:41-42; 20:5). It was conveniently located near the crucifixion site, in a garden (John
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19:41). It was a new tomb (John 19:41). No one had been buried in it before the Lord. It was new in the sense that it had never been used (Greek, *kainon*), not necessarily that it had only recently been hewn. Also, lest anyone think that the body of Jesus had come into contact with some great one's body and raised by its power, as in 2 Kings 13:21, the tomb had to be an unused one.

- e. The great stone with which the tomb was closed is important to the story. The Greek text describes this stone by the words *lithon megan* (Matt. 27:60) which is the source of our English word "megalith" (a huge stone). Several women knew they could not move it, thus no beaten, crucified man who had been severely wounded in the side by a spear could do so.

- 1) The stones used to close ancient tombs usually were set in a sloping groove, a runway, with the lowest point being in front of the tomb entrance. It would require far more strength to remove the stone than to roll it into place.

- 2) The stone was round with the front and back being flat, like a great stone wheel. When it was moved, it was not merely pushed a little to the side so that Jesus could squeeze through, but was moved completely away from the tomb opening (John 20:1). Matthew reports that the tomb had been hewn out of THE rock—thus it was hewn from solid rock.

- 8. Verse 61: "And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre."
 - a. Some of the women were seated nearby while the Lord was being buried. Matthew identifies two of them as "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Mark 15:47 identifies the latter Mary as the mother of Joses.
 - b. Luke indicates that there may have been more women than just these two who witnessed the burial (23:53-56). They watched the tomb for a while and then went home to prepare spices and ointment which they planned to use on the Lord's body following the Sabbath (Luke 24:1).

H. Matthew 27:62-66: The Jewish Plan to Guard the Tomb.

- 1. Verses 62-63: "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."
 - a. The chief priests and Pharisees wanted to leave no possible opportunity for the disciples of Jesus to steal his body and later claim that he had arisen from the dead. Thus, the next day (after the Sabbath had commenced that evening, very shortly after the Lord's body was removed from the cross), they approached Pilate with this unusual request. The Jewish days began at sunset, and no doubt the guard was in place by dark.
 - b. These enemies of Christ remembered that he had taught that he would be resurrected on the third day. If they knew this much about his teachings, they also should have known that he had predicted his death, with the various particulars he foretold concerning it. His foreknowledge of how he would die should have shown them that his promise to rise from the dead was also reliable.
 - c. They did not believe he would be resurrected, but they did not want anyone later to claim he had been raised. The best way to prevent this would be to insure that his body remained where it was buried. But their precautions only served to furnish undeniable proof that he was resurrected. They feared the resurrection, but by their actions here they made belief in the resurrection even more believable.
 - d. That his body was in the tomb for the three days, under the Roman seal and guard, proves that no one stole the body; it also proves that the Lord was truly dead, not merely in some kind of coma. Many today foolishly deny that he was dead, claiming he had merely swooned, and later slipped from the tomb after he had revived. The fact that he was in the grave three days, after undergoing all the terrible things during his last day, precludes the notion that he was not dead!
- 2. Verse 64: "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first."
 - a. They asked Pilate that he secure the tomb until the third day. Has there ever been another case in all history where a guard was placed before a grave to prevent the dead person from being resurrected? Tombs have been sealed and guarded, but never for such a purpose as the one propounded here, or to keep people from thinking he was raised.
 - b. "It should be observed that although the Pharisees quote Jesus as saying that he would rise 'after three

days,' they ask that the sepulcher be guarded only 'until the third day,' showing that they regarded the time designated by 'after three days' as terminating 'on the third day'" (McGarvey, p.249).

- c. The disciples had no ideas about stealing the body. In fact, they were very slow to believe the reports of Christ's resurrection. Even one of the apostles, Thomas, declared that he would not believe until he could thrust his hand into the wounded side of the Lord (John 20:24-25). It was many days after he rose from the tomb before they even knew what use to make of the fact of his resurrection. They certainly could not have concocted such an elaborate plan during the time the Lord's body was entombed. They had to be told by the Lord what the significance of his resurrection was, and be given by him the necessary instructions and guidance to enable them to do what he wanted to be done.
- d. "The singular fact that the enemies of Jesus were more apprehensive of his resurrection than his friends, is accounted for by the consideration that the latter, with their present conceptions, had little to hope for in his resurrection, while the former had much to dread from either the fact itself or a belief of it among the people. A guilty fear makes men more watchful than a languid hope" (McGarvey, p.249).
- e. Views of scholars regarding *the last error shall be worse than the first*:
 - 1) "If the tomb should be found empty, it would give the disciples an advantage over them, and they thought that this 'last error will be worse than the first'" (Boles, p.550).
 - 2) "There is also an admission of the Pharisees in this verse that the crucifixion was an 'error,' although they probably did not intend such an admission...The earthquake, the darkness, the rending of the veil, etc., along with the confession of the centurion, had produced the most overwhelming demonstration that 'the Holy One' indeed had been upon the cross; and as a result, those pious hypocrites were at last willing to admit, quite piously and indirectly of course, that perhaps it was an 'error!'" (Coffman, p.506).
 - 3) Barnes says, "That is, the last deception, or the taking him from the tomb, pretending that he rose, will have a wider influence among the people than the first, or his pretending to be the Messiah" (p.316).
3. Verses 65-66: "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."
 - a. Pilate allowed them to use Roman soldiers to guard the tomb. They sealed the stone and set the guard. They no doubt insured that the body was inside before placing the seal on the entrance stone. Compare: "And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (Daniel 6:17).
 - b. To break the official Roman seal was to commit a great offense; and without breaking it, the tomb could not be entered. The steps taken insured that no man could remove the body.
- I. Jesus Uttered Seven Statements While he Suffered on the Cross.
 1. Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
 - a. We may be sure that God heard all the prayers offered by his holy Son. How many went unanswered? None. How many requests did he make that were turned down? Evidently just one (Matt. 26:39).
 - b. This prayer was answered but not immediately, not without conditions, and not for everyone involved. Acts 2:23,37,38,41. But only some of the guilty ones obeyed the gospel.
 2. Luke 23:43: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."
 - a. The attitude of the two thieves is shown in Luke 23:39-43.
 - b. The statement was addressed to only one of the thieves. It may be that this man was a backslider since he knew somewhat about Jesus and his kingdom (Acts 13:24; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:7,21; 7:30).
 - c. Whether he had or had not been baptized is of no significance to us: the law of the gospel did not take effect until Jesus had died; and prior to the effective date of a will, the testator may dispose of his blessings as he sees fit, but after his death, the conditions of the will are then imposed (Heb. 9:15-17; Gal. 3:15).
 - d. Therefore, the conversion of this thief is no example for us since his pardon was given prior to the death of Christ, and we live on this side of the cross (Heb. 10:9-10; Rom. 1:16; 10:1-3).
 3. John 19:26-27: "Woman, behold thy son...behold thy mother."

- a. It is to be expected that his mother was present (cf. Luke 2:35).
 - b. The Lord demands that children honor their parents (Eph. 6:1-2), even after they are grown (cf. Mark 7:10-13). He never commanded us to do what he was unwilling to do himself (Luke 2:51; Acts 1:1).
 - c. This exchange shows the Lord's great compassion: he made arrangements for his mother's welfare (cf. Matt. 6:33).
 - d. It shows his methods: he uses other people to provide for his own (Matt. 25:40).
4. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
 - a. Although Christ was utterly sinless, yet he died as a sinner—separated from God during his time on the cross.
 - b. But this statement is beyond human comprehension; it enters into the eternal, and has to do with such deep considerations that we are not able to fathom them.
 - c. This is the only statement of the seven recorded by more than one writer.
5. John 19:28: "I thirst."
 - a. Thirst is one of the natural consequences of death by crucifixion.
 - b. He could have miraculously provided water for himself. He did for Israel (1 Cor. 10:4); he made the world (John 1:3). But he died without divine help.
 - c. He died that we might never thirst (John 4:14; Rev. 7:16).
 - d. This is the only one of the seven statements in which he sought something for himself. He was offered a mixture of sour wine and water (vinegar) which the soldiers had provided for themselves (John 19:29-30).
 6. John 19:30: "It is finished."
 - a. All that he had come to do had been done (John 9:4). The pertinent prophecies had been fulfilled; the atonement had been made; the law was fulfilled (Matt. 5:17); his sufferings were now over!
 - b. This is a statement of victory.
 7. Luke 23:46: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."
 - a. He had served the Father well, in fact, perfectly.
 - b. Hebrews 12:1-4: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."
 - c. He died for you and me; let us resolve that we will live for him, and thence be permitted to live and reign with him in that eternal abode he prepared!
- J. Illegality of the Lord's Jewish trials (Rex Turner, "Sound Doctrine," 1978, p.18).
1. The arrest of Jesus was illegal—it was arranged by Judas, an accomplice of the corrupt Jewish leaders and traitor, and not as the result of a legal mandate of the court.
 2. The private examination of Jesus by Annas was illegal—a private preliminary examination of an accused person was not allowed lest he should become perplexed and give damaging testimony against himself.
 3. The operation of the Court was illegal—it convened at night, and a specific and inflexible rule of the Hebrew law was that proceedings in capital trials could not be heard at night.
 4. The place where the trial was held (the palace of Caiaphas) was illegal—the court was required to convene in the temple and within the Hall of Hewn Stones.
 5. The indictments were illegal—they were several and without the certainty that the law required. The first clear indictment was the charge of sedition, and before that indictment was disposed of in proper legal order, another—the charge of blasphemy—was laid.
 6. The indictment of blasphemy was illegal—it was made by Caiaphas, the high priest, and a member of the court. Such action by a member of the court was strictly against the law of the court. The members of the court were the defendants of the accused until the proper evidence showed him to be guilty. A court trial could formerly proceed only when there were witnesses to testify against the accused.
 7. The personal conduct of the high priest Caiaphas was illegal—he rent his clothes and such conduct was strictly against the Mosaic law, as well as the law of the Hebrew court. (Lev. 21:10; Matt. 26:65; Mark
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14:63.)

8. The simultaneous and unanimous vote of the Sanhedrin Court was illegal—the court in simultaneous action condemned Christ to death; whereas, the law of the court required that the youngest judge—in terms of service on the bench—cast the first vote. The balloting was to continue in this manner from the youngest to the high priest in order that the junior judges might not be unduly influenced by the examples of their seniors by reason of years of experience and authority. Further, the Hebrew law provided that "a simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the first day of trial—indicative of extreme malice and prejudice—should have the effect of an acquittal."
 9. The nature of the testimony on which the death sentence was passed was illegal—it was the uncorroborated testimony of Jesus, himself, that he was the Christ the Son of God. One provision of the "law of evidence" in the Hebrew System of Jurisprudence was that an uncorroborated confession made by the accused was not sufficient evidence for his conviction.
 10. The convening of the Sanhedrin Court before the morning sacrifice was illegal—the Hebrew law required that in the case of conviction, the court should proceed the next day in the nature of an appeal and a rehearsing, but the Sanhedrin Court in its rush to have sufficient time to crucify Christ before the feast of the passover met before the morning sacrifice. The rehearing and rehearsing was a farce. They asked Christ: "Art thou then the Son of God?" Christ answered: "Ye say that I am"—meaning I am and ye ask because I am." They then bound Christ and brought him before Pilate. (Luke 22:66-71; 23:1).
 11. The fact that the trial of Jesus was concluded in one day was illegal—the trial began after midnight and was concluded before the morning sacrifice. The Hebrew law allowed no death penalty conviction to be concluded in one day's time.
 12. The fact that the trial was conducted on the day preceding a Jewish Sabbath was illegal—the Hebrew law prohibited court proceedings on a day preceding a Jewish Sabbath or a religious holy day.
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MATTHEW 28

A. Matthew 28:1-8: The Women Find the Tomb Empty.

1. Verse 1: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."
 - a. The translation of the KJV leaves the wrong impression: that the women came to the tomb while it was still the Sabbath. The other accounts show that it was on the first day of the week, early in the morning:
 - 1) Mark 16:1-2: "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun."
 - 2) Luke 24:1: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them."
 - 3) John 20:1: "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."
 - b. The Sabbath had ended at sundown the preceding afternoon, at which time the first day of the week began.
 - 1) "The English version is here self-contradictory: for if the event mentioned occurred 'in the end of the Sabbath,' it could not have occurred 'as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.' The word rendered 'in the end' (*opse*), usually means late, and is sometimes translated 'in the evening.' (Mark 11:19; 13:35.) But it is sometimes used with the genitive in the sense of after...and such must be its meaning here: 'after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn!...' (McGarvey, p.250).
 - c. Guy N. Woods provides us with the following scholarly and informative assessment:



On what day was our Lord crucified? If on Friday, as many say, how could he have been in the grave three days and three nights, as the scriptures say?" (Matt. 12:38-40).

This matter poses a problem only when we attempt to interpret it in the light of *present* concepts, rather than those existing when these events occurred. All difficulty involving the "three days and three nights" disappears when we follow *first* century usage.

The phrase, "three days and three nights," means today a period of seventy-two hours. It is clear, from the accounts given that Jesus came forth from the tomb early on the first day of the week—shortly before dawn. "Very early" on that day the women found the tomb empty (Mark 16:12). Mark tells us that the sabbath "was past" when they came. It is true that Matthew says the woman came to the sepulchre "late on the sabbath day," but then the explanation is immediately offered that it was "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," showing us that it was that writer's intention to indicate that the empty tomb was discovered at or very near dawn—the first appearance of light. The Sabbath day officially ended at sunset; dawn was in early morning hour, with all the dark portion of the night intervening.

Thus, the words, "late on the sabbath day," cannot be construed to mean "while the sabbath was yet on," nor is such necessary in the light of Matthew's clear indication that it was near dawn on "the first day of the week," Sunday, when the women came to the tomb and found it empty. The accounts of Matthew and Mark are thus easily harmonized; and, Luke's report puts the matter in clear perspective: "And it was the day of the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed after, and beheld the tomb, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 23:54-56; 24:1-3.) It is therefore, very clear, from these combined accounts, that Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, shortly before the first light

of dawn.

(It is of interest to note that Matthew's phrase, "late on the sabbath, Matt. 28:1 translates the Greek phrase, *opse de sabbatoon*, and *opse* is a preposition with the genitive, which actually signifies, in this construction, *after*, hence, "*after* the sabbath;"—cf. Arndt Gingrich—and Thayer says that it means "the sabbath having just passed, after the sabbath, i.e., at the early dawn of the first day of the week—an interpretation absolutely demanded..." It is certain, from these considerations that Matthew did not intend to declare that Jesus rose from the dead on the sabbath day.)

In view of the foregoing facts, it is impossible to extend the period our Lord was in the tomb to seventy-two hours—three full days and three full nights. In the late afternoon of the day he was crucified, he was placed in tomb. Luke 23:50-56. This occurred shortly before sunset, when the sabbath began. For him to have been in the tomb three full days and three full nights, he would have emerged from the tomb at the same time *of day*, i.e., in the late afternoon, shortly before sunset, three days later. It is absolutely certain, however, that he rose from the dead shortly before daylight, on the first day of the week. Whatever the day on which he was crucified, whether Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, if he were in the tomb three full days and three full nights, i.e., seventy-two hours, he could not have come forth from the grave in the early morning hour. But he did; therefore, the scriptures do not teach that Jesus was in the tomb three full days and three full nights.

Nor, is such a conclusion necessary, in view of the fact that the phrase, "three days and three nights, in biblical parlance, does not designate a seventy-two hours' period. If this can be shown, (and it can indeed easily be demonstrated the day on which the Lord was crucified becomes obvious. Misapprehension, at this point, is the result of the *effort to make* three days and three nights a period of seventy-two hours, leading some to the conclusion that Jesus was crucified on Thursday. Some have sought to make it Wednesday, and I know of at least one attempt to put the crucifixion on *Tuesday!* All such efforts are vain, because they all fail of the purpose prompting them. Let us suppose, for example, he was crucified on Thursday and buried late on that day, just before sundown. Three full days and three full nights later would be Sunday afternoon, just before sundown, when he must have come forth from the grave, as determined by our concept of three days and nights. However the records show that hours before this period was up, the tomb was empty. Suppose he was buried on Wednesday just before sundown. We know he rose early "on the first day of the week. This period includes more than seventy-two hours, and also involves four nights—not three! Any effort, the design of which, is to make the period our Lord spent in the tomb exactly three full days and three full nights is a fruitless and vain exercise, a useless and unnecessary endeavor.

The sacred writers repeatedly affirm that Jesus would rise from the dead on "the third day." (Matthew said it (16:21, Luke affirmed it (9:22), and Peter confirmed it (Acts 10:40). On two different occasions it is said that he would be raised in three days. (Matt.26:61; John 2:19). In Matt.27:63, Mark 8:31 it is said that he would be raised "after three days." It must follow, therefore, that the phrases, *on* the third day, *in* three days, and *after* three days, all signify exactly the same period, inasmuch as they are all applied to the same event. The period designated in these matters is described as "three days and three nights. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. Thus, *on* the third day, *in* three days, and *three days and three nights* all embrace exactly the same period as applied to the interval our Lord was in the tomb.

A simple induction of passages where these phrases or similar ones occur, will show that this was ordinary Jewish usage. *After* three days, and *until* the third day appear on one statement made by the Pharisees in connection with our Lord's burial. With malice in their hearts and with no respect for the dead, they said, "That deceiver said, while he was yet alive, *After three days* I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure *until the third day.*" (Matt. 27:63, 64.) They thus used these phrases synonymously. When the lovely Esther appeared before King Ahasuerus to plead for her people she instructed the Jews of Shushan neither to eat nor drink for three days, "night or day:" yet, she went into the king's presence "on the third day." (Esth. 4:16; 5:1.) Joseph caused his brothers to be put "into ward," for three days, yet he is said to have released them "the third day." (Gen. 42:17, 18.) After three days, in three days, on the third day, three days and three nights are

phrases used interchangeably to designate the same period in Jewish and Hebrew usage.

Moreover, those people were disposed frequently to speak of a portion of a designated period as the period itself. An excellent example of this is to be seen in the manner in which Luke and Paul refer to the period the apostle preached in Ephesus and its environs. “And he entered into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of *three months*, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of *two years*.” (Acts 19:8-10.) His activities in the synagogue and his labors in the school of Tyrannus embraced a period of two years and three months. When Paul came to designate this period, he did so in round numbers, saying that it was “by the space of three years.” (Acts 20:31.) It is of no little significance, in the light of these studies, that Paul, in this instance uses a Greek term (*trietia*), occurring only here in the New Testament, and signifying a *space* of time *within* which a thing is done, thus indicating the limits of the period rather than the exact period itself.

Our Lord was crucified on Friday, the day before the sabbath (Mark 16:42), and he rose triumphantly from the tomb early on the Lord’s day, the third day following. (Mark 16:9.) [Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers*, Vol. 1, pp.219-221].



- d. Critics assert that the reports contradict since different women are named as being present at the tomb. John only names Mary Magdalene; Matthew names Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; Mark says Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James (the other Mary), and Salome were there; Luke reports the presence of several: Mary Magdalene, Joanna (the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward—Luke 8:3), the mother of James (the Less; she is the other Mary of Matthew's account), and other women:
 - 1) Luke 23:49: “And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”
 - 2) Luke 23:55-56: “And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”
 - 3) Luke 24:1: “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.”
 - 4) Luke 24:10: “It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.”
- e. The complete story is told only when all of the accounts have been consulted; no one of these four writers claimed to have reported every detail, and no detail reported by one is contradicted by any of the others. John does not say that Mary Magdalene came alone; Matthew and Mark do not say that only those women they named were present; Luke gives a more complete picture of the identity of the women since he names more than the others, and states twice that there were others present who are not named (24:1,10).
- f. The purpose of their coming to the sepulchre was to anoint the Lord's body (Mk. 16:1-2). Matthew merely says they came to see the sepulchre, since he had not previously said anything about them preparing spices for that purpose. Luke 23:50-56 reports that the women had watched as Joseph placed the Lord's body in the tomb, and that they returned to the city to wait out the Sabbath, and to prepare spices for the anointing process.
 - 1) Mark states that they had purchased sweet spices. They would have been able to buy and prepare these spices after the sabbath had ended the evening before, and left before daylight to make their way out to the tomb as early as possible.
 - 2) The distance was likely a half-mile or more. It appears that they knew nothing about the Roman guard, or else they would have realized they would not be permitted entrance into the tomb. Also, they discussed among themselves, as they made their journey, how they would be able to move the great stone sealing the sepulchre (Mark 16:3-4).

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- c. Another supposed difficulty is asserted by critics of God's word. They see a clash between Matthew's report which speaks of only one angel, and Luke's report of two.
 - 1) And, they think that there is a discrepancy in the fact that Matthew speaks of this being as an angel, while Mark and Luke speak of "a young man" and "two men."
 - 2) Another is asserted to be found in the fact that Mark has the angel sitting on the right side of the tomb, but Luke has his two men standing by the side of the women.
 - d. The answers to these difficulties are simple. Matthew and Mark simply give a report of one of the angels without saying there was only one present; it is likely that they describe only the one who spoke.
 - 1) An angel is simply a messenger and the Greek term is sometimes used in reference to some human messenger (for example, John—Mark 1:2).
 - 2) But heavenly angels often took on human forms in discharging their earthly missions (Gen. 18, 19). These angels could be spoken of as men for they had the form of men.
 - 3) The record speaks of one angel sitting in the tomb on the right side, but what was the other one doing? Perhaps standing. It may be that after the women entered the tomb, the angels (who were first sitting down), stood up to greet them.
 - 4) John's account shows the two angels sitting, one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the Lord's body had lain. But this was their positions when Mary Magdalene saw them, which was a while later than the time these women in the present situation saw them.
 - e. The size of the tomb is suggested by the number of people inside it at one time. The two angels were present, plus several women. David's tomb is said to have been about 100 feet in length, with places for a good many bodies to be entombed. These tombs were hollowed from solid rock, and had niches cut into the sides where the bodies were placed.
5. Verse 7: "And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."
- a. The angel told these women to go quickly and report to the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that he would meet them in Galilee. In Matthew 26:32, the Lord had made an appointment with the disciples to meet them in Galilee following his resurrection.
 - b. This apparently did not make the proper impression on their minds, for they were dismayed and discouraged when he was crucified, not believing he would be raised. Galilee is no tiny place, so the Lord had doubtless specified the place and perhaps even the occasion (time) when he would meet with them there.
 - c. The word "disciples" is in the masculine gender in the Greek text, thus the eleven disciples are the ones meant.
6. Verse 8: "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word."
- a. The women departed the tomb in great haste, filled with fear and great joy, as they ran back into Jerusalem to bring this happy news to the disciples. The fear on their part was the overwhelming awe they felt at learning this wonderful news, and the great joy was experienced because of the truth the news contained. Jesus is not dead, but had been raised to life again!
 - b. These women were the first to learn of this, no doubt because they were the ones to be interested enough to make plans to anoint the Lord's body.
- B. Essential to the Resurrection is the Fact that Jesus Actually was Dead.
1. Before there can be a resurrection from the dead, the individual involved must truly be dead. Many modernists deny that Jesus died on the cross; this do they for the purpose of explaining away his resurrection. Jesus predicted his death by crucifixion and stated afterward that he had actually been dead.
 - a. Matthew 20:17-19: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."
 - b. Revelation 1:18: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."
 2. If we cannot believe the Savior's words on this subject, he cannot be believed in anything he said! The
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Bible, God's word, says he was dead.

- a. Old Testament prophecies predicted that he would be dead.
 - 1) Isaiah 53:9: "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."
 - 2) Isaiah 53:12: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."
 - b. New Testament statements declare he was dead.
 - 1) Matthew 27:50: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."
 - 2) Luke 23:46: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."
 - 4) Hebrews 2:9: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."
 3. The Roman soldiers knew that he was dead (Matt. 27:54 ["was"]; Mark 15:44-45; John 19:32-34). These were men who were acquainted with death; they could know whether a man was dead.
 - a. Matthew 27:54: "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."
 - b. Mark 15:44-45: "And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph."
 - c. John 19:32-34: "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."
 4. Pilate was satisfied that he was dead (Mark 15:44-45).
 5. The Jewish leaders who had brought about the Lord's condemnation were satisfied that he was dead (Matt. 27:61-66).
 6. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, who buried his body, knew he was dead (John 19:38-42). Great tributes of praise are given by the scriptures about Joseph (good, just, honorable). "And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand" (John 19:38-42).
 7. The godly women who watched the Lord's crucifixion and followed those who buried him knew he was dead; they prepared expensive spices and ointments for the purpose of anointing his body after the Sabbath was past.
 - a. Luke 23:49: "And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."
 - b. Luke 23:55-56: "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."
 8. The apostles who saw his empty tomb and his resurrected body knew he had been dead.
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9. The angels of God stated plainly that he was dead but had been raised to life again.

C. Many Unbelievers Have Tried to Explain Away the Empty Tomb.

1. These include the rank infidels, the modernist religious unbelievers, and the many compromisers of spiritual truth. Quite simply, one who rejects the resurrection of Jesus does not believe the Bible; and one who believes the Bible will fully accept the fact of his resurrection!
2. Some who reject his resurrection claim that the gardener removed the Lord's body.
 - a. This was Mary Magdalene's thought for a time (John 20:15).
 - b. But this could not be, for the tomb was sealed and guarded; and his grave clothes were left in the tomb (Matt. 27:62-66; John 19:39-40; 20:6-7).
3. Some thought his body was removed by his enemies.
 - a. But his enemies did not want his body removed, hence they asked Pilate to supply a guard. They had no motive for taking the body away.
 - b. After the apostles began preaching the resurrected Lord, why did not the enemies produce his body in response to their preaching, if they had stolen it? In fact, they had not removed his body!
4. Many have claimed that his body was taken away by his friends.
 - a. This was alleged by his enemies (Matt. 28:11-15).
 - 1) The soldiers were never punished for sleeping, the punishment for such was very severe under the Roman military code (cf. Acts 12:19).
 - 2) If they were asleep, how could they know the disciples had stolen the body?
 - b. Stealing his body required breaking the Roman seal; why were not the disciples charged by the Roman authorities for that crime? The Romans knew the disciples had not done so.
 - c. The disciples had neither reason, motive, nor desire to steal the body of Jesus. They did not believe he would rise from the dead for they were amazed when they heard the first reports (Luke 24:11). They had scattered, Peter went back to fishing, and the women went to anoint the body.
 - d. It was impossible for them to remove the body since the guard was posted at the tomb, a band numbering from fifteen to sixty trained soldiers. Some authorities say the guard may have numbered from sixty to one hundred and twenty men.
 - e. There was a great change which came over the apostles following the resurrection: they were no longer cowardly; they began to boldly proclaim the resurrected Lord! Beforehand they had fled when the enemy came to arrest Jesus.
 - 1) If they had stolen the body, how can this great change be accounted for?
 - 2) Eleven of the twelve died for their faith in the resurrection. If they had stolen the body and concealed it, why were they willing to die for what they knew was falsehood? People do not endure persecution and death for what they know is a lie.
5. Others claim he was not really dead, but had "swooned" while on the cross, and later revived after resting in the tomb, and rolled the stone away from the entrance enough to slip out, escaping the notice of the soldiers. Another variation of this theory has the Roman soldiers who crucified him in on a plot. This theory says that the drink Jesus accepted at the last was a strong narcotic which made it appear that he was dead. It also claims that the plot succeeded, up to the time another soldier thrust his spear into the Lord's side, which resulted in his death later, after he had been removed from the cross and taken to a secret place by his disciples.
 - a. The "swoon" theory could not be correct for the Lord had undergone some horrible experiences in the hours preceding his death. He had not slept or eaten for many hours; there was the emotional drain of the trials; the scourging was enough to result in death for many who underwent it; the beatings he received from various people; the crucifixion itself; the pierced side. One who was thus treated could not, under any circumstances, have endured them, and still have the strength to roll aside the great stone sealing the tomb. Four or more women knew that they did not have the strength to move it; it is certain that Jesus could not have done so, especially from the inside of the tomb!
 - b. Schonfield's *Passover Plot* theory fails because it is totally lacking in any supporting evidence. That Jesus was dead is evident from the facts stated earlier; that his body was interred in the tomb, sealed and guarded, is also evident from the facts of the case already given. The dead body of Jesus was placed in the tomb, and the tomb was found empty on the third day. The missing body is not explained

by this unbeliever's theory!

6. Others have asserted that the witnesses were hallucinating when they thought they had seen the risen Jesus.
 - a. But this theory does not explain the empty tomb! What happened to the body?
 - b. The ones who saw him were not neurotics, but fishermen, men of other types of work. When they first saw the risen Lord, they did not think it was the Lord—objective proof had to be given. Thomas declared that he would not believe unless he could put his finger in the nail prints in his hands and put his hand into his side; the Lord called this to his attention when he met Thomas, with the effect that he was firmly and fully convinced (John 20:24-29).
 - c. The "hallucination" theory does not account for the fact that more than 500 saw him on the same occasion (1 Cor. 15:6). It does not account for the fact that Saul of Tarsus, who hated Jesus, was convinced of the truth (Acts 9:1ff), and made a drastic change in his life.
 - d. It does not account for the various individuals who saw him, at different times and in other places (1 Cor. 15:1-8). These were all competent and reliable men and women, whose testimony would be accepted by any impartial court.

D. The Facts of the Resurrection Story are Related by the Gospel Writers.

1. Several faithful women came to the tomb early on the first day of the week.
 - a. This company included Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James the Less; Salome, the mother of James and John; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; and others who are not named (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1-4; Luke 23:49,55-56; 24:1-3,10; 8:3; John 20:1).
 - b. These came to further anoint the body of Jesus; they did not have time to do so following the Lord's death, and could not do so on the Sabbath (Luke 23:55-56).
 - c. They left home while it was still dark: “ (John 20:1) and arrived at the tomb as the sun arose on Sunday, the first day of the week: “And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun” (Mark 16:2).
 - d. As they made their way toward the tomb, they wondered how they would be able to move the great stone to gain access to the tomb. Obviously, they did not know about the band of soldiers guarding the tomb or the Roman seal with which the tomb had been secured (Mark 16:3).
 - e. On their arrival, they discovered much to their dismay that the stone had been moved already. An angel had been dispatched from heaven to remove the stone; and after doing so, he sat on it, causing great fear among the soldiers (Mt. 27:1-4).
 - f. The body of the Lord was not in the tomb! The women naturally supposed that the Lord's enemies had removed the body and hidden it elsewhere (John 20:2). Mary ran back into the city to give this report to Peter; the other women entered the tomb in Mary's absence.
 - 1) Mary Magdalene may have reached the tomb ahead of these other women, or on quickly perceiving that the tomb was empty, and supposing the body had been stolen, she ran to tell Peter.
 - 2) In the meantime, the other women arrive and meet the angels. Peter and John ran to the garden immediately upon hearing Mary's report, with John reaching it first, but allowing Peter to enter ahead of him (John 20:3-10).
 - 3) On seeing that the tomb was indeed empty, they returned to Jerusalem. Peter left "wondering" (Luke 24:12), while John "saw and believed" (John 20:8). Mary came back to the tomb after Peter and John, and her conversation with the angel takes place (John 20:1-13).
2. The angels announced to the women the resurrection of Christ.
 - a. Matthew and Mark mention only one angel; Luke and John speak of two. The former simply describe the spokesman, which does not contradict the fact that two angels were present. These angels are clothed in long white, shining garments (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12).
 - b. The women are asked: "Why seek ye the living among the dead" (Luke 24:5); and are told, "I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified" (Matt. 28:5); and still further, "He is not here: for he is risen...Come see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:6). The angels also reminded them that Jesus had told them before the crucifixion that he was to be crucified but that he would rise again on the third day (Luke 24:6-8), which the women now remembered.
 - c. The women are told to go quickly and report the Lord's resurrection to his disciples, and that he would

meet them in Galilee (Matt. 28:7-8; Mark 16:7-8). These women hastened to obey.

- d. While these women were gone on this mission, Mary, who had already gone back to tell Peter about the Lord's empty tomb, preceded by Peter and John, returned to the tomb. These two apostles saw the empty grave, and went back to the city. Mary stood outside the sepulchre weeping before looking into the tomb. It seems that she had not paused long enough to look into it when she first came (John 20:1-2). She encounters the two angels; one was standing at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus had lain (John 20:11-13).
- e. The women brought word to the apostles (Luke 24:9-10). These men did not believe the story at first (Luke 24:11). Luke seems to say that the report to the apostles was given by the whole group of women at the same time, but from the additional information given by John it appears more likely that Mary Magdalene brought the initial report, and the rest of the women gave another report soon afterwards. This view fits the overall facts better.

E. The Eyewitnesses of the Resurrected Lord.

1. Mary Magdalene was the first to see the risen Lord (Mark 16:9; John 20:14-18). She was the lady from whom the Lord had cast seven demons.
2. The other women saw the Lord (Matt. 28:9-10). These had been with the Lord for quite some time, assisting in his ministry (Luke 23:49,55f; 24:1ff).
3. Peter saw the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34). Certainly, this apostle would know whether it was Jesus.
4. The two disciples traveling to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32; Mark 16:12).
5. The twelve, including Matthias (1 Cor. 15:5; Acts 1:21-26; Mk. 16:14; Luke 24:36-41; John 20:19-29).
6. More than 500 brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). At the time that Paul wrote the First Corinthian letter, the greater part of these were still alive.
7. He was seen by James, then by all of the apostles (1 Cor. 15:7).
8. Lastly, he was seen by Saul of Tarsus, hardly an impartial witness since he had dedicated his life to opposing the cause of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1ff; 26:9ff).
9. The Lord picked the apostles to be his special witnesses, but all of these men and women were proper witnesses of the fact that he had been raised.
 - a. The qualifications of a witness includes three basic matters:
 - 1) **Honest.** A man will be a false witness for three reasons: out of fear, through greed, or because of ambition. These witnesses had no reason to fear if they said nothing about the Lord's resurrection (if he had not been raised); and there was no means of obtaining material wealth or advantage by saying he arose (in fact, they lost out materially by preaching the resurrection); and there was no earthly ambition to be gratified by proclaiming his resurrection.
 - 2) **Competent.** The competency of a witness is determined by his mental capacity to observe and remember facts, and repeat the details correctly. Several of the apostles were seamen, Matthew was a tax collector, Paul was a scholar. There is every reason to believe them all to be competent, and no reason to think otherwise.
 - 3) **Sufficient in number.** The number of individuals who saw the risen Savior is more than enough to establish the truth of their testimony.
 - b. The honesty, the competency, and the number of witnesses meet every requirement of a fair and honest court. Their testimony may be safely trusted.

F. Other Compelling Evidence that Christ was Actually Raised From the Dead.

1. The wounds of his crucifixion were plainly evident. Thomas doubted the reality of the resurrection reports until he saw these wounds (John 20:19,24-29; Luke 24:36-40).
2. The fact that Jesus was still using the physical body in which he had died shows he had been raised, a body which still could eat (Luke 24:39-43).
3. The great stone with which the tomb was closed offers testimony of his resurrection. The Greek text describes this stone with the words *lithon megan* (Matt. 27:60) which is the source of our English word "megalith" (a huge stone).
 - a. Several women knew they could not move it, thus no beaten, crucified man who had been severely wounded in the side by a spear, could do so. The stones used to close ancient tombs usually were set

- in a sloping groove, a runway, with the lowest point being in front of the tomb entrance. It would require far more strength to remove the stone than to roll it into place. The stone was round with the front and back being flat, like a great stone wheel.
- b. When it was moved, it was not merely pushed a little to the side so that Jesus could squeeze through, but was moved completely away from the tomb opening (John 20:1). The angel of God removed this stone, and sat upon it; it is no wonder the pagan soldiers shook in fear and became as dead men (Matt. 28:4).
4. The tomb itself offers evidence. There are no back doors or escape hatches in our modern caskets or in those ancient tombs, which were carved from solid rock (Mt. 27:60). It was a new tomb (John 19:41), so there was no possibility of 2 Kings 13:21 being repeated. It was closed with the great stone, sealed by the Roman seal, and guarded by soldiers. This tomb did contain the body of Jesus at the dawning of Sunday. That the tomb was empty afterwards is shown by several reliable facts:
 - a. It was seen to be empty by at least six of the disciples (Matt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:1-8; Lk. 24:10; John 20:2-8).
 - b. It was seen to be empty by at least some of the Roman guards (Matt. 28:2,11-15).
 - c. The Jews did not deny the fact that it was empty; they merely tried to explain why it was empty. They were willing to spend a large amount of money to convince the general population that the resurrection of Jesus was a sham.
 - d. The fact of the empty tomb was publicly proclaimed on Pentecost day in the very presence of many who would know the truth about it, and nothing was said in rebuttal.
 5. Evidence of his resurrection is seen in the grave clothes left in the tomb.
 - a. John 20:4-7: "So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."
 - 1) Greek scholars say that the text says that the linen cloth was lying in folds, that they were in a cocoon shape as if Jesus had simply passed through them without disturbing their arrangement.
 - 2) When Lazarus was raised, he had to have assistance to be loosed from the tightly wound grave clothes (Jn. 11:44).
 - 3) Jesus was bound the same way, hence could not unwrap the clothes or travel any distance in that binding.
 - b. The spices used in the burial customs of the Jews were sticky. These were placed on the body and the linen cloth was wrapped around the body, from neck to foot. "Who unwrapped Jesus, in unhurried manner rolled up the face napkin, then painstakingly, and with the skill of an artist, re-wrapped those sticky grave cloths back into their original shape so perfectly that they appeared as if they had not been tampered with?" (Ed. Wharton, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Historical...Or Mythological?").
 - c. The evident conclusion seems to be therefore that Jesus passed through these grave cloths in the same way he passed through the walls of the tomb and also into the room where the disciples waited behind locked doors (John 20:19,26).
 6. Again, there is the report of many eyewitnesses.
 - a. As we have seen, these were honest, competent, and sufficient in number. They had nothing in this world to gain by their report if that testimony were false. They knowingly faced terrible persecution on account of their report.
 - b. Even these eyewitnesses were very skeptical at first, and only after positive proof was given did they accept the truth that Jesus had been raised. But being honest with themselves, they were convinced it was the truth, due to the overwhelming evidence.
 7. The great impact of the story of Jesus on the ancient world, even before the gospel narratives were written, offers evidence for the resurrection of Christ. When the story of the resurrection was told, great numbers believed the whole story; only later was the account set forth in written form for succeeding generations.
 8. The New Testament itself, being inspired of God, gives final proof of the resurrection of our Lord. It presents all the details, including fulfilled prophecy which related to the subject, and concludes that Jesus
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was indeed raised from the dead.

- a. John 20:30-31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."
- b. Acts 2:29-32: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."
- c. Acts 2:36-37: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

G. There is Great Significance in the Resurrection of Christ.

1. It shows that the promises of God can be relied upon (Acts 2:22-24,27-35).
2. It offers proof positive that he is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4; Acts 2:36).
3. It means that he is alive and well, and sits on David's spiritual throne at the right hand of the Almighty in heaven. (Heb. 12:2; Eph. 4:8; Acts 15:14-17; 1 Pet. 3:22; Dan. 7:13f; Phil. 2:10f; Acts 2:32f).
4. The entire gospel system depends on it (1 Cor. 15:14,17,18-19).
5. His resurrection is the basis of our own salvation and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12ff; Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 3:21).
6. It is the basis for observing every first day of the week:
 - a. Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."
 - b. 1 Corinthians 11:26: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 11:29: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."
 - d. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."
7. Our hope of heaven depends on it.
 - a. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you..." (1 Pet. 1:3-5).
 - b. "Life and immortality" have been made possible for us through the gospel which includes the resurrection of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:4; John 14:19).

H. Matthew 28:9-10: Jesus Appears to the Women as They Return to Jerusalem.

1. These women, with Mary Magdalene being absent from their group, had been to the tomb, had met the angel, had seen the empty tomb, and were following the angels directions to return to the city and tell the disciples of the resurrection and of the Lord's plans to meet with them in Galilee.
2. Verse 9: "And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him."
 - a. As they hurriedly went on this mission with fear and great joy, Jesus met them and greeted them. Since Mark 16:9 states that the Lord first appeared to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, this present passage should be understood in this light.
 - b. The sequence of events followed this pattern:
 - 1) An angel descended and rolled the great stone from the tomb, caused an earthquake and terrified the guards. These guards return to Jerusalem where some of them make a report of this startling development to the chief priests (Mt. 28:2-4,11).
 - 2) Mary Magdalene and the other women traveled to the tomb to anoint the Lord's body. On seeing the tomb opened, and supposing that his body had been stolen, Mary ran back into the city to report this unsettling news to Peter and John (John 20:1-2).

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- 3) The other women proceeded to the tomb and were met by the angels who reported that Jesus had been raised from the dead (Matt. 28:5-8).
 - 4) Peter and John ran to the tomb to see if the body is truly missing (John 20:3-10).
 - 5) After Peter and John left the tomb site and returned home, Mary remained at the tomb, weeping. She saw two angels in the tomb. Jesus appeared to her (John 20:11-17). She returned to Jerusalem and reported the good news to the disciples.
 - 6) As the group of women were going back into the city, the Lord appeared to them, as the present verse reports.
 - c. Possibly only an instant before, he had spoken with Mary Magdalene. "It seems that no one saw him come out of the sepulcher, not even the soldiers. Whether he was invisible at the moment, or was not seen because the soldiers were overwhelmed by the appearance of the angel, we can not tell" (McGarvey, p.251).
 - d. The women were "greatly overpowered" by glad and shocked emotion on seeing the Lord. They fell at his feet, doing homage to him, as they took hold of his feet. One can well visualize the powerful passions that must have flooded their tender hearts on realizing that their Lord was not dead, but alive!
3. Verse 10: "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."
- a. Again they are told to tell the disciples that he would meet with them in Galilee, an appointment he had made with them prior to his arrest (Matt. 26:32). He had identified the place (Matt. 28:16), and maybe even the occasion of this meeting. He referred to the eleven disciples as "my brethren." This term of endearment would have the happy effect of uplifting the apostles by showing that the Lord bore them no ill will for having forsaken him in the garden. Also, Matthew's report does not preclude any earlier meetings with the eleven.
 - b. By calling their attention to the appointment he had made with them prior to his arrest and crucifixion, he reminded them that he had predicted that he would rise from the dead. The appointment had been made in the upper room when he had instituted the Lord's supper, hence only the apostles were present when the appointment was made.
 - c. By referring to this appointment, they could glean additional evidence that the Lord was raised up from the dead even before they personally saw him. In point of fact, the Lord appeared several times to them and others prior to the appearance in Galilee.
 - 1) John 20:24-29: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."
 - 2) John 20:26-29: "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."
 - d. "The fact that Jesus' disciples did not believe (when the women told them that Jesus had arisen from the grave) shows that they were unwilling to accept such reports without incontrovertible evidence. (Mark 16:10-11; Luke 24:10-11)" (ALC, 1973. p.170).
- I. Matthew 28:11-15: The Attempted Deception by the Chief Priests.
1. Verse 11: "Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done."
 - a. "Here Matthew informs us of the exact relative time at which 'some of the watch' arrived in the city and reported to the chief priests what they had seen: it was 'when the women were going' to deliver their message, and it was after their meeting with Jesus. Notice that, not all, but some of the watch went to the chief priests, the remainder going doubtless to their own quarters. Some went to the chief priests because they knew that it was at their instance that the sepulcher had been guarded" (McGarvey, pp.251f).
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- b. The chief priests had gloated over the Lord's plight as he hanged on the cross (Matt. 27:41-42) and claimed that they would believe on him if he came down from the cross. Here was the time for them to make good their assertion. The soldiers made their report of the angel, the earthquake, and the open and empty tomb. If the chief priests had been honest men, they would have allowed these new developments to lead them to see the truth about Jesus.
 - c. Only Matthew gives the account of this shameful episode of the Jewish religious and civil rulers giving a bribe to the Roman soldiers in an attempt to off-set any report from the apostles that Jesus had risen from the dead.
2. Verse 12: "And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers."
 - a. Matthew's account in this chapter is abbreviated, but packed with information. Between the time of verse eleven and verse twelve, the chief priests and the elders had assembled to take counsel how to handle this emergency. The very thing that they had endeavored to prevent had occurred anyhow! Jesus was no longer in the tomb. So what could be done to counteract any claim from his disciples that he had been resurrected? Their answer was to give "large money unto the soldiers." There are some people who think that money will solve all problems.
 - b. We can only wonder what these soldiers later thought and did, having in their minds the knowledge of the supernatural events they beheld at the sepulcher. No doubt money has caused a very great number of murders and other crimes to be hidden from the authorities; it can conceal nothing from the all-seeing eye of God (Heb. 4:13; Ps. 90:8). Even this secret meeting now being conducted was to be reported by Matthew for countless millions of many generations to read.
 3. Verses 13-14: "Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you."
 - a. Why could not men of their knowledge and experience concoct a better scheme than this? It is likely that this was the very best they could do! But any schoolchild can see the utter foolishness of the plot. If the disciples stole the body while the guards slept, how could they know who it was that stole it?
 - b. "The object of the chief priests, as is common with men who persist in crime, was to keep hid from the eyes of men the proof that they had put to death an innocent person.
 - 1) "They were oblivious of the power and wrath of God, and they proceeded to still further inflame the divine wrath by putting a lie into the lips of the soldiers and hiring them to tell it.
 - 2) "The new story bore its falsity on its face. It was an affirmation as to what was done, and by whom it was done, while the affirmants were asleep.
 - 3) "Moreover, it was the affirmation of an impossibility; for it is impossible, even had they been asleep, that a company of men sufficiently numerous to perform the task, could have walked up to the sepulcher, rolled away the great stone, and borne the body away, without awaking some of the guards, who were stationed about the door of the sepulcher for the very purpose of preventing such a removal of the body.
 - 4) "Matthew's account of the origin of this story is confirmed by the character of the story: it is utterly incredible that such a story could be told by honest men for an honorable purpose" (McGarvey, p.252).
 - c. The chief fear of the soldiers would naturally be, "What if Pilate finds out that we admit to having been asleep while on guard duty?" Anticipating this, the Jewish leaders said that if this information came to his attention, they would intercede in behalf of the soldiers. They had shown in the trials of Jesus that they had the means to manipulate the governor. Herod slew sixteen soldiers for their failure to secure the apostle Peter in prison (Acts 12:19). Rulers were very strict and severe in their treatment of underlings. There was no labor board to which the average person could appeal. The discrimination and ill-treatment of our modern society is nothing compared with that of ancient times.
 - d. "It would have been hazardous for the soldiers to tell the new story without some guarantee of protection, for it contained an admission that they had fallen asleep while on guard, and this, in the Roman army, was punishable with death. This fact, be it noticed, adds to the improbability that the story itself is true. The chief priests promised to persuade Pilate and protect the soldiers, in case of their arraignment, and this they could safely promise, both because Pilate was interested like
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- themselves in concealing the fact of the resurrection, and because, if it came to the worst, they would not be afraid to confess to him the lie which they had put into the lips of the soldiers" (McGarvey, p.252).
- e. These men of position were driven by their own sinful conduct to the point of having to resort to an absurdity to maintain their stations. They could not deny that the body of Jesus was gone; they could not claim that he had not really died; they had taken measures to insure the disciples did not steal the body; but they were unwilling to admit the truth of the resurrection. Their only recourse, other than repentance, was the one they took.
4. Verse 15: "So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."
 - a. This episode, although reported in only five verses, must have consumed a sizable amount of time. Time was required to assemble the council; time would be required to arrive at a decision; and time was needed to convince the soldiers to accept the bribe. The amount of money given to the soldiers is not specified, other than the statement that it was "much money" (ASV).
 - b. "Up to the day that Matthew wrote his narrative, this false report was current among the unbelieving Jews. If the truth of a historical proposition can be established by the absurdity of its contradictory, the resurrection of Jesus is established by the absurdity of all efforts to account in another way for the disappearance of his dead body. His enemies of that generation, men of learning and of ingenuity whose honor was involved in the issue, were able to invent no better account of said disappearance than this absurd story put into the mouths of the soldiers; and men of subsequent ages have made no improvement on this original falsehood" (McGarvey, p.252).
 - c. Matthew's account was written prior to 58 A.D. (see introduction). So, after about thirty years, the lie was still making the rounds. A lie often repeated, is often believed. "You have sent chosen and ordained men throughout the whole world to proclaim that a godless heresy had sprung up from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver...whose disciples stole him by night from the tomb" (Justin Martyr, 114-165 AD., Quoted by Moffit, *The Book of Matthew*, p.706).
 5. Barnes (pp.321f) gives the following information regarding the resurrection of Christ:
 - a. The resurrection is attested by the strongest evidence that can be adduced in favor of any ancient fact.
 - 1) That he had often foretold his own death and resurrection (Mt. 12:40; 16:21; 20:19).
 - 2) There was no doubt that he was really dead. Of this the Jews, the Romans, and the disciples were all equally well satisfied.
 - 3) Every proper precaution was taken to prevent his removal by stealth. A guard, usually consisting of sixty men, was placed there for the express purpose of keeping him, and the sepulchre was secured by a large stone and by a seal.
 - 4) On the third day the body was missing. In this all were agreed. The high priests did not dare call that in question. They labored, therefore, to account for it. The disciples affirmed that he was alive. The Jews hired the Roman soldiers to affirm that he was stolen while they slept, and succeeded in making many of the people believe it. This account of the Jews is attended with the following difficulties and absurdities:
 - a) The Roman guard was composed usually of sixty men, and they were stationed there for the express purpose of guarding the body of Jesus.
 - b) The punishment of sleeping while on guard in the Roman army was death, and it is perfectly incredible that those soldiers should expose themselves in this manner to death.
 - c) The disciples were few in number, unarmed, weak, and timid. They had just fled before those who took Jesus in the garden, and how can it be believed that in so short a time they would dare to attempt to take away from a Roman guard of armed men what they were expressly set to defend?
 - d) How could the disciples presume that they would find the Roman soldiers asleep? or, if they should, how was it possible to remove the stone and the body without awaking even one of their number?
 - e) The regularity and order of the grave-clothes (Jn. 20:6,7) show that the body had not been stolen. When men rob graves of the bodies of the dead, they do not wait coolly to fold up the

grave-clothes and lay them carefully by themselves.

- f) If the soldiers were asleep, how did they, or how could they know that the disciples stole the body away? If they were awake, why did they suffer it? The whole account, therefore, was intrinsically absurd.
- b. On the other hand, the account given by the disciples is perfectly natural and credible.
 - 1) They account for the reason why the soldiers did not see the Saviour when he rose. Terrified at the presence of an angel, they became as dead men.
 - 2) They affirmed that they saw him. All the apostles affirmed this, and many others.
 - 3) They affirmed it in Jerusalem, in the presence of the Jews, before the high-priests and the people. See Acts. If the Jews really believed the account which they themselves had given why did they not apprehend the apostles, and prove them guilty of the theft and of falsehood?—things which they never attempted, and which show, therefore, that they did not credit their own report.
 - 4) In regard to the Saviour they could not be deceived. They had been with him three years. They knew him as a friend. They again ate and drank with him; they put their fingers into his hands and side; they conversed with him; they were with him forty days. There were enough of them to bear witness. Law commonly requires not more than one or two competent witnesses, but here were eleven plain, honest men, who affirmed in all places and at all times that they had seen him. Could it be possible that they could be deceived? Then all faith in testimony must be given up.
 - 5) They gave every possible evidence of their sincerity. They were persecuted, ridiculed, scourged, and put to death for affirming this. Yet not one of them ever expressed the least doubt of its truth. They bore everything rather than to deny that they had seen him. They had no motive in doing this but the love of truth. They obtained no wealth by it, no honour, no pleasure. They gave themselves up to great and unparalleled sufferings—going from land to land; crossing almost every sea; enduring the dangers, toils, and privations of almost every clime—for the simple object of affirming everywhere that a Saviour died and rose. If they knew this was an imposition—and if it had been they would have known it—in what way is this remarkable conduct to be accounted for?
 - 6) The world believed them. Three thousand of the Jews themselves believed in the risen Saviour on the day of Pentecost, but fifty days after his resurrection, Acts 2:41. Multitudes of other Jews believed during the lives of the apostles. Thousands of Gentiles believed also, and in three hundred years the belief that Jesus rose had spread over and changed the whole Roman empire. Had the apostles been deceivers, that was the age in which they could most easily have been detected. Yet that was the age when converts were most rapidly multiplied, and God affixed his seal to their testimony that it was true.

J. Matthew 28:16-20: The Great Commission.

1. Verse 16: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."
 - a. Matthew reports the meeting of the Lord and the disciples on the appointed mount as made in Matthew 26:32. "Here we learn that the mountain on which the oft promised meeting in Galilee was to take place (26:32; 28:7,10), had already been designated by Jesus; and we may safely infer that the time had also been named, for otherwise the disciples would not have known when to assemble at the appointed place" (McGarvey, p.253).
 - b. The exact time and place of this meeting is unknown to us. It is very likely that this was the occasion in which more than five hundred brethren saw him (1 Cor. 15:6).
2. Verse 17: "And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted."
 - a. On this occasion, some of those present saw and worshipped him, but others were not certain it was Jesus. "The doubt is accounted for in part by the fact that he first appeared at a distance, as appears from the words, 'he came and spoke to them' (18), and in part by the fact that others were there besides the eleven. This is undoubtedly the time at which he was seen by 'above five hundred brethren at once' (I Cor. 15:6); for it was the only appointed meeting, and the appointment gave opportunity for all who would to be present. In so large a crowd it was not surprising that some even of the eleven did not recognize him at the first moment of his appearance" (McGarvey, p.253).

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- b. The Lord had already been seen by the eleven, at which time their doubts were removed. This suggests that there were others present on this occasion.
3. Verse 18: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
- a. Power here means authority. This statement very properly precedes the world-wide commission he gave his disciples. He was far more than a mere man.
- 1) John 1:1-3: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."
 - 2) Colossians 1:13-17: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."
 - 3) Ephesians 1:20-23: "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."
 - 4) Philippians 2:10-12: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
 - 5) Acts 17:30-31: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
 - 6) Romans 14:10-14: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."
- b. "This teaches the divinity of Christ. If these words were spoken by a mere man, they are nonsense; and therefore in this statement Christ lays claim to status as a member of the godhead. Ten times in the Greek New Testament, Christ is actually called God (see John 1:1; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:8; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 1:8; also Col. 2:9 and John 14:9)...Christ is head of the church while it is upon earth, as well as in heaven.
- 1) "There is no true head on earth, else the church is a two-headed monster. This indicates the reign of Christ is now going on. These are the times of the regeneration when he is reigning with the Twelve in his kingdom, the Israel of God.
 - 2) Christ was not defeated on Calvary but was there victorious over death, hell, and the devil. He will continue to reign till all his enemies have been put under foot, notwithstanding, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:24,25)" (Coffman, p.526).
- c. Consider these passages:
- 1) John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
 - 2) John 20:28: "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God."
 - 3) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own
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- blood.”
- 4) Philippians 2:6: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”
 - 5) Hebrews 1:8: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” [Notice that the Father called Christ “God”].
 - 6) Titus 2:13: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”
 - 7) 1 John 5:20: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”
 - 8) Revelation 1:8: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).
 - 9) John 14:9: “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”
4. Verse 19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
- a. "The term rendered teach...means 'to make disciples.' The clause should be rendered, 'Go, disciple all nations.' A disciple is one who accepts the teaching of Jesus; and men are made such by preaching the gospel to them" (McGarvey, p.253).
 - b. Disciples can be made only by teaching, as indicated by the KJV. Mark's account makes this even more clear (16:15-16). Some have argued that disciples are made by the process of baptizing and teaching, in that order.
 - c. Using this devious argument, Pedo-baptists have asserted that disciples are made by baptizing individuals first, and then teaching them. The following information was written by Guy N. Woods in a *Gospel Advocate* article published in September, 1989:
 - 1) “The view that the participles ‘baptizing’ and ‘teaching’ describe the manner in which the action of the principal verb (make disciples) is carried out, is by no means a new one, although it has appeared only in recent years in the churches of Christ. Pedo-baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians and others—baby sprinklers all—long have advanced the view in their defense of infant baptism.
 - 2) “If one must be a disciple before being baptized, and a disciple is one previously taught—and infants cannot be taught—infants cannot properly be subjects of baptism. To avoid this obvious conclusion their advocates have contended that the participles are modal and thus descriptive of the manner in which disciples are made, by first baptizing babies and then when they are old enough making disciples out of them by teaching them....
 - 3) “First, the verb *matheteusate* (make disciples) is second person plural, aorist active imperative of *matheteuo*, and the noun form is *mathetes*, defined by every reliable lexicon known to me as a learner, pupil and student. The verb is used transitively in the passage under study, and it is quite obvious that one becomes a learner by being taught. To deny, as the doctrine under review does, that one is a disciple only after having been baptized and taught (didaskontes) strikes from the verb its basic and primary meaning.
 - 4) “Second, having instructed the apostles to ‘make disciples,’ Jesus then commanded that they baptize and teach them. This was logical and chronological—logical because only believers are subjects of baptism, and those only are believers who have been taught, i.e., disciplined; chronological because the act designated in the participle ‘baptizing’ cannot be performed until after the action of the principal verb. It then must be apparent that the participle ‘baptizing’ cannot be performed until after the action of the verb (make disciples) and that of baptizing them are not concurrent, because the second of these acts (baptizing) is possible only after the first (discipling) has been done....
 - 5) John 4:1-2: "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)." “The
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order is significant. Jesus, John the Baptist and the apostles all were engaged in the making of disciples. Second, they baptized the disciples they previously had made. Carefully note that the verse does not say they made disciples by baptizing them. They made disciples by teaching them, and these, being prepared, then were baptized. For many months the apostles, under the direct supervision of the Lord, had been engaged in making disciples and baptizing them.”

d. **All nations.**

- 1) This shows the universal scope of the authority of Christ. He is to be served by all men everywhere (Acts 17:30-31).
- 2) But the majority of every generation choose to ignore his supremacy—to their everlasting shame (Matt. 25:31-46).

e. **Baptizing them.**

- 1) This does not mean to baptize the nations, but rather those who were made disciples. A disciple is a learner, a student.
- 2) "Them, in the Greek, is in the masculine gender (*autous*), and can not refer for its antecedent to nations (*ethna*), because the latter term is in the neuter gender. Its antecedent is the masculine noun disciples (*mathateuo*), make disciples. (For another example of this construction, see note on 25:32.)" (McGarvey, p.253).
- 3) "If nothing else appeared in all the Bible relative to the ordinance of baptism, Christ's mention of it in this circumstance would have been more than sufficient to bind it upon all men for all time to come. That Jesus Christ, the Head of our holy faith, in this grand finale of his earthly teaching, should be charged with having introduced secondary, subordinate, non-essential, and unnecessary commands is a reflection upon his divinity. Added to that is the sacred triple name of 'Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' in which baptism was commanded to be administered. Where else in all the Scriptures is there another commandment that enjoys the distinction conferred by those solemn words?" (Coffman, p.527).

f. **Into the name.**

- 1) "Three names are given, yet they are one name. God's unity and oneness are taught by this. There are three persons in the godhead, and each has a name; but their name is one!" (Coffman, p.527).
- 2) "As is well remarked by Alford, 'It is unfortunate again here that our English Bibles do not give us the force of this *eis*. It should have been into (as in Gal. 3:27, al.), both here and in 1 Cor. 10:2, and wherever the expression is used.' So depose Lange, Olshausen, and the best critics generally....The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit means the combined authority of all the manifestations of God. To be baptized into actual subjection to it. He that is baptized is brought into subjection by that act to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; and in consequence of this subjection he receives the remission of his sins...(Acts 2:38)" (McGarvey, pp.253f).

g. The "Trinity" (although the word itself is not found in the Scriptures) is also taught in such passages as Genesis 1:26, Matthew 3:16, and 2 Corinthians 13:14.

- 1) Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."
- 2) Matthew 3:16: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." [Jesus was in the water, God spoke from heaven, the Holy Spirit was coming down from heaven upon the Lord].
- 3) 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. The second epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas."

5. Verse 20: "**Teaching them to observe all things** whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."

- a. "Here the word *teaching* is a proper rendering, and it indicates the third step to be taken with those to whom the apostles would preach. Having made disciples by persuading men to accept the teaching

of Jesus, and having baptized such into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they were next to teach them all that Jesus had commanded—all the duties of the Christian life" (McGarvey, p.254).

- b. "The perpetual mission of the church as a teacher is implicit in these words. Here is the necessity for indoctrination and grounding all the disciples in the Saviour's teaching. Here is the divine authority for the Bible School, the cottage meeting, the mid-week service, the evangelistic campaign, and whatever else may be useful in carrying out the divine injunction to teach the taught and to teach the baptized to do all that Christ commanded" (Coffman, p.528).
- c. **Whatsoever I have commanded you.**
 - 1) The converts were to be taught to be obedient to all those things which Jesus had required of the first disciples. He taught them to preach the gospel to every creature; he expects the same of each succeeding generation of his people. He required that they keep themselves pure from the world; he demands the same of us. He required them to be faithful even though their lives might be forfeited by that faithfulness; the same is expected of us.
 - 2) They had to put God and his kingdom before all things; so must we:
 - a) "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).
 - b) "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).
 - c) "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).
- d. **I am with you always.**
 - 1) The common view of this part is as follows: "This promise includes more than his mere presence. When we urge men to a dangerous and difficult undertaking, and say, We will be with you; we promise them our co-operation and support. Such is the meaning of Jesus: he is with his people to help them and to protect them.
 - a) "The promise is limited only by 'the end of the world.' The term rendered world (*aion*) frequently means age: but whether we render it world or age in this place the meaning is the same, for the age referred to must be the Christian age, and this will end with the world itself.
 - b) "The promise was made primarily to the eleven, but inasmuch as they were not to live till the end of the world, it properly extends to the entire Church of which they were the recognized representatives. While the world stands, therefore, Christ, possessed of all authority in heaven and in earth, is pledged to be with his Church.
 - c) "This is a most appropriate conclusion for a narrative whose object it was to record some of the labors, sufferings, and triumphs by which Jesus laid the foundation of his Church, and from which the promise of his presence derives all of its heavenly consolation" (McGarvey, p.254).
 - 2) Consider these passages:
 - a) Hebrews 13:5-6: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."
 - b) Revelation 2:5: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."
 - c) Revelation 2:16: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."
 - d) Revelation 2:22: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."
 - e) Revelation 3:8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."
 - f) Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by

Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

- 3) Christ was with the apostles and other miraculously-endowed Christians during the first century by providing them with supernatural gifts (Eph. 4:8-16). Comparing the parallel statements of this point in the other accounts, it seems very clear that this is the point being made.
 - a) Mark 16:15-20: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”
 - b) Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
 - c) Acts 3:19: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”
- 4) He guides those of subsequent generations by his inspired written word, and assists us by means of his providence (non-miraculous).
- e. **Even unto the end of the world.**
 - 1) "This is the doctrine of the final liquidation of the entire material creation, specifically of the earth and all that is in it. The apostle Peter elaborated on this (2 Peter 3:1-13)...Even as recently as a generation ago, men scoffed at the idea that the earth could burn; but in the light of what is now known, it is safe to say that scientific knowledge has finally caught up with revelation.
 - a) “The sun itself is a 'nova' and is a type of star that is capable of exploding to a million times its present size and intensity (see 'National Geographic' magazine, November, 1965...).
 - b) “When and if such a thing happens, our poor earth will be millions of miles deep in the flaming periphery of the sun itself.
 - c) “In the light of Christ's word in this place, and in view of Peter's words on the same subject, the end of the world is certain. 'No man knoweth the day nor the hour' (Matt. 24:36).
 - d) “The conclusion that thoughtful men should derive from these considerations is well stated by Peter who said, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace' (2 Peter 3:14)" (Coffman, pp.529f).
6. Jesus remained on earth following his resurrection for forty days (Acts 1:3).
 - a. He ascended back to heaven about ten days before the Pentecost Day of Acts 2.
 - b. His disciples were to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:47-49).
 - c. He will come again, at which time he will raise the dead:
 - 1) John 5:28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”
 - 2) Acts 24:15: “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 4:16: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”
 - d. To change the living:
 - 1) 1 Thessalonians 4:17: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:51-53: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and

the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

e. To judge us all:

- 1) Acts 17:31: “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”
 - 3) Revelation 20:12-15: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”
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A Comparison of Acts 2:38-39 and Acts 3:19

ACTS 2:38-39	ACTS 3:19
Repent	Repent
Be Baptized	Be Converted
For the remission of sins	That sins might be blotted out
Receive the gift	Times of refreshing shall come
Of Holy Spirit	From the presence of the Lord
Promise is to you (and all)	All kindreds of earth to be blessed
As many as God shall call	Turning everyone from iniquities

Accounts Of The Great Commission Compared

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
GO	GO		
TEACH	PREACH GOSPEL	PREACH	
ALL NATIONS	EVERY CREATURE	ALL NATIONS	WHOSE SOEVER
	BELIEVE		
		REPENTANCE	
BAPTIZE	BAPTIZE		
	SAVED	REMISSION OF SINS	SINS REMITTED
WITH YOU ALWAYS	SIGNS ACCOMPANY	ENDUED WITH POWER	RECEIVE SPIRIT

MATTHEW	TEACH			BAPTISM	
MARK	PREACH	FAITH		BAPTISM	SALVATION
LUKE	PREACH		REPENTANCE		REMISSION
JOHN	PREACH				SIN REMITTED
SUMMARY	PREACH	FAITH	REPENTANCE	BAPTISM	SALVATION

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Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven member of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs and Henry Simmons. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, Ray Hawk and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections. Our grasp of the infinite will of God is not absolute, despite the diligence of our efforts; there is always more to learn.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The notes were put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over much time. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people. "Outlined" does not imply skimpy—these are full-length books.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we barely cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge to the recipients. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad!

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

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December 23, 2021

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