

The Gospel of Matthew

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Introduction

- Matthew means “gift from the Lord”
- Matthew is Levi (9:9)
- Only evidence Matthew wrote it comes from the early church fathers
- Tradition says Matthew lived in Israel for 12 years after the resurrection, and then he moved to North Africa, where a large Jewish population was, and in the 100s and 200s a large church was there.
- Matthew was written just before he left Jerusalem or shortly before he arrived in North Africa, around 50 A.D.
- Matthew was probably the first gospel written. Both Matthew and Mark were written in the 50s but were unaware of each other’s writing.
- Luke, written in the 60s, mentions there were other gospels written. John wrote his gospel after he moved to Ephesus in 70.
- Matthew was a tax collector, a record keeper, who also kept records of Christ’s life. It is not in chronological order and there are big gaps of missing information included in the other gospels.
- So Matthew is not a complete, exhaustive history of the life of Christ. It seems like he took his records, put them in more-or-less order and wrote according to a theme.
- All the gospels were written to the church, which began in 33. Matthew was written to a very Jewish church, writing in Jewish terms. A major emphasis is that Jesus came to call people to a kingdom of heaven, not on earth.
- Matthew goes out of his way to say that there will be Gentiles in this kingdom.
- There are over 60 quotes from the Old Testament
- Matthew talks about heaven and righteousness more than any of the other gospels, mostly about the kingdom of heaven
- As a tax collector, Matthew was considered a bad guy by the Jewish community. They were good and he was bad. In his gospel Matthew says he is bad but says “so are you” to the Jews. The Jewish standard of Pharisees was held up to Matthew his whole life. So he must have been surprised to hear Jesus say “unless your righteousness surpasses the Pharisees, you will not enter heaven.”
- There are 7 sermons in the book, two of Jesus’ major discourses (Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet)

Chapter 1

- The genealogy of Jesus to Joseph
- Three women were Gentiles, and Bathsheba associated with Uriah, the Hittite, therefore including Gentiles in the line of the Messiah
- David to Abraham is fourteen generations, Solomon to Jeconiah (v. 11) is fourteen, and Jeconiah (v. 12) to Jesus is fourteen
- According to 1 Chronicles 3:10, there are three more kings between Uzziah = Ahaziah (v. 9) and Jotham. Matthew eliminates naming those kings so there will be 14 in each group,

- perhaps for memory purposes.
- Compared to Luke, which goes all the way back to Adam, so Adam to Abraham is not in Luke. Abraham to David is the same except Luke adds Admin (v. 33). From David to Jesus, it is obviously a different list. Luke goes from David through Nathan, therefore Luke's list is of Mary, and Matthew's is of Joseph.
 - Verse 18—(1) Jewish betrothal was a legal marriage contract which required a divorce to break it (v. 19 Joseph wanted to put her away secretly). Betrothal is much more than our engagement. Engagements are social, betrothals are legal. (2) The betrothed couple were considered to be husband and wife (Deuteronomy 22:23-24, the betrothed girl is called "a wife"). In v. 19, Joseph is called "a husband." In v. 24, he took "his wife." (3) During the betrothal period, the couple did not live together nor have sexual relationships. The proof of this had to be given to the parents at the wedding (Deuteronomy 22:13f).
 - Joseph finds out Mary is pregnant, wants to divorce her, but the angel appears to him in a dream telling him to take Mary as a wife because the child is conceived of the Holy Spirit.
 - Matthew omits Mary's perspective. (Tradition says Luke got much information from interviewing Mary.) The whole focus is on Joseph (more evidence it is a Joseph genealogy).
 - God seems more interested in the process, and we are more interested in the product.
 - Verse 21—The angel says His name will be "Jesus" that is "Yahweh saves." "For it is He who will save His people from their sins."

Applications:

- (1) *Except for what is written in Scriptures, we cannot know what God is doing. We'd not predict that God would develop the line of the Messiah through the fornication of Judah with Tamar, or Rahab the harlot's lies to protect Joshua's spies, or Ruth, who was a Moabitess, or David's adultery with Bathsheba. If it's not written in Scripture, don't try to predict what God will do.*
- (2) *Doing the righteous thing is not the same as doing the right thing. Righteousness goes beyond rightness. Rightness reflects the law of God. Righteousness reflects the love of God. Joseph did the righteous thing according to compassion rather than the right thing according to the law.*
- (3) Determine the will of God by the Word of God not by circumstances. That's what Joseph did in 1:24. Joseph totally disregarded the circumstances when he had the word of God.

Chapter 2

- After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, magi came from the East (Babylon or Susa). They arrived in Jerusalem. We don't know how many of them, but there were three gifts. They came maybe even a year after Jesus' birth, so should not be in the Christmas scene. Jesus is now in a house (v. 11).
- Tradition said these magi were students of astronomy or astrology. But how do we know that? They are not kings. They are maybe even magicians. We know people like them served several of the kings of Babylon (Daniel 2:22, 48) who were not able to tell the dreams and interpretation.
- It was probably influence from Jews still in Persia which sent them to Jerusalem. Notice that God led "seekers" not to their own gods but to the baby in Bethlehem, because of Acts 4:12.
- They did not follow the star to Jerusalem. They saw the star in the East, came to Jerusalem probably from the advice of the Jews, and they said to Herod, "We saw His star in the East." After they were in Jerusalem, the star reappeared to them and they followed it to Bethlehem.
- Verse 6—The scribes and priests tell them to go to Bethlehem because of Micah 5:2. They

- knew where the king was to be born, but did not go there themselves. They misquote the verse. They say “by no means the least” but Micah says Bethlehem “is the least.” Matthew is not quoting Micah 5:2, he is quoting what the scribes and priests said.
- Herod calls the magi and asks the time when the star appeared. But we don’t have the answer to that question.
 - He sent them to Bethlehem to look for the “child” (*paidia*). It’s usually used of a very young infant, before it is weaned (John 16:21). However, this word is used of all the children of a family in Luke 11:7. So it is a very general word. So we do not know exactly the age of Jesus at that time.
 - When the magi leave, they see the star again. It came over where Jesus was, in a house (v. 11). “They saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshipped Him.” Mary is not the mother of God. Mary is the mother of the physical body of Jesus, that is all. Mary is not worshipped, Jesus is. She was not someone to be adored spiritually. The magi looked right past her to the Child. They presented gifts to the Child and worshipped the Child.
 - Clues to figure out how old Jesus was— “child,” it would take the magi several months, maybe even half a year, for them to get there from Babylon, probably the time the angels appeared to the shepherds the star appeared to the magi. He was living in a “house.” Herod killed the boy babies two years old and younger.
 - Verse 11—The early church fathers said the meaning of the gifts gold (Christ’s deity), frankincense (purity, used by priests), and myrrh (His death, used for embalming). It seems they become believers because they worshipped the King of Kings, having left their own country’s gods.
 - Verse 13—An angel appeared after the magi left (having been warned by God in a dream to leave without going back to Herod).
 - Angel appears to Joseph a second time, told Joseph to take the Child and His mother to Egypt.
 - Verse 15—This fulfilled Scriptures, “Out of Egypt I have called My Son” (Hosea 11:1)
 - Herod saw he was tricked and killed the baby boys, which also fulfilled prophecy of Jeremiah 31:15.
 - We would not know these two verses referred to a New Testament fulfillment. Matthew is not trying to interpret these Old Testament prophecies. He is saying these passages have a double meaning. They also apply to the Messiah. You’d have to be inspired by God to know that.
 - Verse 19—Third appearance of an angel to Joseph, after Herod died, and told Joseph to take the mother and Child back to Israel. But Joseph decides to go to the North in Galilee because there was a better Herod ruling there.
 - Verse 22—Fourth warning in a dream, so he went to Nazareth. Again to fulfill prophecy “He shall be called a Nazarene.” The Old Testament said He would be from Naphthali, but no specific prophecy saying He would be called a Nazarene. But notice Matthew does not quote a specific prophet but rather summarizes what several Old Testament prophecies say. “Nazarene” means despised. It could be that Matthew means Jesus would be called “despised.”

Applications:

- (1) *There is only one way to God (Acts 4:12). The magi were led to the baby at Bethlehem not to some king of their own.*

- (2) *Worship focuses on God the Son plus nothing. The magi travelled for months, worshipped the baby of Bethlehem, gave Him gifts, left, and travelled months back home. They asked for nothing. They had no other agenda, they ignored the Temple in Jerusalem, they ignored the synagogues, they came to a house, looked past Mary, and worshipped only Jesus.*
- (3) Circumstances are to be used for wisdom, not a mystical sign of the will of God. Joseph followed the word of God to return to Israel. But he used wisdom along with the word of God to live in Galilee.

Chapter 3

- John the Baptist came preaching (spring of A.D. 26) in the wilderness of Judea, and people came from the region around Judea and Jerusalem.
- John was a legitimate priest. His father Zachariah was a priest and his mother was a Levite (Luke 1:5), so John should have been in the process of becoming a priest in the Temple. Perhaps this was one reason the Pharisees came to John because the priesthood was not legitimate, and John was legitimate, i.e. truly Levite and of the family of Aaron.
- Verse 2—Summarizes his ministry, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Repentance (*metanoeo*) means “to change your mind,” bearing fruit (verse 8) in a change of life. If there is no change of life, then there has been no repentance (1 John 2:4; James 2:18-20).
- The kingdom of heaven is the rule of heaven and the God of heaven, glorified people from all the ages, and angels.
- The Jewish people were looking for the Messiah and a Messianic kingdom being established on earth. This is what John taught was at hand. To enter this kingdom one needed repentance. So what was new about John’s message was not the Messianic expectation, nor was it his baptism, nor was it that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. What was new about his message was that repentance was required to be part of it. The fact that you had to repent to enter it showed that you were not already in it. That’s what was news to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Verse 9, they thought being sons of Abraham allowed them into heaven. But John said that was not sufficient. One needed repentance.
- Verse 3—Matthew says John is the one who precedes the Messiah.
- Verse 4—John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt. He ate locusts (permitted by the Law (Leviticus 11:20-22) and wild honey.
- Verse 5—He baptized them as they confessed their sins. John himself was dipping or immersing them in the water. Normally, converts to Judaism would dip themselves in the water while the rabbi watched from the shore. John’s baptism is different in that he did the dipping of others.
- John calls the Pharisees and Sadducees a bunch of snakes and asked them, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” So for John, repentance, baptism, and confession of sins was a means of fleeing from the wrath to come.
- Verse 10—Whole Pharisaism system was about to be removed. Everybody will be judged by their fruits. The idea of an individual judgment was also a new idea to the Pharisees.
- Verse 11—The coming Messiah is much greater than John, who is unfit to even serve Him, but He will dip you into (1) the Holy Spirit and (2) fire; instead of water. The Holy Spirit represents the first coming of Christ, and the fire represents the second coming of Christ, associated with the wrath of God (verses 7 and 12, cleaning up the threshing floor). But John makes no distinction between the first and second coming of Christ. He thinks they are the same.
- Summarizing John’s message: (1) the Messiah is about to come, (2) John is not the Messiah

but is the one predicted by Isaiah who prepares the way for the Messiah, (3) the Messiah will do two things, He'll bring you to the kingdom of God and He will bring you the wrath (judgment) of God, (4) the judgment of God will be based on individual evaluation of your sin and good works, (5) the entrance into the kingdom will be based on repentance, which will be based on confession of sin, which will be indicated by your baptism and proven by your bearing good fruit.

- Then Jesus arrived from Galilee and came to John to be baptized. But John tried to prevent Him. John did not understand Jesus' baptism. John said, "I have need to be baptized by You." John saw baptism as repentance, confession of sin. It shows John, well into his ministry, still saw himself as a sinner in need of repentance.
- Jesus asked John to permit the baptism "to fulfill all righteousness," i.e., He is identifying Himself with John's message.
- Here is the first complete picture of the Trinity: the Holy Spirit appears as a dove, and the voice of the Father says, "This is My Son."
- Not clear that anyone other than John heard the voice of the Father.
- "... in whom I am well-pleased" with who Jesus was, He had not yet done anything.

Applications:

- (1) *Our most basic message is one of repentance. It is accomplished by confessing sin and evidenced by bearing good fruit, which is the same sort as the repentance. There is no such thing as a person who has repented and not bearing fruit. One is the evidence of the other.*
 - (2) *The mechanical act of baptism does not as a mechanical act provide salvation or any spiritual quality, but it is a mechanical act which we can use to identify with Christ publicly because it was used significantly by Christ and the apostles.*
 - (3) *The most significant baptism of our age is to immerse people into the Holy Spirit through accepting Christ (Matthew 28:18-20) and to immerse them into the fire of 3:11 in the sense of giving them the knowledge of the judgment of God against sin, thus making repentance necessary.*
- Jesus took the initiative to be baptized, God the Father took the occasion to announce His pleasure about Christ. Jesus' baptism was not like John's in that it was an identification not a repentance. Jesus' disciples baptized people for conversion (1 Peter 3:21), and Jesus Himself did not baptize anyone (John 4:2).

Chapter 4

- Jesus was led by the Spirit into the Judean wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The temptation was God's idea. Jesus was led not by the devil but by the Spirit of God to be tempted by the devil. God tests people. God tests good people. He tests His own people, His saints. God even tested the Son. God doesn't tempt people, but the only difference is the motive, the purpose, not the specifics. The difference between tempting and testing is the motive or the purpose. For example, James 1:3 says to consider it all joy when you are tested. But in verses 12-14, it says God doesn't tempt us, and it is the same word (*peirosmos*). The only reason we say "tempted" instead of "tested" is because it comes from Satan. Satan's motive is to disprove the value of being part of the kingdom of God. God's motive is to prove the value of being part of the kingdom of God. For example, in Job, God and Satan agreed about the physical nature of the testing but they disagreed about the outcome, i.e., they had the opposite motive. So the purpose of the leading of the Spirit was to prove who Jesus was.
- Jesus fasted 40 days and nights in preparation for the temptation.

- First temptation begins, “since You are the Son of God.” Satan acknowledges that Christ had the power to turn a stone into bread. The purpose is to get Christ to use His deity to destroy the plan of God.
- Jesus answered with Scripture. Not talking about general ideas from Scripture but about “every word.” God’s Word is inspired in “every word.”
- Second temptation is at the pinnacle of the temple, near the Kidron Valley (about 600 feet above the valley). “since You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.” Satan is not doubting Christ is the Son of God. He is assuming Christ can do the miracles in the temptations. He misquotes Psalm 91:11-12. He makes it sound like the purpose of the Psalm as the angels catching someone who is thrown down. The Psalm actually reads, “angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways.”
- Jesus said, “you shall not put the Lord your God to the test” (Deuteronomy 6:16).
- Satan then takes Jesus to a very high mountain (unknown). Satan will give Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus will bow down to him.
- Jesus commands Satan to leave, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20. Jesus adds the word “only.”
- Then the devil leaves and the angels ministers to Jesus.

Observations:

- (1) *There are some similarities to the temptation to Eve in Genesis 3 and the temptations mentioned in 1 John 2:16 (lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life). But it seems to me the Genesis and John passage are more similar than this Matthew one is. For example, pride is not a problem with God. The temptations for people and for the Son of God are different.*
- (2) *Christ answered every temptation with Scripture, and all the Scripture came from the book of Deuteronomy. All of His statements were consistent with the author’s intended meaning.*
- (3) *Satan’s use of Scripture left out a portion which did not fit his purpose.*
- (4) *I know of nothing that prohibits turning stones into bread. We do that when we earn a living. But there is something wrong with doing it as Satan’s request. There is nothing wrong with healing the sick, but there is when it is done via an occultic practice, such as voodoo, because when you do it Satan’s way, you acknowledge his values and turn your attention to values away from the Word of God.*
- (5) *The second temptation is testing God, which is trying to get God to do something not in His plan, for your own independent-from-God purpose.*
- (6) *The last temptation is to focus on political power rather than the Gospel. The kingdoms of the world were indeed Satan’s to give (see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; where Satan is called the ruler of this world). Satan’s goal seems to be to get Christ to go directly to the kingdom age, bypassing the cross. It would also eliminate God as the suffering servant and the righteous character of the kingdom of God that Christ revealed. It seems that Satan wanted Christ to do what John and the apostles thought Christ was going to do—set up the kingdom.*

- There is a big gap in time between verses 11 and 12, almost a year in time (as recorded in John 1:19–3:36). Jesus calls His first disciples, turns water into wine, visits Capernaum, goes to Jerusalem where He cleanses the temple and teaches Nicodemus to be born again. He then has a co-ministry with John the Baptist and speaks to the woman at the well in Sychar. Then He goes to Nazareth (verse 12).
- Verse 12—When Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, Jesus went to Galilee and settled in Capernaum, which fulfills prophecy of being from the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (Isaiah 9:1).
- Verse 17—Jesus’ message is “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Does it sound familiar? The same message as John the Baptist (3:2).
- Verse 18—Jesus calls the two brothers, having known them for about a year by now.
- Verse 23—With them He went in all Galilee, teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the

kingdom, and healing.

- Large crowds begin to follow Jesus from Galilee, many for healing. Tiberias was a new city in Jesus' day, and it was a city of healing, with many spas for the people, so many sick people were in the area. But the Bible never mentions Tiberias. It was a Roman city on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. These crowds follow Jesus to the mountain where He will give the Sermon on the Mount.

Applications:

- (1) *Satan is an unwilling servant of God. God tests His own people, even His Son. Satan tempts people. The only difference is the motive. The specific suffering may be the same. God's motive is to prove your faith. Satan's motive is to destroy your faith.*
- (2) *Don't do even seemingly good things in a worldly or Satanic context because it acknowledges Satan's system as of value apart from God (such as secular counseling, wisdom from the world, used as Christian counseling, taking your attention away from the Word of God).*
- (3) *Face temptations and tests with the Word of God, understood as the author of Scripture intended it to be understood. All temptations and tests are to see if you will follow the Word of God.*
- (4) *Understand that God never does anything contrary to His plan. So have confidence in that plan.*
- (5) *If you want to be part of the kingdom of heaven, begin with repentance and live a life of repentance (v. 17).*
- (6) *Call the faithful to discipleship (see chapter 10).*
- (7) *Teach, proclaim, and do good. Do all the good you can for everyone you can, whether it has anything to do with the Gospel or not.*

Chapter 5

- Theme of the Sermon on the Mount—Live so as to be rewarded in the kingdom of heaven.
- This is a mountain somewhere on the north end of the Sea of Galilee. The Luke 6 sermon says Jesus was on a mountain and came to a level place. Here it doesn't mention a level place. Large crowds were following Him, and His disciples came to Him, so this sermon was for everyone.

Three major purposes for the sermon:

- (1) *It tends to drive us to our knees. It shows us the real righteousness of the kingdom of God. It gives us the standard of the kingdom of God, but it also shows us how far short of it we are. All standards fall short of it, even the Pharisees' and Sadducees'. It shows us we need to beg for mercy and cling to the cross of Christ.*
- (2) *It reveals God's pattern for happiness in the kingdom of God. It's the way of joy, peace, and contentment.*
- (3) *It shows us how to please God. The Sermon on the Mount is not written for the millennial kingdom because:*
 - a. *The Sermon itself never says it's for another age.*
 - b. *Jesus demanded these standards of people living in His age.*
 - c. *Many of these standards have no meaning in the millennial kingdom. For example, 5:10-12, and 44, there will be no persecution of believers in the millennial kingdom.*
 - d. *The principles taught in the Sermon on the Mount are found elsewhere in the New Testament.*
 - e. *Chronologically, it was written to the church age, about 50 A.D.*

Eight Opportunities for Happiness in the Kingdom (verses 1-15)

- (1) "Blessed" means "happy"
- (2) "Blessed are the poor in spirit," is one who is destitute. Blessed are you when you are that way spiritually, i.e., spiritually desperate. This is the foundation of the whole sermon. He begins with His conclusion.

50 Applications from the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5—7)

- (1) *Humility is the root of all virtue and pride is the root of all sin (v. 3).*

- (3) "Blessed are those who mourn," is a deep grief, the type of grief if someone close to you,

like a child, died. You are mourning because of your sinful condition before God.

(2) *Be increasingly sensitive to your sin. Come to God daily on your knees in deep remorse, confessing your sin (v. 4).*

- (4) “Blessed are the meek,” is used of soothing medicine, it’s used of a soft breeze, it’s used of a domesticated animal, i.e., controlled strength, a gentleness with strength behind it, not weakness.

(3) *Put God in control of your strengths, that is, practice meekness (v. 5).*

- (5) “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

(4) *Develop a desire, or hunger, for righteousness. The ungodly or the immature do not have that hunger. The Godly and mature have developed that desire. Be around people who also desire that. Avoid people who do not desire righteousness (v. 6).*

- (6) “Blessed are the merciful,” mercy is unmerited non-punishment.

(5) *Show mercy when you are wronged, i.e., don’t pursue justice when you are wrong (v. 7).*

- (7) “Blessed are the pure in heart,” pure is the word for “clean” in heart, i.e., clean motives, more than sincerity. Sincerity can lead to sin (Hitler was sincere), but David said, “Create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10), the wisdom of God is first pure, clean (James 3:17). It’s an inside problem. You do this by conforming your actions to the Word of God. You cannot know your motives, so work on your actions, and conform them to the Word of God. The Pharisees did mechanical things with the goal of just doing mechanical things. But do mechanical things as a means, or goal, of getting a clean heart. If you have a problem with pornography, pray about it, desire to rid yourself of it, then do physical things to get it out of your life (don’t buy it, etc.). From God’s perspective, it’s what He does in your life.

(6) *Pursue pure motives by conforming your actions to the Word of God (v. 8).*

- (8) “Blessed are the peacemakers,” look at heroes of the Bible, how did they make peace? Peacemaking is not compromising with evil. It’s not peace by tolerating evil. It’s peace that may first require going to war with sin. The struggle of Romans 7:15f, for example.

(7) *Be a peacemaker, not by tolerating or overlooking sin but by helping people expose it and deal with it (v. 9).*

- This final Beatitude includes verses 10-12, being persecuted for righteousness. If you’re not being shot at, perhaps you are not in the battle. Don’t seek persecution. That’s what’s wrong with the monastery with self-persecution. But if you pursue the righteousness of the kingdom, you will be persecuted.

(8) *Be sufficiently outspoken for the ways of God, knowing it will bring about criticism from the ungodly (v. 10-12).*

People in the Kingdom (verses 13-16)

- Salt = motivate people to desire the light of God’s revelation (God’s Word). The salty way is good works, i.e., good as God defines “good” and “works” as God defines “works,” as what glorifies God in heaven.

(9) *Keep yourself salty. Don’t become bland, boring or tolerant of evil (v. 13).*

(10) *Be visible. Don't hide your spiritual gifts under a basket (v. 14-16).*

Six Ways to Fulfill the Law (verses 17f)

- You might get the idea, from what Christ is going to say, that He wants to abolish the Law, but He is not going to do that. Not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter of the law will fall away. Christ is fulfilling the law.

(11) *Fulfill the laws of God by reflecting the heart of God as displayed in the Word of God (v. 17).*

(12) *Never deny anything in the Bible as 100% true (v. 18-19).*

- Verse 19—Whoever annuls the least of the commandment will be least in the kingdom, but if you keep and teach them, you will be great in the kingdom.
- What about the animal sacrifice laws? What about the dietary laws, seemingly done away with in Acts 10? What about the Levitical priesthood laws? etc. The law was done away by Christ (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3–4) on the cross. But they are to be applied today. Application has to do with understanding the mind of God. My only access to it is via the mind of the human author of the Word of God, and my only access to the author's mind is through what he wrote. If I apply the mind of God, I'm keeping the commandments, even if I may seemingly break one of them. For example, I tell a child not to cross the road without her mother. But you don't keep your own advice. You wouldn't tell that to an adult child. But that doesn't mean because they don't do that command they aren't keeping your mind (which is to cross the street safely). What Jesus is saying here is that He is giving us the mind of God. It may sound like it is neglecting the law, but it really isn't. It is fulfilling it.
- The Pharisees took what the human authors wrote and produced a tradition of the elders, which took them further from the mind of God. That's why they didn't understand that Jesus was from God. They were too far removed from the Word of God and therefore the mind of God. They disagreed. The Pharisees said Jesus was far from the law, and Jesus said the Pharisees were far from the mind of God.

(13) *Your righteousness must surpass that taught by your religion (v. 20).*

- Ancients said to not commit murder. Jesus said if you are angry, you are guilty. The internal governs the external. Verbal abuse is discussed in verse 22. Verbal abuse comes from internal anger, which comes from the false idea that the other person is causing the problem. The truth is, God has caused our situation, and we've chosen to be angry about it. So our problem is always a conflict with God about how to define what is in our best interest.

(14) *Don't be angry with anyone (v. 22).*

- Verse 23—Jesus gives us the most difficult challenge in relationships. If you remember someone has something against you, go be reconciled to your brother. It is not about you having something against someone else. Then you simply forgive them. But this is if someone has something against you. You go to them and try to reconcile with them. That mean that you apologize or you acknowledge your sin, but in the end, the only way you can help them is to help them understand their problem is really with God for putting them in this situation.

(15) *Try to be reconciled to those who have something against you (v. 23-24).*

Six Ways to Fulfill the Law

- In all six of these, Jesus is contrasting the legal acts with personal acts.
- (1) Verses 25-26—Don't go to court. Three problems: (1) It costs you time and worry. (2) You'll have to defend yourself, so it produces pride, making a case for yourself, pride-based. (3) You're a sinner, too, so you will probably lose. So you'll lose, no matter what. You'll lose time, you'll lose morally (pride), and you'll probably lose financially. So don't choose to go to court, but if you end up in court, just realize you will lose one way or another.

(16) *Don't go to court (v. 25-26).*

- (2) Verses 27-30—Don't lust. Two violent pictures. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, for that's better than your whole body going into hell. Same with right hand. Jesus is not commanding self-mutilation. This is like an artist's painting. It makes a real point with an unreal picture. Here is a violent picture of

someone without an eye or hand, showing the violent consequences of sin. The statements are true in themselves. The point is to do something radical about your sin. I suggest it means to do something mechanical. Most habitual sins are connected to circumstances. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous changes a person's schedule, so they go to meetings several times a day instead of going to a bar.

(17) *Don't look to lust. Realize sex outside of marriage is sinful, before it's physical (v. 27-30).*

(18) *Eliminate the cause of your sin by changing your circumstances (v. 29-30).*

- (3) Verses 31-32—Law of divorce. The difference between the legal and personal aspects. Giving a divorce is a legal act. Verse 32 is a personal act.

(19) *Never think, "I'd be better off with a divorce. God doesn't want me to live like this" (v. 32).*

(20) *Never marry a divorced person because you cause them to sin (v. 32).*

- (4) Verse 33-37—Don't make false vows, but Jesus says to not make any vows because you cannot control your future circumstances. It doesn't help if you make vows by something greater. Just be honest, let your yes be yes and your no be no. You're only as good as your word, so let your word be good.

(21) *Don't make oaths because you can't control future circumstances (v. 33-36).*

(22) *You are only as good as your word (v. 37).*

- (5) Verses 38-42—An eye for an eye is justice. Justice is the job of government and God. The law of Moses set up a government. Christ was not preparing the 12 to be a part of government but part of the church, which is individuals. Governments should punish, not discipline. Believers should discipline, not punish. Rather than punishing an evil person, don't resist him. Don't defend yourself (for example, against law suits, which take from you personally). Do I need to defend myself to have what God wants me to have? It's talking about yourself, not others. Others may be your responsibility, if they are in your family or business, and you may need to protect them. If someone rapes my daughter, I don't need to give them another daughter to rape. Just make sure it's not to defend yourself. You may defend someone else, in your sphere of responsibility. It's a difficult line. Am I doing it for me or for them?

(23) *Walk away from any fight that does not involve the truth of God (v. 36-39).*

- (6) Verses 43-47—Love your enemy. Under the law, it meant love Jews and wipe out Canaanites. But individually, we are to love, i.e. give to and pray for, our enemies. That results in rewards in the kingdom of heaven. That's what God does to His enemies, sends sunshine and rain on the same people. Our motive is to be rewarded in heaven by God, to have the character of God.

(24) *Give to every need where you can help (v. 42).*

(25) *Do something good for somebody who you don't like (v. 44).*

- These will result in a poor society. This stuff won't work on earth. It only works for the kingdom of heaven. It's value is for your future in heaven.
- "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Chapter 6

Giving

- The Sermon on the Mount is like a sample test you take before you take the real test, which is at the judgment seat of Christ. Are you practicing your righteousness to be seen by God or by other people? Don't be like the hypocrites who like to be seen in the streets. They're paid in full. For example, when you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (another unrealistic picture like in 5:29-30). As much as possible, conceal your giving. Go for the profit of having rewards in heaven rather than on earth.

(26) *Try to conceal your giving (v. 4).*

- Uses the same formula but regarding prayer. Pray in secret, in an inner room. The Father will see you and reward you. The promise is to be rewarded, not to get the answer to your prayer.

Lord's Prayer

(27) *Pray in secret (v. 6).*

- Don't use meaningless repetition, a second requirement for effective prayer. It's the danger of all liturgies. It's possible to have repetition without it being meaningless, but repetition breeds meaninglessness, it will most likely happen.

(28) *Pray without repeating a mindless liturgy (v. 7).*

- Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. This is a reason to pray! So why pray if He already knows? I suggest it's because I am acknowledging God is responsible for my situation. Even if you got into your situation by your sin and foolishness, like the prodigal son feeding the pigs, God is still responsible for your situation and knows your needs. The reason you pray is not to get stuff, it is to be obedient to God.

(29) *Pray because God knows what you want (v. 8).*

(30) *Pray praising God (v. 9).*

- God's will be done on earth in our age means in the church. Pray for God's will to be done, not His plan. God's plan is already being done (it includes our sin and suffering, and many people being lost). And He doesn't say to pray for our will. That doesn't need to be done. But God's will is God's desires. Therefore, our prayers will not always be granted because God's plan is not always God's will. But we're rewarded for praying God's will because it's the best possible prayer, and it is right to pray for it, even if it can't be granted because it's not part of God's plan. For example, prayer for someone's salvation. It was right for Abraham to pray for Sodom, it was right for Jesus to pray for the cup to pass by Him, etc.

(31) *Pray for God's will not your will (v. 10).*

(32) *Ask for daily needs daily (v. 11).*

(33) *Ask God to forgive your sin (v. 12).*

(34) *Forgive everybody who hurts you, even if they don't ask for it (v. 14-15) because your forgiveness depends on it.*

(35) *Ask God to deliver you from temptation (v. 13), Satan's motive, when God brings us into testing situations.*

Fasting

- Don't be like the hypocrites, who do it for appearance's sake. They are paid in full.
- Some points about fasting:
 - a. Fasting is not unique to Christianity or to Judeo-Christian history. It was part of Babylon, Assyria, Rome and Greece. It is part of Hinduism and Islam. So is prayer and meditation.
 - b. There are many kinds of fasts: no food, no food or drink, certain kinds of food, Daniel (10:3) ate no tasty food.
 - c. There was one required fast in the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement. Zechariah records four non-required fasts. No fast is required in the New Testament for our age.
 - d. Christ fasted and taught about fasting (4:2; 6:16; 9:15).
 - e. Many church leaders fasted: Calvin, Whitefield, Wesleys. The Didache shows that the early church fasted.
 - f. Reasons for fasting in the Bible: preparation for receiving revelation from God (Exodus 34:28; Daniel 9:3; 10:2-3; Acts 13:1-3); in time of emotional stress (2 Samuel 12:16); to show repentance to God (Jonah 3:7; Acts 9:8-9); when making important decisions (Acts 14:23). Acts 13:1-3, 14:23 are only examples of fasting in the early church.
- If you fast, why do you fast? If you do not fast, why not?

(36) *Fast once in awhile for sincerity, and do it secretly (v. 18).*

- The main point of the Sermon—don't store up treasure on earth but store it up in heaven, for where your treasure is, your heart will be.

(37) *Focus your goals on heavenly treasure (v. 20).*

- If the eye is dark, the body will be dark. Your eye is how you see the truth or your world view. If you understand the truth, a world view that says God reveals truth through His Word, then you will conform yourself to that truth, changing your desires to that truth. But if you are focused on your desires, then you will change the truth to fit those desires.

(38) *You will either change your desires to fit the truth (light) or change the truth to fit your desires (darkness) (v. 22-23).*

- Do what your desires, gifts, and life situation calls for. God’s will is revealed in His Word. Do what is morally right. You can be successful in business without the goal of being rich. If you are doing your business as unto the Lord, with the goal of having a successful godly business, riches are up to God.

(39) *If you’re not poor, stop trying to make more money (v. 24).*

- Don’t worry about your life. “Life” is *psuche*, usually personality. First he talks about food and clothes but then about worry. “Worry” occurs six times in v. 25-34. It means to be anxious, to be in trouble, or to take thought of or take care for. It’s used in Philippians 4:6 “be anxious for nothing ...” 1 Corinthians 12:35 it is used in a positive sense of believers caring for one another. In Luke 10:41, Christ uses it of Martha who is worried about fixing the food. Don’t trouble yourself about your life. He illustrates it with food, clothes, your life stature (height or length of life?), or about tomorrow. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. So we can conclude that God knows all our needs and God supplies all our needs. But God also decides what those needs are. We want to define our own needs. For example, suppose you are dying of cancer, you are married to someone you don’t like, is God meeting your needs? We have to conclude those things are what we need. It’s an act of God to supply our needs. When we are suffering, we tend to ask two questions: What sin am I committing? What mistake did I make to get into this mess? You have made mistakes and sin, but your situation is God meeting your needs. When you ask, What did I do to cause my suffering? You put yourself in charge of your suffering. When you do that, you will always be anxious for tomorrow. The same is true if you ask, What did I do good to cause my prosperity? You will be just as anxious for tomorrow. If you put yourself in charge of your needs, you will always be anxious for tomorrow. So, the good news is—God meets your needs. The bad news is—He also defines those needs. (See James 4:13-16.) Your job is to do whatever you can to move in the direction of the kingdom of God. But if you conclude that your suffering or success is due to your sin or your wisdom or lack of it, then you don’t have a sovereign God. You are responsible for what you do. God is responsible for what He does. But what you do will be in submission to what He does. God is good. God defines what is good. God is just. God defines what is just. God has your best interest in mind. God defines what is in your best interest.

(40) *If you believe you brought about your prosperity or your suffering, you will worry about tomorrow (v. 25-32).*

(41) *When we seek God’s kingdom first, the rest of life comes into perspective. When we first seek worldly things, both their value and the kingdom of God get blurred (v. 33).*

(42) *Stress is a self-induced condition caused mostly by worrying about tomorrow (v. 34).*

Chapter 7

- Do not judge, because your own standard will be used to judge you. Christ gives us another unrealistic picture—a log in one eye, a speck in another eye. Both are intentions because you can never see intentions. Stop treating your wife badly before you tell your children to quit fighting.
- Throughout the New Testament, there are two areas we are to never judge: motives (intentions) or to bring about justice (pay people back for what they did).

(43) *Don’t judge by criticism (gossip), punishment (eye-for-an-eye), or guessing people’s motives—ever. Instead, discipline, instruct, and disciple, that is, help believers get back on the biblical path (v. 1-5).*

(44) *Do #43 with yourself first (v. 5).*

- Judgment does not mean to not discern. You are to discern what is a dog and what is a swine. The dog and swine are not dirty people but people like the Pharisees.

(45) *Be discerning—judge virtue by actions—and don’t disciple or instruct people who repeatedly insist on acting morally like dogs and pigs (v. 6).*

- Constantly pursue what it is to be good. Even if you are evil, you can give good gifts. The point is not that you will get what you seek but that you will get what God wants you to have, His definition of what is good. Pray for what is good according to God's will.

(46) *Ask, seek, knock. Be persistently asking God for "what is good" according to God (v. 7-11).*

(47) *Whenever you deal with anybody about anything, frame it with the Golden Rule (v. 12).*

- Many Christians, although they believe the Bible, are convinced that grace does away with judgment. This means that because of the death of Christ, there is no eternal accountability for temporal behavior. If this is true, then an eternal sense of truth is relative. All you have to do is beat the system here on earth because you have already beat the system in heaven. If the grace of God has eliminated eternal judgment, then the commandments of God are optional. That is a broad gate mentality.
- Beware of the false prophets because they will keep you out of heaven. You will know them by their fruits. A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. We have to conclude that Ghandi, Mohammed, Buddha, all produced bad fruit. If we say that Ghandi is a good man who produced good fruit, then we don't understand the kingdom of God. The goodness of the fruit is defined by God. If you give a humanistic understanding to the fruit, then you will not come up with a good tree. Good fruit has to be defined biblically by God.
- Verse 21—Doing the will of God narrows the gate and identifies the good and bad trees and good and bad fruit. Wide gates and false prophets may be seemingly good, they may do religious things, miraculous things, do things in the name of Christ, but they don't do the will of God. The way to know the difference is to know the Word of God.

(48) *The real kingdom of heaven (God's kingdom) will always have a narrow gate. If everybody is flocking to it, it's probably something that gratifies the sin nature (v. 13-14).*

(49) *Reject all religion not based solely on the Bible. Good fruit is biblical teaching and action, not just good humanitarianism (v. 15-20).*

- Those who hears God's words and acts on them, their foundation will be on the rock. The same storm (suffering) comes to both the wise and the foolish equally, the believer and the unbeliever. There is no discernible difference. The difference is the foundation, which is the attitude you have toward the storm. That's obtained from "these words of Mine." Attitudes are based on declarations of truth which we believe. The good rain fell on both the good and the evil. The storms come to both the wise and the foolish. In other words, both comfort and suffering will come to everybody. Generally speaking, if you are suffering, you are on the path to comfort. If you are in comfort, you are on the path toward suffering. The questions is, will you let the circumstances define God or will you let God define the circumstances? Jesus is saying, at least in part, the wise man lets the Word of God define his circumstances. The fool lets the circumstances define the Word of God. But Christ said it is not just observation and interpretation that is needed. It's also application. "He who acts on My words." So acting on the Sermon on the Mount will not prevent suffering. It will give you a foundation to endure the suffering, in a context of a heavenly perspective. For example, if you are a peacemaker or love your enemies, don't get a divorce, if you give, pray, and fast secretly in order to store up treasure in heaven, it will not in any way keep you from getting cancer, losing your business, having people hate you, or being hit by a car and being in a wheelchair the rest of your life. But it will give you a foundation to be able to endure it. Because if you believe God has your best interest in mind, then you will use both your comfort and your suffering to build a foundation of rewards in heaven.

(50) *Know what Jesus said and act on it. But you can't act on it if you don't know it (v. 24-29).*

- When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed because He was teaching not as the scribes. He was not ordinary or predictable.

Chapter 8

- In a mountain in Galilee. A leper came and said, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."
- Verse 3—Jesus was willing. It was a ceremonial defilement under the law according to Leviticus 14:45-46. Immediately he was cleansed of the leprosy.
- Jesus told him not to tell anyone but show himself to a priest because the law required that a priest declare him to be clean.

- No record of any Jew being cleansed of leprosy except Miriam in Numbers 12.
- When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion (a Roman over 100 soldiers) approached Him. “I am not worthy for You to come under my roof. Just say a word, and my servant will be healed.”
- He says: (1) he was not worthy and (2) Christ had the authority. Jesus called that great faith. In fact, Jesus said He had not found such great faith in Israel (v. 10). Jesus marveled at this. Perhaps because the centurion had earthly authority. He was not in the position of the prodigal son, which is how most of us come to belief. The condition of his servant, someone he obviously cared for, made him realize that his authority didn’t mean anything and that he was unworthy. The Pharisees thought their authority mattered a lot.
- Jesus adds in verse 11, many will come from the East and the West and recline with Abraham and Jacob in the kingdom. These are the church age, the tribulation, and the millennial kingdom. But the sons of the kingdom (the Jews who should have been part of the kingdom of God but they didn’t believe). 22:13 and 25:30 are the only passages referring to unbelievers being cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Hell is usually described as a lake of fire. If you look at the final state in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22), the city seems to be a source of light. The further away from it, the further into darkness, the outer darkness.
- Next they arrive at Peter’s home, and his mother-in-law was sick. Peter was obviously married (1 Corinthians 9:5, as were most of the apostles). All of Jesus’ healings were of this sort, contrary to nature miracles. Peter’s mother-in-law was instantly better. Just like the leper.
- Verse 18—A crowd gathered, so Jesus said they were going to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. A scribe came up and said, “Teacher, I’ll follow You wherever You will go.” But Jesus said He had no place to live. Did the man think He would go to where Jesus would live? A monastery?
- Another disciple said, “Let me go bury my father.” But Jesus said, “Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead.” Let the people of the world take care of the affairs of the world. It means that Jesus is more important than burying your father. Obviously, burying his father was keeping him from following Christ (like the rich young ruler’s riches). Jesus knew this because He knew the man’s motives. He is not saying entrance into the kingdom is difficult, it is impossible. Most people want to reduce it to difficult.
- Jesus gets into the boat. Matthew says the disciples follow Him, but Mark 4:36-41 says there were other boats as well. There was a great storm on the sea. Jesus was asleep. They wake Him up and say, “Save us. We are perishing.” Jesus said they had “little faith.” It is the disease of discipleship. It’s not “no faith.” It’s “little faith.” He tells them this right in the middle of the storm. Then He gets up and rebukes the sea and it becomes perfectly calm.
- Verse 27—They are amazed. What kind of man is this that even the sea and the winds obey Him? They are still learning about Him.
- (1) On the one hand, the storm came up because by chance storms come up. On the other hand, it was in the sovereign plan of God. The same is true of the storms in our lives. (2) The disciples concluded that because of the storm, things were out of God’s control. “We are perishing.” Which is what we often conclude when there is trouble in our lives. Things are out of God’s control and we are perishing. (3) The storm brought them to Jesus because they had no other options. They needed Jesus’ protection just as much before the storm but they did not realize it or come to Him until they were convinced they were perishing. That’s why there are storms in our lives, to show us what was true all along, that without Christ, we are perishing. (4) Their sin was “little faith.” From our perspective, there are many reasons for storms in our lives—sin, mistakes, bad luck—but from God’s perspective, they are there to draw us to Himself and to help our “little faith” and to force us to ask the question, “What sort of man is this?”
- Verse 28—He went to the Gadarenes and saw two men who were demon possessed. Demons are fallen angels (Revelation 12:4) who joined Satan in rebellion against God thus creating a spiritual warfare that reaches from heaven to earth (Ephesians 6:10-12). Some demons are so bad, they do not come to earth until the tribulation. They will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10), which is probably what they had in mind here by “don’t punish us before our time.” They can possess people, but it is a sin because only the fallen angels practice it.
- Verse 29—The demons recognize Jesus, calling Him the Son of God. They ask Him to let them to into the herd of swine. Apparently demons can possess animals, too, but they don’t prefer that. Jesus commands them to go into the swine. Again we can see that demons are servants of God because they cannot act without permission from God, which means God is not responsible for their sin but for the results of their sin. Like people, they have free will, are sinners, but their actions are ultimately under the sovereignty of God.
- Verse 33—The herdsmen run away and report what Jesus has done. The people come and ask Jesus to leave. Mark 5:13 says there were 2,000 pigs. For Christ, two people were more important than 2,000 pigs. For the village, 2,000 pigs were more important than two people.

Applications:

- (1) *Like the leper of 8:4, we should realize that the power of God is exercised by the will of God. God's answers to our requests are not linked to our will but to God's will. God will do what He wants, not what we want, unless we want what God wants.*
- (2) *Like the centurion in verses 5-13 to have great faith is to recognize that I am unworthy and Christ has great authority. God defines great faith when we have nothing left we can do. It's true all along, but we just don't recognize it.*
- (3) *Healing, the removal of suffering circumstances, is not something that God does as an end in itself. It's done to fulfill the bigger plan of what He is doing, not to heal the masses. Israel was still full of sick people when Jesus left.*
- (4) *Ministry does not require a special place to go to do it. Jesus told the scribe, "I don't have any place to go." Jesus did the most ministry on earth and had no place to do it.*
- (5) *Following Christ means letting the people of the world take care of the concerns of the world (v. 22). Working, taking care of our families, discipling, evangelism are all following Christ.*
- (6) *The storms of our life are always given by God as opportunities to strengthen our "little faith."*
- (7) *Sometimes (as when Christ went to the Gadarenes in v. 28-34), ministry is spiritual warfare, where your confrontation of evil will only bring about a rejection from people.*

- It was a common Jewish belief that sickness was caused by your or your parents' sin (John 9:1-2), but only God could forgive sin. So for Christ to say the man's sin was forgiven was the same as saying He was God.
- The scribes said this was blasphemy. Isaiah 43:25 and Micah 7:18-19 says only God can forgive sin. Of course, they are right, unless He really was God.
- So Christ confirms His deity with a contrary-to-nature miracle, telling the man to walk. He did this to prove to them He had the power to forgive sins, that He was deity.
- The people were amazed God had given such authority to men (v. 8). So they still didn't recognize that Christ was God.
- Matthew records his own conversion. He is sitting in tax office just outside Capernaum. Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."
- Matthew then has a meal for Jesus in his own house with his friends, many tax gatherers and sinners. It bothers the Pharisees because the meal was an indication of fellowship. Some examples: in Genesis 18 God appeared to Abraham along with some angels, and Abraham prepared a meal for them. When the angels went to Sodom, 19:1-3, Lot prepared a meal for them. When Abraham's servant went to get a bride for Isaac, Rebecca's family prepared a meal for them (24:54). When Jacob and Laban departed from each other, they sealed their agreement with a meal (31:54). When Joseph was testing the character of his brothers in Egypt, he had a meal for them in his own house (34:32). When Moses' father-in-law learned of Israel's exodus from Egypt, he celebrated it with a meal for Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel (Exodus 18:12). Eating is sharing in meeting a common need. It's usually a pleasant experience. We sit much closer to each other than we usually do. It is acceptable and expected. We usually face each other. We each have something to do, but it doesn't require much concentration, so talking is easy and natural. It's okay to abruptly change the subject, not usual for any other conversation, which allows anyone to share about anything, even children. There's a sense of giving and receiving. Would be good to be a part of our church, but it is hard because it is not part of our traditions.
- Verse 12—It's not those who are healthy (in their own minds) who need a physician but those who are sick, i.e., the desperate. Hosea 6:6 quote, God desires a heart of compassion, not a system of sacrifice. Hosea defines that as the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
- Verse 14—The disciples of John the Baptist come and ask about fasting. Why do we and the disciples of the Pharisees fast but Christ's disciples not fast? The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:9-14). The real point was why wasn't Jesus fasting? Jesus uses the occasion to predict His own crucifixion. He says that fasting is for a time of distress, but Jesus is still here. When Jesus is gone, then His disciples will do that. Perhaps John's disciples were fasting because John was in prison.
- No one puts new wine into old wineskins or a piece of new cloth on an old garment.

Contrast between compassion and sacrifice:

Sacrifice (Hosea 6:1) was burnt offering. Compassion is Hebrew word "hesed," like "agape" in Greek, it's loyal love. It's based on the knowledge of God (Hosea 6:6).

Sacrifice = the Pharisees

Compassion = Levi and his friends

Sacrifice = those who see themselves as healthy
Compassion = those who see themselves as sick

Sacrifice = those who see themselves as righteous
Compassion = those who see themselves as sinners

Sacrifice = fasting as a ceremony, a religious activity
Compassion = fasting as a way of seeking God when suffering

Sacrifice = the old cloth, old wineskins
Compassion = the new cloth, new wineskins

To summarize,

Sacrifice is a system of religious activity, which results in people feeling okay about themselves.

Compassion is a loyal love for God, based on the knowledge of God, which leads you to feeling desperate for God.

- Verse 18—(Mark 5:22 calls him Jairus) his daughter has died, but if Jesus would lay His hand on her, she will live. Desperation brings people to God. Jesus and disciples go to his house.
- On the way, He is touched by a woman who has been hemorrhaging for 12 years. She is healed. Jesus tells her that her faith has healed her. From God's perspective, it was in the sovereign plan of God that she was healed. But Jesus looks at it from her perspective here and says her faith has healed her. Are you saved because you are predestined or because of your faith? Both things are true.
- Jesus came to the house and saw the flute players. According to the Talmud, even the very poor were allowed two flute players and one crying woman at a funeral. Jesus tells the people to leave because the girl is not dead. They begin to laugh at Him because she was dead. He took the girl by the hand, and she got up.
- Verse 27—Two blind men follow Jesus. These are not the two blind men on the way to Jericho (20:30-31). These men ask for mercy. Jesus said, "Do you believe I am able to do this?" They said, "Yes." He said, "Let it be done according to your faith." Their eyes are opened. They can see. Jesus sternly warns them not to tell anyone about this, but they go out and tell everybody. Typical scenario of a non-disciple believer: (1) cry for God's mercy, (2) declaration of faith (3) followed by disobedience of Christ's words.
- Verse 32—A demon-possessed man who is mute. The demon is cast out, and he can speak. The people are amazed, but the Pharisees say He is casting out demons by the ruler of demons. This is the Pharisees' explanation for Christ's miracles. This was the beginning of the end of their opportunity to receive the Messiah. It ended with the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (chapter 12). It is the same sin—saying His power came from Satan and not God.
- Verse 35—Jesus continues through the villages, teaching, proclaiming the gospel, and healing. He felt compassion for the people because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. It's amazing since the place was full of religious leaders. There were priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, synagogue officials, yet the people were like sheep without a shepherd, and there was no workers for the harvest.

Applications:

- (1) *Jesus is the only one whoever walked the earth who had the power and authority to forgive sins. So don't go to anyone else or any religious system to get forgiveness of sin (9:6).*
- (2) *Eating together is the most natural form of fellowship (9:9-11). Gathering of the church should be a meal in a home.*
- (3) *Pursue compassion not sacrifice, i.e., a loyal love for God based on the knowledge of God which leads you to feeling desperate for God. Don't pursue religion which makes you feel okay about yourself. Christianity is a religion of the desperate.*
- (4) *Desperation for Christ and faith in Christ must be followed by paying attention to Christ's words, not like the blind man, who asked for mercy, had faith, but didn't do what Jesus said to do.*

Chapter 10

- Jesus summoned the 12 disciples. Their names are in verses 2-4. Of the 12, one betrayed Him, one was a political revolutionary (Simon the Zealot), one was a tax gatherer (a disgraceful job among the Jews), Thomas is known as a doubter, there were two sets of brothers and all four of them were fishermen, the first two (Andrew and John) come from John the Baptist, the next three come from referral of them. We only know the occupation of five, they all appear to be literate and intelligent, with normal jobs in the business community. They were more men of action than they were thinkers. (Paul is more of a thinker.) Probably the most

significant fact is that none of them were inhibited by religious tradition and training, i.e., none of them were clergy, political, or military. They didn't have a position of responsibility in an organized system which would hamper their understanding. They all left their jobs to become full-time apostles, but not until after the resurrection (John 21 they were back out fishing). Most, if not all, of them were married and their wives usually travelled with them (1 Corinthians 9:5), and apparently they all died as martyrs.

General observations about Jesus' leadership training:

- (1) *A few workers thoroughly taught are more effective than many who are superficially taught.*
- (2) *The most important thing to teach those few workers is character development.*
- (3) *The most effective way to teach character development is through personal contact, i.e., incarnationally.*
- (4) *The goal of personal contact is to have reproducers, and having reproducers narrows the small group to a very few people.*

Jesus goes from 5,000 to 70 to 12 to 4 to 2 (Peter led the church during the first years and John during the last years).

(5) *What did Jesus train the 12 to do? See the Concepts' brochure "The Training of the Twelve."*

- Jesus was talking about the journey they were going to go on. But then He gives some general principles of discipleship. The first 15 verses are before the cross, verses 16-20 deal with the whole church age, verses 21-23 deal with the tribulation, and verses 24-27 deal with discipleship in general, not related to any one period.

First from their journey before the cross:

- Verse 5—Do not go to the Gentiles, or even the Samaritans. Only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
 - (1) *Acts 18:9-10, go only to those Christ is calling to Himself (those who respond). Be witnesses to the world but we're not to reach the world for Christ.*
- Verse 7—As you go, preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - (2) *Preach the whole counsel of God, not just the gospel, and do it with urgency.*
- Verse 8—Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, but the principle He gives is that you receive freely so give freely.
 - (3) *Whatever you have (money, talents, gifts, abilities), you have freely received it, so freely give it.*
- Verses 9-10—He tells them specifically to not acquire gold or silver or money. Don't store up on these things before you go. The worker is worthy of his support.
 - (4) *Generally speaking, God will use your work (ministry) to provide your support. It's good for the people you serve to support you.*
- Verse 11—When you go into a village, inquire who is worthy in it and abide there.
 - (5) *Establish a base of operation with worthy people.*
- Verse 14—Whoever doesn't receive you, shake the dust off your feet.
 - (6) *We're not responsible for how people respond to the gospel, but let them know they may not get another opportunity, or there is a limit to the opportunities they will get.*

For the time of the church:

- Verse 16—Be shrewd (practically wise) as wolves and as innocent as doves.
 - (7) *Be innocent with respect to sin but sensible, practical, and prudent and wise in your methods.*
- Verses 17-18—Beware of men who may deliver you to courts, scourging, etc.
 - (8) *Watch out for people who prioritize religious or political systems.*
- Verse 18—You'll be brought before kings, as a testimony to them.
 - (9) *Some of you will be brought before local and/or national officials. When you are, use it as an opportunity to tell them about Christ.*
- Verse 19—Don't worry about what you are to say.

(10) *If you worry about what you are going to say, you'll be thinking about yourself rather than Christ.*

From the time of the Tribulation:

• Verse 22—You'll be hated by all because of My name.

(11) *Endure inevitable hatred from the world until the end, and you will have rewards in heaven.*

• Verse 23—Whenever they persecute you, flee to the next city. You will not finish all the cities until the Son of Man comes.

(12) *When you are persecuted, move on to another place because whatever ministry you have, you won't finish it. Someone else will finish your work anyway. Keep going until Christ comes for you, either through the rapture or your death.*

Discipleship in general:

• Verses 24-25—If they called Christ as being from Satan, they will do to you, too.

(13) *Don't try to be something Christ was not, i.e., to be accepted by the world.*

• Verses 26-31—Don't fear them. There is nothing concealed that won't be revealed.

(14) *There are no secrets. What people are doing and thinking will be revealed, and what you are doing and thinking will be revealed. So fear God, not the one who is lying about you.*

• Verses 32-33—Everyone who confesses Me before men, I'll confess in heaven.

(15) *Wherever you are and whenever there is an opportunity to testify for Christ, don't back away from it.*

• Verse 34—Don't think I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

(16) *Someone living for God will always have inner peace and outward trouble.*

• Verse 37—He who loves father, mother, son, or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

(17) *If your family is more important than Christ, then you are not a disciple of Christ.*

• Verse 38—If you don't take your cross and follow after Christ, you are not worthy of Him.

(18) *Your cross is your suffering situation. It's a death march. Accept your own individual suffering situation as the context from which you are to serve God.*

• Verse 39—If you find your life, you'll lose it.

(19) *If you pursue your own life, whether it is self-actualization or business success, you'll discover there is no value there, and you'll die grasping for what little pleasure you can hang on to, wishing you were young again.*

• Verses 40-42—Rewards mentioned three times in these verses.

(20) *Whoever receives a disciple of Christ will be rewarded.*

Chapter 11

• When Jesus finished giving instructions to His disciples, He departed into the cities.

• John the Baptist was in prison. John heard of the works of Christ, and he sent his disciples to ask if Christ was the Messiah. The reason John questioned that was because he was an Old Testament prophet. They did not see the church age between the Old Testament and the second coming. So John was confused. He was in a prison, a dungeon. Jesus was in the process of being rejected by the Pharisees.

• Jesus said to John's disciples for them to report to John the contrary-to-nature miracles that Jesus did, and He is preaching the gospel to the poor—two things that God would do.

• "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." Jesus made no attempt to release John from prison or to explain to John why he was in prison, just like the other Old Testament prophets, just like Job's suffering was not explained to him, and Paul's thorn in the flesh was not explained to him. Jesus simply reminds John of the spiritual evidence of the Messiah being fulfilled in Himself.

Application—Does God offend you? Probably not when things are going well. Wonder if you are in prison, like John, or in prison in a bad marriage, or a bad family, or a bad job, or a bad country, or a bad body filled with disease or dying? If you think somehow you caused your imprisonment, then you don't have a sovereign God. If you believe your imprisonment (your life situation, your cross) is explainable by cause and effect in this life, then God is predictable. If God is predictable, then you control God. I suggest that God is completely

consistent with His character but also unpredictable. What bothered John the Baptist was that he could not predict what God was doing, and he was a prophet. Jesus said to not take offense or stumble over that. God is good, but God defines what is good. God is just, but God defines justice. God will do what's in our best interest, but God defines what our best interest is. Don't take offense or stumble over that. Read Isaiah 40:13-14. God is never obligated to explain to you.

- Verses 7f—When John's disciples went away, Jesus began to talk to the crowd about John. Whatever meekness is, it is not a reed shaken in the wind, or someone dressed in soft clothes. John was more than a prophet in two ways: he was the last Old Testament prophet (v. 13) and he was the prophet who prepared the way for the Messiah (v. 10).
- There's no one born among women greater than John, but the least one in the kingdom (in heaven) is greater than John (on earth).
- From John until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, like Herod who threw John in prison and the Pharisees who were planning to kill Jesus.
- Verse 14—John is Elijah. Their connection—
 - (1) John has his own personal ministry of calling people to repentance (Matthew 3:1-2).
 - (2) John fulfilled the prediction of Isaiah that there would be a predecessor to the Messiah who would (Isaiah 40:3) come out of the wilderness.
 - (3) John was not Elijah personally (John 1:19-28). They asked him if he was Elijah, and he said he was not.
 - (4) Jesus said here that John is Elijah.
 - (5) The angel who revealed his identity to John's father Zacharias, said John would come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:16-17).
 - (6) Malachi 4:5 says Elijah the prophet will come before the great and terrible day of the Lord. But that seems to be a description more of Christ's second coming. Perhaps Elijah is one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-6.

Conclusion—John was the last Old Testament prophet who had his own ministry of calling people to repentance. He was the forerunner of the Messiah, predicted by Isaiah. He actually fulfilled the prophetic task of Elijah in that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, but Elijah himself will personally return during the tribulation period just before the second coming of Christ (probably one of the witnesses of Revelation 11).

- Verse 16—What to compare this generation? Jesus and John are first children who play the flute to other children (Jews) . Jesus and John were very different. John was conservative and Jesus was liberal. But the Jews wouldn't listen to either one of them.
- Verse 20—Jesus condemns the people of three cities because they didn't repent. It will be more tolerable for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah than them. The more revelation you get, the more responsibility and more judgment you get.
- Verse 25—Jesus praises God for hiding these things from the wise and revealing them to babes. You can be wise but you won't be able to get to God. It needs revelation from God. He reveals Himself to infants, i.e., the humble not the proud and self-sufficient.
- Verse 27—All things have been handed to Jesus from the Father. No one knows the Father but the Son. No one knows the Son but the Father. The only way you will know anything about either of them is if it is revealed to you by the Son. But if we come to Christ, He'll give us rest. His yoke is easy. If you are gentle and humble, then you find rest for your soul. An easy yoke gives the burden to the larger one bearing the burden. Rest is contentment with what God is doing. Not stumbling over Jesus but takes Jesus' easy yoke, which is taking up your cross and following Christ, while you are on your death march. The rest is not defined by circumstances. Never let your circumstances define God. Let God define your circumstances.

Applications—

- (1) *Don't be offended by God, i.e. stumbling over what God is or is not doing in your life, when you are in a prison of suffering without explanation. The disciples stumbled over Jesus sleeping while they were perishing on the boat. They thought Jesus did not care, He was no longer with us, involved in our life. Jesus told them they had little faith. When you are in suffering situation, don't have little faith, don't respond to that by having less faith in God.*
- (2) *Pursue rewards in the kingdom of heaven not greatness on earth.*
- (3) *Seek the rest of God in the midst of being weary and heavy laden, not by looking to get rid of the weariness but by taking on the yoke of Christ. The reason we don't like the easy yoke is because it doesn't eliminate suffering on earth.*

Chapter 12

- This is the pivot chapter of the book. After the “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which shall not be forgiven either in this age or the age to come,” Jesus turned His attention away from presenting the kingdom to preparing for the church.
- It began with a controversy over the Sabbath. They were going through the grain fields, the disciples became hungry, so picked grain to eat, allowed in the law, but necessarily on the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 23:25).
- The Pharisees saw it and said it was not lawful to do that on the Sabbath (according to “their” law).
- The law described (Exodus 31:12-17; 20:9; 23:12; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:13) the Sabbath as a day of rest for Israel. It is the only purely ceremonial law in the Ten Commandments. The reason is because God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:3). The word “sabbath” means inactivity. It’s the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated for the church. Breaking it required the death penalty. The Talmud had 24 chapters about keeping the Sabbath. According to the Talmud, if you rubbed a grain of wheat, it is considered threshing. So it was the Talmud law that was broken, not the Mosaic Law.
- Jesus answered them in verses 3-6 by talking about David, when he became hungry, ate the unlawful consecrated bread. Also, the priests break the Sabbath in order to do sacrifices on the Sabbath (Numbers 28:9-10; Leviticus 24:8-9).
- Then Jesus repeats God’s words, “I desire compassion not sacrifice.” If the Pharisees had learned that, they would not have condemned the innocent. So Jesus is declaring His disciples innocent because compassion is better than sacrifice. The point is not that people are greater than laws but that some laws are greater than other laws.
- Verse 8—His conclusion—Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath—another claim to deity.
- Jesus’ answer in verses 3-6 is that Jesus never claimed that He did not break the Sabbath laws. Instead, He introduces something the Pharisees had not thought about—vertical thinking, that is, that God is greater than the law of God. This led to hierarchial thinking, that some values are greater than other values. Jesus said that David did what was not lawful and the priests in the Temple break the Sabbath. So Jesus’ answer is not that He did not break the Sabbath. His answer is that He is greater than the Sabbath and greater than the Temple.
- Jesus raises 9 of the 10 Commandments (adultery to lust, murder to hate), but lowers only one commandment, the Sabbath. Romans 14 says one day is like any other day.
- Verse 9—They go to Capernaum and enter the synagogue. There is a man there with a withered hand. He asked the Pharisees if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. According to “their” law, it was not lawful.
- If you have a sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath, would you lift it out? Yes, of course. But Jesus adds that men are more important than sheep.
- Verse 12—It is lawful to good on the Sabbath. So Jesus tells the man to stretch out his hand, and it is healed, like the other hand.
- Why did Jesus go into the synagogue and cause this problem in the first place? He could have easily waited until Sunday when there would be no objection. But Jesus created an issue that communicated crucial truth.
- Verse 14—The Pharisees began to counsel together how to destroy Him.
- Big time gap between verses 14 and 15. Matthew puts them together to show the buildup of the Pharisees’ thinking.
- Jesus, aware of their plan to kill Him, withdraws. But He continues His healing ministry, but with the warning to not say anything to anyone about what He is doing.
- Verse 17—This was to fulfill what was spoken to Isaiah the prophet: (1) the Messiah will be a servant, (2) God has chosen Him (or one who has become an heir), (3) He is My beloved, (4) He is well-pleased, (5) I’ll put My Spirit upon Him, (6) the Messiah is not just for Israel, but will proclaim justice for the Gentiles, (7) He will not be a politician (His voice crying out in the streets), (8) He will suffer, a battered reed, (9) He’ll not be silenced, the reed won’t break, the smoldering wick will not be put out, (10) until He leads justice to victory. Verse 21 repeats #6, He will go to the Gentiles.
- Verse 22—A demon-possessed man who is blind and can’t speak because of his demon-possession is healed by Jesus. The crowds are amazed, and they begin to suggest that He might be the Messiah, the Son of David.
- This triggered a forceful response from the Pharisees. They say Jesus casts out demons because He is the ruler of the demons.
- Jesus answers this in two ways:
 - (1) A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Why would Satan cast out his own demons?
 - (2) If that is how I’m doing it, how are you doing it? (Because they also claimed to do that.) It sounds like a double standard.
- Verse 30—He who is not with Jesus is against Him. He who does not gather, scatters.
- Verse 31—Any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be

- forgiven. He illustrates that with “speaking a word.” Illustration: make the tree good and the fruit good.
- Verse 34-37—The mouth speaks out of what fills the heart. By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned. There is no inconsistency between your heart and your mouth.
 - Illustration: The idea that we would get along better if we communicated better is nonsense. If we understood each other better, we might like each other less. The fact that we don’t understand everything about each other is a useful protection. The evidence is that we have to edit ourselves and ponder before we speak. Telepathy would be an utter disaster. Our only chance to get along is to not be able to communicate what we **really** think!
 - You are going to be condemned by your words.
 - The Pharisees and scribes do not answer Him but say they want to see a sign.
 - Jesus says that an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. But no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah (the resurrection, as Jonah was 3 nights and days in the fish, so Jesus will be in the grave). Three days and nights are not 72 hours. The Jews commonly used “day and night” as a part of any day to equal a day. It does require that Jonah be a real historical figure, who was actually swallowed by a great fish.
 - Verse 38-45—“generation” occurs in 11:16; 12:39, 41, 42, 45; 16:4; 17:17; 23:36; 24:34. Probably means “race.” It can mean family origin, or a multitude of contemporaries, or one segment of society (like “the Pharisees”), the people around you which are some way like you. It’s also used in Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:15; and Hebrews 3:10. The best understanding in Matthew is “evil race” or an “evil group.”
 - The men of Nineveh repented. The kingdom of God in Christ is greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon.
 - Verses 43-45—An unclean spirit goes out and passes through waterless places—it doesn’t find rest, so it goes back from where it came, and he finds it clean, so he brings more demons, and the last situation is worse than the first. That’s the way it will be with this evil generation. It seems to describe what happens under a Pharisee-type religious system. It’s probably true of other religious systems that help people outwardly, take people from chaos to order through groups like Mormons or Jehovah Witnesses. Demons may leave a person, perhaps because the person’s life was put in order via some religious system, but the demons get together and become part of that religion (Paul said all religions are of demons, 1 Corinthians 10:20), and then they come back in force, and the last state is worse than the first. A Mormon is a far greater tool of Satan than a drunk.
 - Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit—
 - It’s not being a super bad sinner (that eliminates passages that offer the gospel to whosoever will, such as John 3:16, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13, Revelation 22:17). Many saved people were super bad sinners, such as Paul murdering Christians.
 - It’s not profanity or some set of words you might say. Peter was (Matthew 26:74) guilty of profanity (16:22-23) but he was not unsaved (John 21:15-23). Paul was guilty of blasphemy. He was not only forgiven but rewarded for his righteousness.
 - It’s not suicide. Suicide is a sin, but either all person’s sins are forgiven or none of them are, depending on whether they accepted Christ.
 - It’s not unconfessed sin because any sin separates us from God, and none of us can remember all of our sins, let alone confess them.
 - It’s not sexual immorality. David was guilty and God honored him all through history. Paul called the Corinthians fleshly believers.
 - It’s not personally receiving Christ for salvation. Although we can argue that it has the same consequences. We have the ability to accept Christ right up to our death.

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not repeated in the Bible after the cross. The apostles never warned anybody about it that it could be done. In Matthew 12, the Pharisees said that Jesus was a blasphemer, and Jesus was saying that they were. The point is, your words condemn you because they reflect your heart. There is no inconsistency between the fruit and the tree. Some blasphemy is forgivable, against the Son of Man. We can’t know for sure why that is. In the Law unintentional sins could have a sacrifice. Intentional sins could not (such as David’s with Bathsheba). Blasphemy is words against someone. That can be forgiven, even against the Son of Man. What cannot be forgiven is speaking against the Holy Spirit. It has to do with attributing the work of the Holy Spirit through Christ to Satan. Matthew is presenting a perfect standard. He says we will be condemned for our words. Any word against God condemns us. So like everything else in Matthew, we’re all condemned unless the cross can deliver us. It’s not difficult to enter the kingdom, it’s impossible. Without the cross.

- Verses 46-50—Jesus’ father Joseph died before Jesus’ ministry years. He gives no special attention to His mother and brothers. His true brothers are “whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”

Applications:

- (1) *Be sure that Jesus Himself is held above (is more important than) your ceremonial worship of Him. Jesus is greater than the temple and the Sabbath.*
- (2) *There are those for Christ and those against Christ and nothing in-between.*
- (3) *The only miraculous sign that is the foundation of Christianity is Christ's resurrection. An evil generation seeks for signs instead of righteousness.*
- (4) *Mary is no greater than anyone else who does the will of God. All who do the will of God are disciples of Christ.*

Chapter 13

- Jesus went out of Peter's house to the Sea of Galilee. The crowd gathered around, so He got into a boat, and He spoke to them in parables.
- Parables—A parable is a figure of speech or a story in which a moral or spiritual truth is illustrated by an analogy drawn from everyday experience. Parables (in this chapter) present truth about the kingdom in the church age. The lesson is the main point of the story not in the story itself. The story of a parable could be about bad guys, an unjust judge or a dishonest steward. We must look for the truth illustrated by the story. The truths in these parables are called mysteries (v. 11) because they were not revealed in the Old Testament. They are revealed by Christ only to those who are rightly related to Him. The Jewish leaders' rejection of Christ reached a peak in the last chapter, although that rejection would continue and strengthen. Jesus now turns His instruction to His disciples about the present dispensation which Paul calls a mystery in Ephesian 3:5-6, which we call the church age, which Paul says was not revealed in the Old Testament prophets, and it fits between the first and second comings of Christ. So chapter 13 represents a major division in Christ's ministry. Now He is giving them parables for the church age they were going to go into.
- The first parable is about the four different soils. The sower is Christ, or a disciple of Christ, and the seed is the Word of God and the message of the kingdom of God, but the variable is the soils. And the point is about understanding the kingdom of God.
 - The first soil, the hard soil, is a negative understanding. It is a soil that is already used for something else. It is beside the road. So the seed doesn't penetrate it at all. It's eaten by the birds. I call it negative understanding or negative preparation.
 - The second soil is no preparation or very shallow understanding, so the seed springs up but it doesn't develop any roots.
 - The third soil is the weedy soil. It is a competitive understanding or preparation.
 - The fourth soil is the good soil which is prepared and able to understand and is reproductive.
- He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
- The disciples asked why He spoke in parables. Jesus said it is because they will understand it and the others won't. The understanding of the mystery, the new revelation from God, is granted to the disciples but not to the others. It's all about understanding.
- Verse 12—Whoever has an understanding of the kingdom of God, more of an understanding of the kingdom of God will be given to him. Whoever does not have an understanding of the kingdom of God, even what little he has will be taken away from him.
- That's why He speaks in parables. Then He gives illustrations of it: hearing and seeing.
- If you lack understanding, you can hear without hearing, see without seeing.
- There's four ways you can look at the understanding. That is the four soils.
- Verse 15—The heart of the people is dull. Religion like that of the Pharisees' dulls the heart, which is our moral, spiritual sensitivity. That's why they focus on sacrifice and not on compassion.
- Howard Hendricks, "Winning comes with (1) discernment, (2) anticipatory thinking, (3) walking with the wise, (4) and thoughtful assessment." (1) Discerning what is right and wrong, (2) thinking ahead or anticipating what will happen, (3) being around the right kind of people who are wise, and (4) evaluate or think through. Three evaluation questions: (1) What did I do well? (2) What did I do poorly? (3) What can I change?
- Then Jesus explained the parable to the disciples. Notice that the key element is that the first soil does not understand and the fourth soil does understand.
- In the first soil, the seed is snatched away from their heart. The soil has been used for something else.
- The second soil has no understanding because of external pressures, persecutions.
- The third soil can endure the external pressures but not the internal suffering. This soil has two problems: the worries (when I don't believe God has my best interest in mind or that God is not in control of my circumstances) of the world and the wealth of the world (the idea is that I would be better off if I had more wealth). So one or both of these ideas keep the seed from developing in this soil.

- The good soil has understanding. Understanding is the link between hearing and reproducing. If you are not reproducing it, then you didn't understand it. You only heard it.
- The only good soil is the last soil. Doesn't have anything to do with salvation (first soil not saved, last soil saved, for example). It's about understanding.
- The amount of reproduction doesn't seem to be relevant. Some of the good soil produces a hundredfold, some sixty, etc., all of which are good soil. So we should determine the good soil not by the amount of reproduction but by the fact of reproduction.
- Verses 24-30, 34-43—The parable of the wheat and the tares—The kingdom of heaven is the wheat, the field is the earth. Then there is bad seed, tares, sown in with the wheat by the enemy. The tares grow up with the wheat. The servants of the landowner ask how the tares got there. The owner says that an enemy has sown it. It's not by change. They ask if the owner wants then to gather it up. The owner says not to gather the tares because they will uproot the wheat also. This uprooting of the wheat is judging the world. Don't judge the world, let the angels do that at the harvest time. The difference between that and the teaching of Israel—it was to judge its world. Now we are not to judge the world. The angels will do it at the harvest.
- The next parable is about the mustard seed. Here the kingdom is very small but it will become global. Even unbelievers will benefit from it. It's also a characteristic of God's kingdom in general. Every effort for the kingdom of God seems small at the beginning but then it somehow grows. The mustard seed is smaller than any other garden seeds yet it grows to such a huge tree.
- Verse 33—Parable of the leaven and the bread. The kingdom is like leaven that a woman hides in the flour. Just because leaven is used of evil in other passages doesn't mean it is evil in this parable. The point in this context is how it spreads. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is the leaven. This parable has a similar idea to the last one. Here the kingdom of heaven is hidden in the world and grows by the nature of itself to penetrate all the world. With the mustard seed it is about the size. With the leaven it's about the impact or penetration.
- Verses 34-43—The explanation of the wheat and the tares. A summary judgment of all unbelievers. In verse 41, the angels are taking out from amongst the kingdom the stumbling blocks. In verse 42, the furnace of fire sounds like the Great White Throne in Revelation 20:11-15. Verse 43 sounds like the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22.
- He who has ears (understanding) let him hear (understand).
- Verse 44—Parable about the treasure. The kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man finds. He finds the treasure, buries the treasure, sells all he has, and buys the field. The man happens upon the kingdom almost by chance. He realizes its value and hides it again. The point is, the value is so great, he gives up everything to get it.
- Verse 45-46—Parable about a costly pearl. Here the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant who is seeking pearls, and he finds one of great value, so he sells all the others he has in order to get the one of great value. This is similar to the treasure parable. The difference is that the kingdom of God is not found by accident but by the process of seeking. So some people come to the kingdom of God, from their viewpoint, almost by chance. Others are actually seeking, looking for it.
- Verses 47-50—Parable about the dragnet. The kingdom is like a dragnet, a sort of judgment. The point is that God is like a fisherman who takes the initiative to throw out the net until it's full, representing the end of time and God's plan. Then He separates the believers from the unbelievers.
- Verse 52—The parable of the houseowner. A scribe who has become a disciple is like the head of the house who brings out both old and new treasures. It's like the Old and New Testaments. This is a very unique disciple in the kingdom of heaven, one who has a knowledge of the Old Testament, like a scribe, but who discovers the truth of the New Testament (such as the apostle Paul).
- When He finished the parables, there is an attack on Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth. He teaches there, and they wonder where He got this teaching. "Is this not the carpenter's son?" It's a general word for a craftsman who builds with his hands, either wood or stone. Names His brothers and sisters. So they took offense at Him. Same word as He said to John the Baptist, don't stumble over Me.

Applications:

- (1) *The impact (changed lives of others) of our ministry will always be directly related to people's ability to understand the truth of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven is only available to those who are available to the kingdom of heaven, and availability is an ability to understand it.*
- (2) *Things which keep people from understanding the kingdom of God:*
 - The devil's already implanted a different understanding of the kingdom of God*
 - A shallow emotional understanding of the kingdom of God*
 - No theological understanding of the roots of the kingdom of God*

—*The worries of the world and the deceit of riches, that is, mixing the understanding of success in the world with success in the kingdom of God*

- (3) *There will be true believers and false believers mixed together until the end of the age. Do not bring about an inquisition on false believers. You'll know them because they won't bear fruit in keeping with the kingdom of God.*
- (4) *Expect the kingdom of God to start small and barely be noticeable.*
- (5) *The kingdom of God will spread seemingly by itself, like leaven in flour.*
- (6) *The kingdom of God may be found by seeking for it or it may seem like one comes upon it by chance. In either case, if it's understood, it will be seen as the greatest value of anything.*
- (7) *The kingdom of God is the harvest of God and the judgment of God.*
- (8) *The kingdom of God is a special blessing to one who understands it from the Old Testament.*

Chapter 14

- In northern Galilee, Herod the Tetrarch heard the news about Jesus. This was Herod Antipas, who reigned from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D. He reigned in Galilee and Perea. His brother Philip had a wife named Herodias, and they had a daughter name Salome. Herodias divorced him and married Herod Antipas.
- When Herod heard about Jesus, he thought John the Baptist had risen from the dead. He had put John in prison because John had said it was wrong for Herod to have his brother's wife. At his birthday party, Salome dances for him, and he promises her anything up to half the kingdom. Her mother asks for the head of John the Baptist on a platter. He didn't want to do that, but he honored his oath. (Don't make an oath!)
- So John was beheaded in prison.
- Why did John tell Herod not to have his brother's wife? In the church age we are only to discipline those in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5). But John the Baptist wasn't in the church age. He was an Old Testament prophet addressing Israel. John did not complain about the immorality of Rome in general, but only what was ruling Israel.
- Why didn't Jesus make any move to release John from prison? Or even criticize Herod for beheading John? Or for having his brother's wife? Christ refused to talk to Herod. Jesus is now introducing the church age and training the twelve to start the church. Correcting the morals of the government was not part of that.
- Also notice that this is a good example of meekness, or controlled strength. Christ had the power to wipe out Herod but stayed focused on His calling. John's imprisonment and death were part of the program of God. John was not a victim of Herod's wife but a part of God's plan.
- Verse 13—Jesus withdrew by Himself, apparently to meditate on the death of John.
- Verse 14—Christ felt compassion for the crowds and healed their sick.
- Verse 15—The disciples come to Jesus and ask Him to send the crowd away to get something to eat.
- This is the only miracle of Christ's that is repeated in all four gospels.
- Jesus told them to give the people something to eat.
- The disciples say they only have five loaves and two fish.
- They brought it to Jesus. He prayed for the food. There was enough. Anything with Christ is sufficient.
- There were 5,000 men plus women and children, so it could have been 15,000 to 25,000 people.
- He made the disciples get into a boat to go ahead of Him to the other side, from Bethsaida (east) to Gennesaret (west).
- After Jesus sent the crowds away, He went into the mountain to pray.
- The boat was a long way from land, between 3 and 6 in the morning, the waves battered the boat.
- Jesus came to them on the water. They see Him and are afraid.
- Verse 27—Jesus says for them to take courage, it is Jesus.
- Peter says, "If it is You, command me to come out on the water." So Jesus invites him to come. So Peter does it, but becomes aware of the wind and starts to sink. Peter gives us the shortest prayer in the Bible, "Lord, save me!"
- Jesus stretches out His hand and saves him. Then He talks to him about the same problem they've had all along—little faith.
- When they got into the boat, the wind stopped, and they worshipped Him and said, "Surely You are God's Son."
- Verses 24-33—It's a short trip, but the wind drove them out into the middle of the Sea (John 6:19).
 - Jesus could have come sooner, before the storm.
 - Jesus could have calmed the storm or He could have waited until later at night.
 - He came to them through the storm, i.e., through the danger.
 - They weren't lost or in trouble. They just thought they were. Christ knew exactly where they were.
 - His command to take courage and not be afraid was in the midst of the storm (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

- Peter’s decision to step out of the boat was honored by Christ.
- It was Christ who kept Peter from sinking, i.e., Christ took Peter as far as his faith would take him.
- Peter began to sink when the wind took his focus off from Christ. That is a good definition of doubt—to take your focus off from Christ. We do not call people to have faith. We call them to direct their faith toward Christ. Everyone has faith. The question is, What is your faith in? Doubt is to lose focus.
- The situation resulted in worship of Christ.
- Verse 34—They get to Gennesaret. The people recognize Christ and bring the sick to Him. Some wanted just to touch His cloak, and they were healed.

Applications:

- (1) *If you want people to understand your point, illustrate it with real people that everyone knows. John would have had little impact if he talked about having someone else’s wife in general. Because he pointed out Herod, he had impact. But he was in prison and beheaded, too. The more specific you are, the more trouble you will be in, but the better you will communicate!*
- (2) *Our response to political evil in the church age is to ignore the political evil and have compassion on the people.*
- (3) *Whatever you have, plus Christ, is sufficient to meet your needs. Your five loaves and two fish can feed your 5,000.*
- (4) *Rather than keep us **from** turmoil, God seems to come to us **through** the turmoil.*
- (5) *Faith is to focus. Faith in Christ is to focus on Christ. Little faith is when our focus gets diverted into the storms around us.*
- (6) *When God comes to us through the storms in our lives, it inspires the faithful to worship. Counseling, for example, which tries to keep people from turmoil, may be keeping them from worship because God gives them peace in the midst of the storm. If your objective is to make people more comfortable in this life, then you will bend the Scriptures.*

Chapter 15

- The Pharisees and scribes come to Jesus from Jerusalem. These are the “important” Jewish leaders. They want to know why Jesus’ disciples break the traditions of the elders—specifically, they don’t wash their hands when they eat. They are talking about a ceremonial washing. The purpose was to remove ritual defilement from touching something unclean, like a Gentile. They had to have enough water to fill 1 1/2 eggshells. The water was to first be poured on both hands with the fingers pointed upward, and the water must run down to the wrists and then drop off the wrists to the ground. If any of the water splashed back up on the hands, it was defiled, and you had to do it all again. The process was repeated with the fingers pointed down, with the fist (not the fingers) rubbing the other hand. The disciples did not follow this procedure.
- Jesus answer the question with a question. Why do your disciples transgress the Word of God for the sake of your traditions? For example, God said to honor your father and mother, but you say you can’t do it because you gave that money somewhere else. So you invalidate the Word of God for the sake of keeping your traditions, making them higher than the Word of God.
- The Judean Pharisees had more prestige and learning than the Galilean scribes.
 - (1) They were intentionally external in their traditions so anyone could keep them no matter what the condition of their heart. It was a religion of the masses which only required diligence.
 - (2) It was concerned with keeping rules, not dealing with sin.
 - (3) It was concerned about appearing righteous before people not being righteous before God.
 - (4) It focused on the tradition of the elders, not on the Word of God. They would say the traditions interpreted the commandments. Jesus said the traditions invalidated the commandments.
- Verse 8—The people honor God with their lips but not their heart. Exactly, that way it could be done.
- Verse 10—Jesus called the crowd to Him and said to them three parables:
 - (1) Verse 11—Not what enters the mouth that defiles a man but what proceeds out of the mouth that defiles a man. The disciples told Jesus He offended (stumbling block) the Pharisees. What should you do if you learn you have offended someone? First, did you sin to cause their stumbling? And confess that sin to God. Then you should help the other person understand your sin (and possibly theirs, if it is an issue). But if it is the truth that has offended them, then help your disciples understand the truth, and if you cannot help the person, then leave them alone. Explain the things to your disciples, explain why the person is offended at the truth.
 - (2) Verse 13—Every plant which My Father has not planted shall be uprooted. Verse 14 says to let them alone because they are blind guides of a blind.

- (3) If a blind man guides a blind man, they'll both fall into the pit.
- Explain it, asks Peter. Jesus explains the first parable. First He told them they should have understood it. Verse 19—It's from the heart you have murders, etc. and that's what defiles a man, not not washing your hands (outside of a man).
- So the Pharisees stayed offended, and Jesus tells His disciples to let them alone.
- Verses 21-28—Jesus goes to Tyre and Sidon, northwest, outside of Israel.
- A Gentile woman comes pleading for mercy. She gets rejected three times. The disciples want her to leave.
- Finally, Jesus says her faith is great. What does that mean?
 - (1) Come from a position of humility. Someone asking for mercy is asking for something undeserved.
 - (2) She had a rightly directed reverence of Christ, in worship.
 - (3) She had to overcome barriers apparently put up by Christ. First, neglect, no answer at all. Then an answer that was "no" (He's only going to the lost house of Israel). Then an answer which seems like no hope.
 - (4) To reason with God, or content with God from His perspective, recognizing His greatness. She argued with Him.
 - (5) Persistence in worship, directing her reverence toward Him in humility.
- Matthew records this example of Gentiles having as much, or more than, faith in Israel, in preparation for the church age, which will include Gentiles and Jews together.
- God gives us opportunities to show great faith.
- Verse 29—Jesus went to a mountain, and large crowds came for healing. The crowds glorified God when they saw the healing. There were 4,000. The purpose of the gathering of 4,000 was the same as the gathering of the 5,000—for healing, not teaching. The healing was to fulfill prophecy (11:5), it was to have people glorify God, and it was to show compassion for the sick. These were all contrary-to-nature healings.
- In 16:9-10 there is another problem about bread, and Jesus asked them if they learned anything from the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000.

Applications

- (1) *We all come from this world with customs that seem right because we are raised in them. But they are traditions of men, not the Word of God, so be careful not to negate the Word of God for our traditions.*
- (2) *Our traditions can be recognized because they will be concerned with:*
 - They will be rules of behavior rather than sin*
 - They will be about fitting in with society not being righteous before God*
 - They will have to do with controlling the masses not with the heart*
- (3) *Don't try to offend people. Be a peacemaker. But don't try to not offend people if it means compromising the truth of the Word of God.*
- (4) *There's no spiritual significance in any mechanical act (v. 11-20).*
- (5) *Great faith grows out of (among other things) a context which seems like barriers given by God (v. 21-28).*
- (6) *Be compassionate to the sick, the needy, and the hurting. Do all the good you can for everyone you can every time you can.*

Chapter 16

- The Pharisees and Sadducees (from Jerusalem) come to test Christ and asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. This is the first time these two groups are mentioned together. Normally they were enemies. Nothing like a common enemy (Christ) to unite people. Those who don't believe in miracles (Sadducees) come and ask for a miracle.
- Jesus asks how they can figure out the weather from looking at the sky, yet they can't figure out the signs of the time. An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign (12:39). John 20:29 says, "Blessed are those who do not see but believe). Hebrews 11:1, faith is the evidence of things not seen. There's something evil about seeking for a sign. It's adulterous in that you leave your first love, God, for some miracle or mystical sign. It's the sin of being more interested in what God does than in God.
- They were looking for a proof-sign rather than looking at the character of Christ. The deity of Christ was to be found in His character not in His signs. He was like the God of the Old Testament.
- No sign will be given but one, the sign of Jonah. This time He did not explain what that was. He just left them and went away.
- The disciples went to the other side of the Sea, but they had forgotten to bring bread. Jesus tells them to watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees, and they think He is talking about bread. Jesus asks them, "Don't you understand—I just fed 5,000 and 4,000, and you are worried about bread? Then they understood it was the teaching of the Pharisees He was talking about (v. 12). Leaven is yeast which causes the bread to rise.

They kept a small piece of dough from every bread to use in the next bread. The word is used to mean “influence”—it is good influence in 13:33 and bad influence here. In Luke 12:1 Christ says the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. The leaven of the Sadducees is never identified, but it is probably materialism. Both focused on this life and reward from men rather than eternal rewards from God. False teaching, like leaven, penetrates.

- Verse 13—Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, up at the base of Mt. Hermon in the far north. It was originally named Panias after the Greek god Pan. According to mythology, Pan was born in a cave there. Caesar Augustus had given the area to Herod the Great, who built a temple there in honor of the emperor. Herod’s son Philip the Tetrarch inherited the land, and he greatly enlarged the city and renamed it after Caesar and added the name Philip to gain honor for himself and to separate it from the Caesarea on the coast. It’s about 40 km north of the Sea of Galilee.
- This is a last retreat with Jesus and His disciples. Jesus asks them, “Who do people say that I am?”
- Answers: John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah, one of the prophets.
- Then Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”
- Peter answers, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- Jesus says Peter is blessed because the Father has revealed this to him (see also John 6:44).
- Jesus then told Peter that He would build His church on Peter, and the gates of hell would not overpower it.
- Jesus is the big rockbed rock (*petra*) (see also Isaiah 44:8, God is the rock, therefore Jesus is saying He is the God of Isaiah 44:8), Peter is the small rocks (*petros*) broken off the big rock, and then there is small gravel rocks (*lithos*) (the church in 1 Peter 2:5). The “rock” (*petra*) upon which Christ is building the church is Peter’s statement, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The whole point of the conversation was to identify who Christ was (it’s how Christ started the conversation, “Who do people say I am? Who do you say I am?”)
- “I will build My church”—He did not ask for any help, either from Peter or the disciples. Jesus was simply informing them what He was going to do. Our assignment is to make disciples. Don’t confuse our job with God’s job. From time to time, God lets us in on what He is doing. But building the church is God’s job. Nothing, even hell, i.e. Satan’s power, will prevent Jesus from building His church.
- Verse 19—“I’ll give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which is the church in the coming age (Revelation 1:18; 3:7, Christ has the keys to hell). It’s meaning/interpretation is best seen in its fulfillment (Acts 2, 8, 10) where Peter brought the church age to the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit came to the people through Peter, fulfilling Acts 1:8 as a plan outline. After bringing the Holy Spirit to Cornelius in Caesarea (the port gateway to the world), Peter was no longer necessary to bring the Holy Spirit. So, Peter was the first “pope,” but there was no second pope. This unique leadership was for one particular task for a particular time. Peter had authority connected to heaven, of binding and loosing, referring primarily to the coming of the Holy Spirit (such as when Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, Peter put them to death). But it had nothing to do with being a bishop of Rome. No biblical evidence Peter was ever in Rome. Peter had no administrative role. The Jerusalem church was headed by James. Paul left a plurality of elders.
- Verse 20—Jesus warns the disciples not to tell that He was the Messiah, probably because the masses would take it politically.
- Verse 21—They would go to Jerusalem, He would suffer, and be killed. (About six months before the crucifixion.) This is the first prediction of the events of the last week.
- Verse 22—Peter doesn’t like that, so he rebukes Jesus. Jesus then tells Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to Me.” Before He spoke from God (v. 17) now he speaks from Satan. Peter was nothing in either case. This shows that Satan’s goals in the temptations was to keep Christ from going to the cross. Jesus identified that it was a Satanic goal to keep Him from going to the cross.
- Jesus tells Peter that his problem is that he is not setting his mind on God’s interests but on man’s. This is how to discern if an activity is of God or Satan. Whether it has to do with man’s interests or God’s. It’s how to test the spirits. Apply this to counseling advice, conflict resolutions, music, forms of worship, prayer—is it serving God’s interests or man’s?
- Verses 24-27—Jesus says to His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me” (four overlapping things):
 - (1) deny yourself
 - (2) take up your cross
 - (3) follow Me
 - (4) lose your life for My sake
- The purpose of this is for profit (verse 26). What profit is there in gaining the world and losing your soul? That has to do with rewards, God paying everyone (verse 27).
- A significant paragraph to the disciples about discipleship, which is defined as “anyone who wishes to come after Me.”

- Verse 28—The most obvious interpretation would be chapter 17, the transfiguration. All three synoptic gospels put this statement right before the transfiguration.

Applications

- (1) *Look for the Word of God, not miracles, to determine the truth on which you base your faith. The only miracle that should define our faith is the resurrection of Jesus.*
- (2) *Beware of the influence of groups which put value on this side of the grave, whether conservatives or liberals (leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees).*
- (3) *The most important question in life is, “Who do you say Jesus is?”*
- (4) *The key test of the spirits, with respect to any theology or program, is, “Does it set your mind on God’s interests or man’s?” The biggest influence on the American church is Christian humanism. Our churches are designed to attract people and serve people and keep people coming, always to have more people coming.*
- (5) *The path of discipleship is a pursuit of heavenly profit, obtained by denying your old sinful self and take up your new self as a death march (taking up your cross) and following Christ to eternal rewards.*

Chapter 17

- In same area of northern Galilee, six days later, probably walking up Mt. Hermon (9,000 feet high), Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John.
- He was transfigured (changed, *metamorpho*) in front of them, such as when a butterfly comes from a cocoon. It reminds us of the description John gives of Jesus in Revelation 1. When we are raptured, we also will be changed (1 Corinthians 15).
- Moses and Elijah appeared, talking with Jesus. Probably the disciples recognized them because they greeted Jesus.
- Apparently the 3 listened for awhile, then Peter wanted to make 3 tabernacles, one for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. It was the time the Jews celebrated the feast of the booths (tabernacles). During these 7 days, the people were to live in tents made from boughs of trees, symbolizing coming through the wilderness out of Egypt (Leviticus 23:33-44). In Luke 9:31, He tells us more of their conversation, that they spoke of what would be accomplished in Jerusalem. They spoke of Jesus’ departure (exodus), also reminding Peter of the feast of the booths.
- Peter was interrupted by a voice from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased. Listen to Him.” This is the *petra* of the last chapter.
- The disciples fell down, afraid. Jesus told them to get up. When they did, Elijah and Moses were gone. Then Jesus told them not to tell anyone until after the resurrection.
- The disciples ask about Elijah again, and Jesus says he will come, and they understood He meant John the Baptist.

Observations

- (1) *The purpose of the transfiguration may have been to show the disciples there was no contradiction between the cross and the kingdom.*
 - (2) *It also showed that Christ was consistent with the law (represented by Moses) and the prophets (represented by Elijah). His crucifixion wasn’t inconsistent either. It was what they were discussing. It was confirmed by the voice of God the Father (3 witnesses, as required in the law).*
 - (3) *It has several benefits for us as well.*
 - It shows Christ’s true glory. Peter says they were eye witnesses (2 Peter 1:16, Revelation 1:13-16).*
 - It confirms a body after death. They were not spirits or ghosts. They were the same people they were on earth.*
 - It disproves the theory of soul sleep.*
 - It disproves reincarnation. Moses and Elijah were no reincarnated into someone else. They were the same people they were on earth before (see Luke 16:19-31).*
- Verse 14—When they came down from the mountain, to the crowd gathered around the other disciples, a man comes asking for mercy because his son was a lunatic. He falls into the fire and into the water. It was common that open fire pits burned all day for heat and cooking. The man said he brought the son to Jesus’ disciples while Jesus was up on the mount, but the disciples couldn’t heal him. Jesus says they are “a perverted generation.” Jesus seems a little put out with the disciples because they didn’t cast the demon out. So He tells them to bring the boy to Him. Jesus cast the demon out of the boy.
 - The disciples ask why they couldn’t do that. They seem to be more focused on what they could do than on the power of God to heal this boy. Jesus said their problem was “little faith,” the disease of the disciple, trusting God for some things some of the time. If you had the faith of a mustard seed, you could move a mountain from

here to there. Nothing would be impossible.

- Verse 21—This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting—This verse is not found in the best manuscripts of Matthew. It is found in Mark 9:29. However “and fasting” are not in any manuscripts in any of the gospels. So the statement is about prayer in Mark. Nothing about fasting.
- Verse 24—They came to Capernaum from Caesarea Philippi area. Those who collected the two drachma tax came to collect from the disciples. This was a government approved tax that the Romans allowed the Jewish leaders to collect for the operation of the Jerusalem temple. It was about two days’ wages for the average worker. It was originally instituted for the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 30:11-16). It was for every male 20-years-old and older. It’s also called a half-shekel tax. When the temple replaced the tabernacle, this tax continued. (Nehemiah 10:32 reduced it because the people were so poor.)
- Peter said, “yes,” but then Peter asked Jesus if they should pay it. Jesus asks, “From whom do the kings of the earth collect taxes, from their own sons or strangers?” Peter said, “From strangers.” Jesus said they were not strangers, but to not offend, they would pay the tax.

Applications

- (1) *Saints who have died have a real material, though not physical flesh and blood, body, and they are the same people they were on earth.*
- (2) *Christ is God’s beloved Son. So if you want to know what God says or what God is like, listen to Jesus.*
- (3) *The disease of discipleship is not lack of faith but little faith, and little faith is trusting God somewhat for some things some of the time.*
- (4) *If it’s appropriate, offend false teachers but not people without understanding. Contrast Nicodemus with the woman at the well, and Christ’s response to the Pharisees and Sadducees with those collecting the tax.*

Chapter 18