

# UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Study of the Gospel of Matthew

Joshua Gordon

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# PREFACE

Thank you for purchasing this volume in the Understanding the New Testament series. I'm grateful that you've chosen to spend your time studying God's word, and I'm thankful that your support allows me to continue preaching and teaching the Scriptures. It is my hope that this material serves you well and strengthens both your understanding and your faith.

This series was designed with a simple goal: to help ordinary Christians read the New Testament more carefully and more confidently. These studies are not devotional guides, nor are they academic commentaries. They are careful readings of the biblical text itself. My aim is to let the inspired writers speak for themselves by paying attention to context, structure, argument flow, and key terms.

You don't need a seminary education to benefit from this study. I've tried to write in a way that is accessible to anyone who sincerely wants to understand Scripture more deeply, whether this is your first serious attempt at studying a New Testament book or you've been reading the Bible for many years. When original-language insights are necessary to clarify meaning, they are explained clearly and simply. No prior knowledge of Greek is assumed or needed.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible. However, I encourage you to compare different translations as you study. Seeing how different translations render a passage can sharpen understanding and highlight important nuances in the text.

My approach throughout this series is straightforward: context governs meaning. Each book of the New Testament was written to a real audience in a real historical setting. By paying attention to literary structure, historical background, and the author's stated purpose, we're better able to grasp what the Spirit intended to communicate. My goal is not to promote a system of theology, but to understand what the text says and allow it to shape our thinking.



# *How to Use This Book*

To benefit most from this study, I recommend the following approach:

**1. Read the biblical passage first.**

Before consulting the commentary material, read the section of Scripture carefully. Try to understand its flow and argument on your own.

**2. Read through the study material alongside the text.**

Each section is arranged according to natural divisions in the biblical book. The heading at the top of each page identifies the passage under consideration. As you work through the comments, keep your Bible open and compare what is written here with the text itself.

**3. Read the passage again.**

After working through the notes, return to the Scripture and read it once more. Often clarity comes on the second or third reading, once structure and emphasis become more apparent.

**4. Reflect and apply.**

While this book focuses primarily on understanding the text, Scripture was not given merely for information but for transformation. Ask how the truths revealed in the passage affect your faith, conduct, and perspective.

This material is designed for individual study, but it can also serve as a helpful resource for small groups or Bible classes. The most important thing is that the text remains central. Let Scripture lead the study.

## *A Word of Encouragement*

The New Testament was not written to scholars alone. It was written to congregations, families, and individual believers seeking to follow Christ faithfully. Careful reading is not reserved for professionals. It is the privilege of every Christian.

If you approach the text patiently, prayerfully, and honestly, you will grow in understanding. You don't have to understand everything the first time you read through the book. Any knowledge gained about God's Word serves you to better attain His will. The Lord has revealed Himself in His word. Our task is to listen carefully.

## *A Prayer for the Reader*

May God grant you wisdom as you study. May He open your mind to understand the Scriptures more clearly. May your confidence in His word deepen and your knowledge of His will grow. Finally, may the truths you discover shape your heart, strengthen your faith, and guide your life.

Amen.

## *A Brief Request*

If you find this study helpful, I would be grateful if you would consider leaving a brief, honest review. Reviews help other readers discover these studies and allow this work of teaching to continue reaching those who are searching for a clearer understanding of Scripture.

If you want to leave a review, browse to your recent purchases in Amazon and click on this book.

Thank you again for your interest in studying the New Testament carefully and faithfully.

~ 2 Timothy 2:15 ~

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

# INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

## *Author*

- As early as ~100 A.D., this gospel was ascribed to Matthew (Levi), the apostle
- Many of the early church writers (like Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Origen) all affirm Matthew as the author
- Every single copy or fragment of a manuscript that we have attributes this gospel to Matthew
  - In other words, no one ever cites this as being written by anyone BUT Matthew
- It was widely circulated in the early church, and no argument against his authorship was ever made

## *Date*

- There's a lot of debate surrounding the dating of Matthew
  - Many place it in the latter part of the 1st century (~90 A.D.) or even later
  - There are also a lot of people who argue for a date more around 45-50 A.D.
- As the gospel to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, I think if the gospel was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., that Matthew would have mentioned it
- Since he does not, then a date earlier than this must be assigned
- Also, according to Catholic tradition (for what that's worth to you), Matthew was martyred in Ethiopia in 60 A.D., so that would also be a limiting factor, as well
- In my opinion, Matthew was the first gospel written
- With the Jews being God's people and the Gentiles not being introduced into the Church until Acts 10, it would be necessary for a gospel account written to them long before one was necessary for Gentiles and Romans (Mark's primary audience)
- Many of the early church writers named Matthew's gospel as the first written; this wasn't challenged until 1838

## *Message and Purpose*

- It is clear from the book that it was written to Jews to demonstrate that Jesus is Messiah and King
- Matthew quotes from the OT just over 50 times, and makes at least 45 more allusions to OT scriptures
  - Many of these are references to Messianic prophecy (around 40)
- He also includes the genealogy of Jesus in the 1st chapter, which was very important to the Jews

## *Connection to the Gospel of Mark*

- We can't talk about Matthew without also mentioning Mark
- The Gospel of Mark contains 661 verses, 600 of which are word-for-word included in Matthew
  - That's almost 91% of Mark that is also in Matthew
- It's very clear that one of these men used the other's work as a reference
- It was originally thought that Mark used Matthew and just stripped out all the "Jewish stuff" as he wrote to a Roman audience and they wouldn't know what it all meant
- More recently, scholars think that Matthew used Mark as a foundation and then added all the "Jewish stuff" to it
- I don't think it really matters which came first, as God has given us the Bible He wants us to have

# CHAPTER 1

## *Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17)*

- Matthew starts out with a genealogy of Jesus, traced through Joseph, His earthly father
- Verse 1 sets the tone for what Matthew is trying to prove with his gospel – that Jesus is the rightful heir to David's throne as the Messiah
- Notice he immediately states that Jesus is
  - The Messiah
  - A descendant of David
  - And a descendant of Abraham
- To be considered a Jew, you HAD to be able to trace your lineage back to Abraham through Isaac
- 2 Samuel 7:12-13 is where God told David that his son would sit on his throne forever
  - This is why the term “son of David” became a term interchangeable with “the Messiah”
- Verse 17 tells us that Matthew broke the genealogy into 3 sections
  - Abraham to David – the “glory days” of Israel and the Patriarchs
  - David to the captivity – the crumbling of Israel because of their sins
  - Captivity to Jesus's birth – the “dark days” of waiting for the Messiah
- Not meant to be a genealogy that mentions everyone from Abraham down, but rather a placing of Jesus within the history of Israel, but still accomplishing His establishment as a Jew and son of David
- Perhaps one of the more shocking things about this genealogy is that it highlights
- Israel's persistent sin
  - Jacob (vs. 2) spent most of his life as a deceiver
  - Judah (vs. 3) slept with prostitutes
  - Rahab (vs. 5) and Tamar (vs. 3) were prostitutes
  - The adultery of David with Bathsheba is highlighted in vs. 6
  - Hezekiah (vs. 9) was a good king, but Manasseh (vs. 10), his son, was the worst king of Judah and brought sin into the people from which they never recovered
- Matthew didn't whitewash the list and make it look good
- He marched every black sheep out in full view
- Vss. 13-16 round out the genealogy with a list of nobodies until you get to Jesus's name

## *Foretelling Jesus's Birth (Matthew 1:18-25)*

- Once Jesus's relationship to Abraham and David is established, Matthew gets straight into Jesus's life, starting with His conception
  - Mary was engaged to Joseph
  - Before they were actually married, she was found to be pregnant
  - Joseph could have had her stoned for this, but decides to "send her away secretly" instead, as he didn't want her dead or even disgraced
  - Before he does this, however, an angel visits him in a dream and tells him that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and not another man, so he should marry her
- Notice in vs. 21 that the angel tells Joseph that Jesus will save people from their sins
  - Matthew highlights the sins of the people in the genealogy and then makes sure to emphasize straight away that Jesus changes that
- In vss. 22 and 23, we get our first OT quotation, and it drives straight at Jesus being the Messiah
- This answers the question of how Jesus will save people from their sins
- He is "God with us"
- Salvation can't come from within humanity, as we are all sinful
  - Romans 3:23
- We NEED God to do it
  - Our hope can only come from the Messiah
- After his dream, Joseph goes through with marrying Mary
- Because it was known that Mary was pregnant, Jewish society would see this as an admission by Joseph that the baby was his and they'd had relations before being formally married
  - And that's exactly what happened (Matthew 13:55)

# CHAPTER 2

## *Visit from the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12)*

- We jump straight to Jesus's birth in Matthew
- Some magi (or wise men) show up at the gate of Jerusalem inquiring about the birth of the King of the Jews
  - Magi were a caste of priests who studied astrology and magic
- Coming from the east meant Arabia, Babylon, Persia, or possibly India
  - In other words, these are Gentiles
  - Almost certainly more than 3 of them; a huge entourage is most likely, due to the distance they had to travel
- Say they've come to worship the king
  - God uses their modern science to show the need to worship Jesus
- When Herod hears of this (vs. 3), he is troubled and so is all of Jerusalem with him
  - There's no joy that "the King" has been born
- In fact, Herod has to call together the chief priests to inquire where the King is supposed to be born
  - They tell him that the King is supposed to be born in Bethlehem
  - It is clear from their answer that they understood this to be the Messiah as they quote the Messianic prophecy of Micah 5:2
- These Gentile magi are more ready for Jesus than the Jews!
- Herod makes it appear that he wants to worship as well, so asks the magi to let him know exactly where the Messiah is at when they return
- They head to Bethlehem (which is only about 5 miles away)
- They find Jesus, worship Him, and present Him with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh
- They then head home another way because God warned them not to return to Jerusalem
- The Gentiles, then, give gifts to the King, but the Jews don't
  - Remember Matthew's reason for writing the gospel – Jesus was the Messiah, and you missed Him!
- Three responses to Jesus
  - Herod's response – hostility
  - Scribes and priests' response – indifference
  - Magi's response – sacrifice and worship

## *To Egypt and Back Again (Matthew 2:13-15)*

- After the magi leave, Joseph is visited by an angel in a dream and told to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt immediately
- Joseph does as instructed and leaves in the middle of the night for Egypt and they don't come back until Herod has died
- We have our next fulfilled prophecy – Hosea 11:1
  - It's worth mentioning that this prophecy is placed here instead of down when Joseph is told to return
- Interestingly, we see that safety for Jesus isn't in Israel but in Egypt
  - A sort of reverse Exodus has occurred

## *The Murder of Infants (Matthew 2:16-18)*

- When Herod realized the magi have tricked him and they aren't returning, he gives orders to kill all 2 year old and younger boys in the vicinity of Bethlehem
- Why two years old?
  - Remember he asked the magi the exact time the star appeared (Matthew 2:7)?
  - Apparently they first saw it about 2 years earlier
- Our next prophecy fulfilled is mentioned, this one from Jeremiah 31:15
  - In Jeremiah 31:16, God tells the people that they will return from the land of their enemies
  - While the murder of these children is horrible, the reason for it – the Messiah's arrival – is good news that should trigger hope instead of gloom

## *Called a Nazarene (Matthew 2:19-23)*

- Joseph has another dream with an angel telling him to go back to Israel because Herod is dead
- Joseph hears that Archelaus, Herod's son, is ruling in place of his father in Judea so he doesn't want to go back there
- He's warned in another dream to go to Galilee
- Joseph heads back home to Nazareth (where he's not been for at least 3 years, and probably more like 5 or 6 years)
- We're given a third non-prophecy to end the chapter
  - This isn't a straight quote from any one prophet
  - Instead, Matthew attributes it to "the prophets"
- While not a prophecy from the OT, saying that He will be called a Nazarene does evoke certain thoughts
  - John 1:45-46
  - Acts 2:7-8
  - Matthew 26:73
- Being a Galilean from Nazareth meant you were a nobody; insignificant; uneducated; out of touch
  - Many prophecies in the OT mention that Jesus was not going to be anyone special by the world's standards
  - Isaiah 49:7; 53:2-3
- Matthew's audience understood what it would mean to say that Jesus was called a Nazarene

# CHAPTER 3

## *The Message of John (Matthew 3:1-6)*

- John is preaching in the wilderness of Judea
  - Interesting that he's not in Jerusalem or another city/town; why?
  - Isaiah 40:3
  - Clearly a pre-Messianic prophecy
- Wearing camel's hair clothing and a leather belt; eating wild honey and locusts
  - Identifies him as Elijah
  - 2 Kings 1:8
- Notice in verse 5 that the people are leaving Jerusalem, the towns, the Jordan region to go see John
  - Symbolically leaving the places of power of physical Israel, King Herod, scribes and Pharisees
- John is preaching that the Kingdom of God is about to arrive
  - "Get ready for the King's arrival"
- When a king traveled through an area, criers would go before him and let everyone know
  - This allowed people time to clean trash off the streets, getting things looking nice, etc.
- And how are these people supposed to get ready for Jesus?
  - Repent!
- Repentance is an understanding that you need to change your life because you are NOT okay before God
- They confessed their sins and were baptized (vs. 6)

## *The Warning of John (Matthew 3:7-10)*

- It's not just the people of Jerusalem, Judea, and the area around the Jordan coming to see John
- Many Pharisees and Sadducees are also there to get ready for the king's arrival (v. 7)
  - This is an indication that they understood this to be the Messiah
- Worth noting is that John didn't say they couldn't get baptized
  - He tells them they need to bear fruit in keeping with repentance
  - If they are truly repentant, their actions will show it; otherwise this is just another show that they perform for the people
  - He also tells them that being Jewish isn't enough; "God's people" is about to change, and being Jewish won't do anything for them then

## *The Proof of John (Matthew 3:11-12)*

- John says he's baptizing for repentance, but the one that comes after is far greater than he
- John isn't fit to remove his sandals
  - Anything to do with feet or shoes was considered filthy and undignified
  - Oftentimes, washing guests' feet was given to the lowliest slave
  - John is saying that he's not even worthy of doing the job of the lowest of the low for Jesus
- John says Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire
  - This isn't new; the OT talked about this pretty extensively
  - Isaiah 32:14-18; 44:3-5; Ezekiel 37:13-14; 39:28-29; Joel 2:28-31; Malachi 4:1-3
- John explains what this means in vs. 12
  - He's going to rid God's people of the chaff and keep the wheat

## *The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)*

- Jesus comes to John to be baptized
- John goes, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?”
  - Not unlike Peter 3ish years later when Jesus washes their feet in the Upper Room and Peter says, “No way that’s gonna happen!” (John 13:511)
  - John understands that Jesus is greater and he’s unworthy to remove his sandals
- Jesus gives John that “win”, but also says, “Do it just this time to fulfill all righteousness”
  - This isn’t Jesus saying that He needs to be baptized for forgiveness, but rather that it needs to be done to establish God’s order and path
  - Isaiah 9:6-7
  - Jesus is essentially telling John that this is the beginning of His kingship; His rule and the fulfilling of God’s plan
- What happens next is the visible proof of what Jesus has just told John
  - Vs. 16 states that as soon as Jesus has come up from the waters of baptism, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God came down upon Him as a dove
  - A voice from heaven says, “This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”
- Imagine the scene
  - A person repents, John baptizes them, and then the next person does the same thing; repeat and repeat – until Jesus
  - When He comes up out of the water, the heavens open the Spirit comes down
  - Everything stops – there’s no “next person”
- These words indicate that everything is about to change
- “This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased”
  - Isaiah 42:1-4
  - Psalm 2:1-9
- God declares that this is His Son
  - After this, there should be no debate about it at all
  - Yet, the religious elite and leaders of Israel refuse to believe it, even though there were Pharisees and Sadducees in attendance at the event
- God declares that this is the Messiah, whom He’s promised
  - Genesis 3:15
  - Isaiah 53:10-11
  - Psalm 22

# CHAPTER 4

## *Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)*

- Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness with the express purpose of His being tempted by the devil
- Vs. 2 says He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights
  - One can't help but see the parallel between Jesus's being in the wilderness for 40 days and nights and the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years after they refused to take the land of Canaan after the spies returned
  - Also, Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights when he received the Law, and he also fasted the entire time
  - Deuteronomy 9:9
- We'll see that the temptations Jesus underwent are the same ones that Israel had in the wilderness
  - Jesus succeeds where Israel failed, though
- The first temptation is to turn stones into loaves of bread (vss. 3-4)
- Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:2-3 to refute the temptation
- What did Jesus understand that the Israelites did not?
  - Life is in God's hands and not in our physical circumstances
  - The wandering in the wilderness was to show the Israelites that God would take care of them; God will provide
  - Jesus understood that His life was in God's hands and He didn't need to take care of His every need, but instead that God would do it if He followed God
  - Matthew 6:33
- What this temptation boils down to is trusting in God to meet our needs
  - We think that our lives depend upon our power
- The second temptation is to throw Himself from the top of the Temple
- Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16-17 to refute the temptation
- To understand the temptation, we need to look at Massah, which Jesus's quote mentions
  - Exodus 17 (specifically vs. 7)
- What did Jesus understand that the Israelites did not?
  - The Israelites put God to the test by demanding He show them He was with them through providing water to drink
  - The temptation was knowing that God was with Him, instead of making God PROVE that He was with Him
  - Jesus says, "I don't need God to prove He's with Me. I already know He is."
- Consider how many people want God to prove that He's with them by doing X or Y "and then I'll serve you."

- How can we think that sacrificing His own Son on the cross is not enough to prove that God is with us?
- Think about the demands that you are putting on God; what are you saying “Do this and then I’ll serve you” about?
- Trials are all about our getting through the hardship knowing that God is there despite it
- The third temptation is to bow down to
- Satan to rule all the kingdoms of the land
  - That is, that’s what Satan promised; whether he could or would do it is highly unlikely, in my opinion
- Jesus refutes it by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13-15
  - This is a sermon that Moses gives the people about their failures in the wilderness before they enter the Land of Promise
  - This is specifically about the golden calf they made “to worship the Lord”
- What did Jesus understand that the Israelites did not?
  - The Israelites came up with a way to “worship Jehovah” while ALSO doing what they wanted – the best of both worlds
  - Jesus understood that we have to live according to God’s word and our desires MUST be secondary to God
- This temptation is also before us on a daily basis
- We can’t worship God correctly and still do anything we want
  - When we do that, we make our desires our priority
- We see this in many Christians
  - “I can be a Christian but not change my life to reflect what God wants from me.”
  - “I can be a Christian but never assemble with the saints.”
  - “I can be a Christian but stay in my sins.”
  - “I can be a Christian and cherry-pick the commands I follow and don’t follow.”
- We say we’d never serve another God, but do it when we do what we desire instead of what God desires

## *The Beginning of His Ministry (Matthew 4:12-17)*

- Jesus's return after the temptations He endured is generally considered the beginning of His ministry
- Notice in vs. 12 that John gets arrested and imprisoned almost immediately after Jesus's baptism
  - His work is done!
  - The way has been paved for Jesus to begin His work
- Because of John's arrest, Jesus returns to Galilee; however, instead of going to Nazareth where He grew up, He settles in Capernaum
  - Luke 4 shows that He returned to Nazareth, and they tried to kill Him when He claimed to be God's Son
  - After that, He went to Capernaum and stayed with Peter in his house
- Matthew says that His starting His ministry in the area of Capernaum in Galilee fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-2
- Jesus preaches a message of repentance in (what most Jews) considered the backwaters of Israel
  - The response is HUGE!
  - The people who are living in darkness respond to the light of Jesus's message
  - Those that think they live in the light (Pharisees and scribes) ignore the message of repentance
- Just like them, we must understand that we all live in the shadow of death and need the light that Jesus is to get out of that shadow

## *Following Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22)*

- As Jesus walks along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He comes across Peter and Andrew, two brothers that have a fishing business with two other brothers, James and John
  - This isn't the first time we see Peter and Andrew
  - John 1:39-40 shows that Andrew listened to John the Baptizer and followed Jesus when John says, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"
  - Andrew goes to find Peter and brings Him to meet Jesus
- He tells the four of them to follow Him, and they do so without hesitation
  - Luke's account (Luke 5) shows that the crowds were pressing all around Him, so He gets into Peter's boat and teaches from there, then after the lesson, tells them to fish again; once the brothers' nets are breaking from the mass of fish, they go with Jesus
- Being called by Jesus to be a disciple would be like having Michael Jordan ask you to tag along and learn how to play basketball
- They drop everything and go when Jesus calls because they understand that this is the Messiah and He wants them
  - They didn't say, "Let us finish mending the nets" or "Wait till we sell these fish and then we'll be along"
  - This was an immediate walk away from their lives to live another life with Jesus
- How often do we tell Jesus, "Just a second" or "Let me do this first"?
  - We are essentially telling Jesus to follow us, not that we'll follow Him
- Jesus can change your life, if you want your life to change
- Also, you can't change your life if you don't want to change your life

## *Healing the Masses (Matthew 4:23-25)*

- Jesus begins going throughout Galilee preaching in the synagogues and healing the masses
- News of Jesus spread through all of Syria (a Gentile country)
  - Even they brought their sick to have Jesus heal them
- People from everywhere around followed Him
  - Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan
- Vs. 24 shows us that there isn't a single disease that Jesus couldn't heal; not a single demon He couldn't cast out
- The message is clear – bring Jesus your broken life and He can fix it; He can heal you spiritually

# CHAPTER 5

## *The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)*

- The word “beatitudes” comes from the Latin beatus meaning “blessed”
  - Called this because Jesus gives a series of “Blessed are the ...”
- The Greek term means “happy” or “fortunate”
- Jesus presents a list of blessings and responsibilities of being a disciple of Christ
  - Explains the worth of turning your life over to God
- Beginning of the Sermon on the Mount – Jesus’ first real center-stage lesson to those who followed after Him
  - Sets the tone for His entire ministry
- Key to understanding the beatitudes
  - They build on each other
  - One leads into the next
  - Jesus is building stairs with 9 steps
- The beatitudes are the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount -- Jesus's first real center-stage lesson to those who followed after Him
  - They set the tone for His entire ministry

|  |                                                           |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Persecuted (again)                                        |
|  | Those persecuted for righteousness                        |
|  | Those who make peace (with God)                           |
|  | Pure in heart                                             |
|  | The merciful                                              |
|  | Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness             |
|  | The humble                                                |
|  | Those who mourn (are sorry about their sinful state)      |
|  | Those who are poor in spirit (understand they are sinful) |

- Moves from someone who knows they're living in sin with the first beatitude to a great reward in Heaven with the last
- Most consider this a very occluded version of the gospel without the steps explicitly stating that

## *1st Beatitude*

- What is meant by "poor in spirit"?
  - Should we be constantly depressed?
  - Spiritually immature?
- Greek word means "poor" literally; "distressed" figuratively
- In other words, someone who realizes that their spirit is in peril or distressed
  - They acknowledge that they are sinners
  - He clearly sees the poverty of his soul due to his sin
- Why would someone in this state inherit the kingdom of heaven?
  - They understand that they aren't righteous in and of themselves
  - They know they need outside intervention, and so they are ready to become God's children and receive heaven as their inheritance

## *2nd Beatitude*

- What is being mourned?
  - Loss of a loved one?
  - Loss of wealth or property?
- Remember that they build on each other
- The mourning is caused by the effects of sin on one's life; the sadness we cause God by sinning
- James 4:8-10
- When we acknowledge our sin and pray for forgiveness, God is there to comfort us with His grace and mercy

## *3rd Beatitude*

- Our culture puts a lot of emphasis on serving ourselves, solving our own problems, standing up for ourselves, acts of pride, etc.
- "Gentle" could also be translated as "meek" or "humble"
- Jesus puts the emphasis on serving others and humility
- Gentleness/meekness isn't weakness or compromise, but rather selflessness and service (to God and others)
- Why will the gentle/meek/humble inherit the earth?
  - Mark 10:29-30
  - Matthew 20:16; 26-28
  - This is a figurative way of saying that we will be well-rewarded for our service and humility
- How does being gentle/meek/humbles follow after mourning over our sinful state?
  - Realizing that we can't save ourselves from sin gives us the space to understand that we aren't at the top level of any sort of hierarchy
  - Whoever is able to rid us of our sin is "bigger" than I am

## *4th Beatitude*

- Hunger and thirst impart a desperation to find righteousness
  - Hebrews 11:6 - God rewards diligence, not passing interest
- We must continue our search for righteousness and not settle for anything less than godliness
- Why are the seekers of righteousness satisfied?
  - "Satisfied" means filled up; it goes back to the hunger and thirst
- If you hunger for righteousness, you WILL find it
- How does this build on the last beatitude?
  - When we humble ourselves before God and acknowledge that only He can remove our sins, then we will become righteous
  - There's a subtle difference between humbling ourselves before God, though, and hungering and thirsting for righteousness
  - Humility acknowledges another's superiority; hungering for righteousness means we are actively seeking it out and will do whatever we must to attain it

## *5th Beatitude*

- Can't help but think of passages like Romans 9:15, Luke 17:3-4, and Matthew 6:14-15
- We must show mercy to receive mercy; why?
  - God freely gives us mercy when we follow the plan of salvation
  - If we aren't willing to give mercy to others when they need it like we did, then we aren't behaving like God
- How does mercy in this beatitude build upon righteousness in the last one?
  - Being righteous means we are free of sin
  - If we are freed from sin, then we can't act sinfully
  - Sin is acting in an ungodly way, and God is merciful

## *6th Beatitude*

- What does it mean to be pure in heart? How will they see God?
  - James 4:7-8
  - Those that are pure in heart want to be like God and are drawing near to Him
  - In response, God draws near to them
- How does this build on the 5th beatitude regarding mercy?
  - Forgiving someone a wrong they've done to you is one of the hardest and most loving things you can do for them
  - Those who can forgive and are righteous are as close to being Jesus in the flesh as we can manage

## *7th Beatitude*

- What is a peacemaker?
  - A better question is who are we making peace with?
- Making peace with God (Ephesians 2:14-18)
- Making peace with others (Hebrews 12:14, Romans 12:18)
- What does making peace have to do with being called a son of God?
  - Most people don't want to be at peace with others
  - That is to say, they want things their way, and they are typically confrontational when they don't get their way
  - Someone who is willing to make peace with others or make peace between others is like God, who makes peace with us through our salvation
- How does peacemaking build upon being pure in heart?
  - Those that are pure in heart will have others best interests in mind
  - Peacemaking (in the sense Jesus uses the word) is about creating peace between someone else on God through teaching them about Jesus

## *8th Beatitude*

- Persecution for righteousness is easy to understand
  - Notice how this beatitude includes the 4th beatitude as well
- John 15:20, 2 Timothy 3:12, and 1 Peter 4:12-16 all guarantee that the righteous will be persecuted
- Why does persecution for righteousness lead to inheriting the kingdom of God?
  - This is now more than just belief
  - We are living godly lives and suffering because of that choice
  - Since we're suffering for Christ's name, God will reward us with eternal life
- This obviously includes the 4th beatitude; how does it build upon the last beatitude as well?
  - The peacemaking we are doing is preaching the gospel message so others can become right with God as well
  - Preaching the gospel is what God wants us to do, and so doing that is part of being righteous

## *9th Beatitude*

- This last beatitude doesn't have the same form as the last 8, but He does bless a group here as well
  - Because of that, there's debate on whether this should be counted as the last beatitude or if it's just a reiteration/continuation of the 8th beatitude
- Who is blessed and what is promised them? What is the location of that promised reward?
  - Jesus calls out His audience here - "blessed are you"
  - They're promised a reward, and that reward is in heaven
- This aligns with the 8th beatitude in that Jesus takes the last somewhat general beatitude and applies it specifically to them - they can have everything that He's just named
- Jesus goes from someone seeking God in the first beatitude to their reward in heaven with this last beatitude, and now He has named them as the recipients of these blessings

## *Teaching of Righteousness (Matthew 5:13-20)*

- What message did the beatitudes bring to people?
  - Anyone can be a child of God
  - The kingdom of Heaven is not for the religious few, but for anyone willing to search for God
  - It was a message of hope – God is there for anyone
- After the beatitudes, Jesus moves into a section on righteousness
  - Righteousness played a major role in the beatitudes
  - The Jews had a major misconception about what it meant to be righteous and who God would choose as His people

## *Salt of the earth*

- He begins by telling His audience that they are the salt of the earth
  - Salt was rare and expensive
  - Roman soldiers were often paid wages in salt because it could be traded anywhere
  - These people certainly would not have been told they were valuable by anyone before
  - Why are they the salt of the Earth, though? What does Jesus mean?
  - Anyone can do valuable service for God, not just scribes and Pharisees
  - However, our worth can disappear (as it had with the scribes and Pharisees) and then we're good for nothing

## *Light of the world*

- He moves from telling them that they are the salt of the earth to the light of the world and a city on a hill
  - Even at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was telling the people what the Kingdom of God would be on the earth
  - John 1:5; 8:12; 9:5; 12:36 – Jesus is the light
  - 1 John 1:5 – God is light
  - Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 2:8-10 – We are children of light

## *City on a hill; light under a basket*

- City on a hill
  - Revelation 21:10-27
- Then Jesus says you don't light a lamp and then hide the light but put it out so it's a benefit to everyone
- In all of these allegories, what is the driving point Jesus is making?
  - The common people make up God's kingdom, and they have a responsibility to be seen by others (vs. 16)

## *Let your light shine*

- There are two key components to how we let our light shine
  - Others see our good works
  - Those good works point people to glorify God
- Most Christians are modest, in that they try and deflect or play down the good they do
  - We need to get better at pointing people to God instead of saying, “It was nothing” or “Anyone would have done it”

## *Your righteousness must surpass...*

- Let's skip down to vs. 20 for just a second
- Jesus tells them their righteousness should surpass the scribes and Pharisees
  - "Nobody can do that, Jesus!"
  - The scribes and Pharisees were the epitome of serving God the way He wanted
  - Looking at the two points from vs. 16, though, what did they lack?
  - They didn't point people to God as they did their good works

## *Attack on the Pharisees, part 1*

- In verse 17, it seems Jesus takes a sharp left turn
- He starts talking about the Law of Moses
  - Didn't come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it
  - Not a stroke will pass away until all is accomplished
  - Don't get confused by the "until heaven and earth pass away" part
- Shots fired!!
  - In vss. 19-20, Jesus makes His first (recorded) attack on the scribes and Pharisees
- Matthew 5:19a
  - We find out in this verse that this is EXACTLY what the scribes and Pharisees were doing
- In the entire verse, Jesus lays down a basic tenet by which we can judge anyone
  - Preach the truth, you're great; preach falsehood, you're not

Your righteousness must surpass...

- After vs 19, then, Jesus tells the audience that they're righteousness must surpass the scribes and Pharisees to enter the Kingdom of Heaven
  - Again, the audience would have been taken aback by that
- However, using the rubric Jesus laid out at the end of verse 19, He then moves into the next section where He starts giving examples of how the scribes and Pharisees were guilty of misappropriating the Law for their own means

## *You have heard ... statements (Matthew 5:21-48)*

- Jesus begins a series of statements contrasting what the scribes and Pharisees have taught regarding the Law of Moses (NOT the Law itself) and what God intended by the Law
- This is a direct attack against the religious leaders and what they taught regarding the Law of Moses (back to 5:19)

## *Comparison of each in this study*

- Each starts with, “You have heard that it was said ...”
- Tells what is being taught regarding the topic
- Then says, “But I say to you ...”
  - This part isn’t in all of them
- Gives God’s intention with the Law
- Underlying all of these examples are principles by which God wants His people to live

## *You have heard ... Murder (Matthew 5:21-26)*

- Jesus first stop on the Law tour is murder
  - 21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'
- This is the 6th commandment – “You shall not murder (or kill).”
- What is from the Law of Moses?
  - “You shall not murder”
- What did mankind add to the Law?
  - “Whoever commits murder will be answerable to the court.”
- What does man’s addition show their main concern/focus was as far as murder is concerned?
  - In saying, “You murder and you’re guilty before the court”, it shows that, for them, murder was a sin against man, not against God

## *But I say ... Murder (Matthew 5:21-26)*

- What does Jesus say about murder?
- It goes beyond murder, doesn't it? What does Jesus address instead of murder?
  - Anger
- Jesus says that if we get to the point where murder is a possibility, we've already gone too far
- He then sets up a hypothetical scenario
- If you are about to make a sacrifice and realize someone holds something against you (notice it's not even you that's angry!), then stop and go take care of it
  - Why?
  - We should act out of love towards them, and not allow them to be in a place they could sin
- Jesus then presents another situation and offers advice
- If you're on your way to court, try and settle things before you get there, lest you end up in prison and it "costs" you more than settling things would have cost you
- What's the principle Jesus is trying to set here?
  - Once we lose respect for someone and dehumanize them, it's very, very easy for us to treat them as less than human
  - How we think about someone is how we will treat them
- Not acting on a thought doesn't make it okay to have the thought (this will come up again and again)
- So how do we fight anger and malice? How can we strike at the root of the problem that leads to murder?
  - Have a forbearing and patient attitude (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)
  - Always consider the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4)
  - Forgive as Christ forgave us (Colossians 2:12-14)

## *You have heard ... Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)*

- After speaking about murder, Jesus moves on to the topic of adultery
- This is the 7th commandment
  - Deuteronomy 22:21 lays down a penalty of death for committing adultery
- What is from the Law of Moses?
  - “You shall not commit adultery.”
- What did mankind add to the Law?
  - Jesus doesn’t specify anything
- If there’s no “additional teaching” by man, why does Jesus bring it up?
  - Because they were strictly adhering to the Law (which is good) but not going “behind the curtain” on the why of it
  - We can see this in his teaching on divorce (next teaching)

## *But I say ... Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)*

- What does Jesus say about adultery?
- It goes beyond a simple act of sexual intercourse, doesn't it? What does Jesus address instead of adultery?
  - Lust
- If we get to the point where adultery is a possibility, we've already gone too far
- Looking at verse 28, is lust a sin?
  - Biblically, lust is the idea of "looking with continual longing with the mind made up to commit a sin"
- James 1:14-15
  - I would say no, based on this passage from James, but lust is where all sin starts!
- So what is Jesus saying here? What's the principle He's setting down?
  - Include evidence from verses 29 and 30
- Based on James, lust breeds sin; if we can't control our own lusts, we shouldn't be surprised when we fall into temptation and then sin
- If we are susceptible to certain lusts/temptations, then don't put yourself in a position where you voluntarily, willingly expose yourself to those lusts/temptations!
- So how do we fight lust? How can we strike at the root of the problem that leads to adultery?
  - Love your spouse (Ephesians 5:22-25)
  - Ensure that your spouse is not in a position to WANT to commit adultery (1 Corinthians 7:1-6)
  - Deal with the SOURCE of sin – why would you want to commit adultery?
  - If you are to the point where committing adultery is even an option, then your marriage is already broken – work on that instead of plotting adultery

## *You have heard ... Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)*

- After speaking about adultery, Jesus moves to the topic of divorce (and remarriage)
- What Jesus quotes in verse 31 (sort of) comes from Deuteronomy 24:1-5
  - Jesus speaks more on divorce in Matthew 19:1-12
- What is from the Law of Moses?
  - “Whoever sends his wife away must give her a certificate of divorce”
- What did mankind add to the Law?
  - Jesus doesn’t mention anything
- If there’s no “additional teaching” by man, why does Jesus bring it up?
- We know from Matthew 19:1-12 that the Pharisees were pretty plainly abusing the allowance of divorce
  - Again, we see that they weren’t looking at the principle behind the Law

## *But I say ... Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)*

- What does Jesus say about divorce?
  - God's intent is and always has been (since the Garden of Eden) one woman for one man forever
- The Pharisees were saying that a man could divorce a woman for any reason! In fact, they argued that Moses commanded it!
- Jesus makes it plain that there's no reason for divorce except for adultery
- He also plainly states that anyone who divorces his wife makes her commit adultery and if he marries a divorced woman, he commits adultery
- So what is Jesus saying here? What's the principle He's setting down?
  - One man with one woman forever
  - Vows we make to one another are to be kept
  - We must act out of love to one another or we've already started down a very slippery slope

## *You have heard ... Making Oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)*

- The fourth topic that Jesus hits is making oaths (or swearing, as some versions read)
  - I make the differentiation because we tend to think of swearing as cursing, not making an oath
- For the third (of 4 topics), Jesus presents a topic, but adds nothing besides what the Law says
- It's clear from what Jesus says about the topic that the Pharisaical view of oaths was not at all what God intended

## *But I say ... Making Oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)*

- Before we get to that, is Jesus telling us that we can't make any oaths at all? That's what He says in vs. 34
  - Can't be
  - Hebrews 6:13 – God swore by Himself
  - Matthew 26:63 – “Adjure” means “to cause to swear under oath”
  - 2 Corinthians 1:23 – Paul calls God as a witness to his oath
- Vs. 33 is an amalgam of several places in the Law
  - Leviticus 9:12
  - Numbers 30:2
  - Deuteronomy 23:21
- Jesus is not forbidding making oaths, but rather saying if you make an oath, you must keep it
- The Jews had taken to making “promises” that they had no intention of keeping
  - Matthew 23:16-22
- They taught that oaths were only binding if someone swore upon certain things
  - The Pharisees had essentially created a religious way of lying
- What's the difference between “I swear”, “I promise”, and “I affirm”?
  - It's all semantics
- We must be men and women of our words – Our “Yes, yes” and our “No, no”
  - Why?
  - Because God can't lie, so neither should we

## *You have heard ... Retaliation (Matthew 5:38-42)*

- The fifth topic that Jesus mentions is retaliation, or turning the other cheek
- Our fifth topic is the fourth that Jesus adds no other man-made interpretations
- Comes from Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; and Deuteronomy 19:21
  - Read entire sections of these passages; what does this part of the Law seem to intend? Why did God enact this level of retribution?
- God's intent was that we need to understand the consequences of our actions
  - If we hurt someone, we will suffer the same
  - A very personal game of mutually assured destruction
- What about the cities of refuge in Deuteronomy 19?
  - Deuteronomy makes it clear that these cities were to be used by those who accidentally kill others
  - Those who premeditated murder would be turned over to the avenger
- Extra-Biblical records show the scribes and Pharisees perverted this law
  - They had taken "eye for an eye" to mean that God WANTED and COMMANDED them to seek revenge upon their enemies who wrong them
- The Pharisees had essentially created a religious way of seeking vengeance; they had made seeking revenge a sinless act

## *But I say ... Retaliation (Matthew 5:38-42)*

- So what does Jesus say?
  - “Don’t resist an evil person”
  - “Turn the other cheek to be struck as well”
  - “Give him your coat as well as your shirt”
  - “Walk a second mile with a man, and not just the one mile he forces you to walk”
  - “Give to those who ask”
- The Pharisees’ attitude was, “Get them back!”
- Jesus says, “No, the attitude God always intended was exactly the opposite.”
  - Help those who are in need, be more generous than what people ask and demand of you
  - Why?
  - Because God is more generous to us than what we ask

## *You have heard ... Hate your enemy (Matthew 5:43-48)*

- The last topic that Jesus addresses in his attack on the scribes and Pharisees' abuse of the law is loving your neighbor and hating your enemy
- We have finally arrived at our second topic where Jesus clearly includes some 'added interpretation'
- Quote from the end of Leviticus 19:18
  - Relates back to the last topic of vengeance and retaliation – that's the first part of Leviticus 19:18
- What did religious leaders add to the Law? Why might they have done that?
  - "Love your neighbor" is broad, so they attempted to narrow that down
- They also tried to delineate what was meant by "neighbor" by saying there are some people who aren't neighbors
  - God told them to kill everyone in the land of promise (Deuteronomy 7:15-16)
  - Obviously, not everyone is to be loved, then
- Again, they've taken a very broad divine principle and tried to cut their way out of obedience by creating man-made definitions

## *But I say ... Love your neighbors (Matthew 5:43-48)*

- So what does Jesus say?
  - “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”
  - Why?
  - God loved us while we were still His enemies
- What does the sun rising for everyone and raining on the just and unjust have to do with anything?
  - God is a just and fair God
  - He causes the sun to shine and the rain to rain on everyone – even those who oppose Him, not just “His people”
- Jesus then logics his audience some
  - If you love those who love you, so what?
  - If you only greet and acknowledge your brothers, so what?
- Then Jesus drops the ‘p’ word – ‘perfect’
  - How does loving our enemies make us perfect?
- As Christians, we have a special responsibility in the world
  - To seek peace and reconciliation (back to the beatitudes)
  - To not be satisfied with bitterness, anger, hatred, and division
  - Even if that means persecution or suffering for us

# CHAPTER 6

## *Hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-18)*

- After Jesus finishes his 6 topics on how the scribes and Pharisees have twisted the Law into a mockery of what God intended, Jesus isn't done with them
- Next, he moves into a very brief discussion of hypocrisy
- Hypocrisy is one of the most damaging actions to the cause of Christ that we can take
- A failure in a single Christian principle gives Satan the opportunity to engender scorn and mockery among the unconverted
- Jesus uses 3 different examples to show how the religious leaders of the day were acting like hypocrites
  - Giving alms
  - Prayer
  - Fasting
- Each example shows hypocrisy, but Jesus also uses them as teachable moments as well, showing proper behavior as a counterpoint to each
- Matthew 6:1 is more of a thesis statement to the rest of this section
  - "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."
- What does Jesus mean by "practicing your righteousness"?
  - God expects us to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16)
  - Becoming holy requires us change the way we live
  - Some things we have to start doing in a godly way, and others we have to stop doing to be godly
- If people do these things to be seen by men, is it really righteousness?
  - Jesus's point in all of this is that, if you do it to be seen by men, then you have your reward when they see you
  - It's an attitude we must have rather than action just to take action or to look pious

## *Hypocrisy in giving alms (Matthew 6:14)*

- We know from the “give to the poor” in verse 2 that this is NOT tithing (the Law commanded everyone but priests to give 1/10th of everything to the Lord)
  - This is giving alms; i.e., charity
- What is the example of hypocrisy that Jesus gives in regard to giving alms? What do hypocrites do?
- Hypocrites blast trumpets before them so everybody knows they are about to hand out money
  - This might have started out as a way to let poor people know there was some help being offered
  - If so, it turned into a way for someone to announce they’re about to perform a charitable act, so come look at me!
- Does God want us to help those in need and extend mercy to people?
- Yes! Absolutely!
  - Matthew 5:7
  - Matthew 23:23
  - Luke 6:36
  - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
- So what is hypocritical in their behavior?
  - They are glorifying themselves instead of God while making it seem like a magnanimous act
- How do people cross this line today?
  - Example: Giving huge sums of money to have buildings named after them
- What is Jesus’s counter-example? How would non-hypocritical people act in this situation?
- Give with your right hand so secretively that even your left hand doesn’t know what’s going on
  - This is impossible, so what’s Jesus’ point?
- If we try to give alms in secret and someone finds out, does that mean there’s no reward?
  - No! It’s a matter of the reason why we gave the alms – for God’s glory or our own glory

## *Hypocrisy in prayer (Matthew 6:5-6)*

- What is the example of hypocrisy that Jesus gives in regard to praying? What do hypocrites do?
- Hypocrites stand in the synagogues and on the street corners
- What is the counter-example that Jesus gives of a non-hypocrite?
- Go into your inner room (or closet) and close the door and pray there
  - So even within the house, it's hard to find you
  - Nobody is going to see you unless they are specifically looking for you
- Why? What's the purpose of going off into an inner room where no one is going to find you when you pray?
  - You aren't saying the prayer for other people to see
  - It's just you and God having that conversation
- What's hypocritical about praying in public? We do it all the time!
  - The Pharisees did it to look pious, even though they didn't really mean what they said
- Jesus next says that they shouldn't use many words and endless repetition when they pray
- Instead, how should they pray?
  - Succinctly
- God already knows what we need
  - So why do we need to ask?
  - It's a way of us showing humility to God
  - A way of demonstrating that we know He's God, and He's in control

## *A model prayer (Matthew 6:7-15)*

- Next comes the “Lord’s prayer”
- Why would His audience need a model prayer?
  - The priests said the prayers (for the most part), not the lay-people of the Israelites
  - The only examples they get on how to say prayers not by priests is the Pharisees Jesus is condemning
- What does the model prayer contain?
  - Reverence, humility
  - Your will be done (and, tacitly, not mine)
  - Take care of our physical needs
  - Take care of our spiritual needs
- After the model prayer, Jesus comments on forgiveness
  - If we can forgive others, than God will forgive us
  - If we don’t forgive others, God won’t forgive us
- But wait a second ... 1 John 1:9 says if we confess our sins, God will forgive them; doesn’t mention anything about our forgiving others...
  - What’s going on here?
  - John didn’t mention the necessity for us to forgive others when they sin against us
  - Jesus is combating the hypocrisy of the religious elite here, who wouldn’t forgive anyone of anything, but still expected God to forgive them
  - John was writing about becoming more like God (holy) and how we need to acknowledge that we need God to be holy

## *Hypocrisy in fasting (Matthew 6:16-18)*

- What is the counter-example that Jesus gives of a non-hypocrite?
- Maintain your appearance as normal; give no outward sign of your fasting
- Why did people fast back then?
  - Mourning, penance
- Why do people fast today? (Do they fast today?)
- Why should they/we not outwardly display signs of our fasting? What does this do/show?
  - Done for the show – the look of righteousness
  - We are perfectly capable of fasting without anyone knowing

## *Treasure in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-24)*

- After discussing hypocrisy, Jesus moves into a seemingly unrelated topic of treasure in heaven, eyes as lamps of the body, and not being able to serve two masters
- They are all related, though, and they're all directed at the scribes and Pharisees as well
- Is this “treasure in heaven” discussion a hyperbolic one or a literal physical vs. spiritual treasure one?
  - It's yet another way Jesus draws a distinct “line in the sand” between how the scribes and Pharisees approach life and how God intends things to be
- God rewards those who aren't hypocrites, and that's how to earn treasure in heaven (where God rewards His people)
- Treasure on earth
  - Moths and rust destroy
  - Thieves steal
  - Anything the world considers valuable; not just money or things
  - Also prestige, power, influence, authority
- Treasure in Heaven
  - Nothing can destroy it or steal it
  - Spiritual blessings
- “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”
- Why? What does this mean?
  - Whichever we think is valuable is what we'll put our effort into accumulating

## *The eye is a lamp (Matthew 6:22-23)*

- Jesus moves into another topic just a few verses later by saying that the eye is the lamp of the body
  - An interesting view of sight
- If your eye is clear (healthy) then the light comes in; if your eye is bad (evil) then no light comes in and you have darkness inside of you
- What's this got to do with anything else?
  - This is all about the duality that we have to choose from
  - Either we can be light or dark; good or bad; worldly or Godly
- The scribes and Pharisees, despite everyone thinking they were righteous and Godly, were the opposite – they were not seeing anything and no light was getting in

### Serving two masters (Matthew 6:24)

- Jesus summarizes this entire diatribe against the scribes and Pharisees by saying that you can't serve two masters
  - He mentions God and wealth
  - Of course, you can replace "wealth" with pretty much anything, and this section still applies
- In fact, the Pharisees problem wasn't serving wealth, but rather serving self
  - For them, it was a matter of choosing Godly ways to serve self so they appeared righteous, even though they were far from it

## *Don't be anxious (Matthew 6:25-34)*

- Jesus' next topic is anxiety
- He starts out by saying, "For this reason ..."
  - What's the "this" he's talking about?
  - Vs. 24 – "You can't serve both God and wealth."
- There's a natural bridge between these two topics
  - We need money to survive, but we must also trust God
- His first point is that, yes, we need food and clothing, but that's not all our life and bodies are
  - What else is included in this?
  - We can answer that question by looking at the examples He gives
- Example 1: birds don't sow or reap, but they find the food they need to eat
  - This addresses our drive to serve money to buy food
  - An ever-present issue in that time
  - An issue today, too
- Vs. 27 – "And who of you being worried can add a single hour to his life?"
  - Scientific studies show that worry actually kills you faster due to the stress it puts on the body
- Example 2: the lilies of the field are beautifully adorned, but they don't toil or spin
  - Plants live and die so quickly
  - If God "dresses" them like that, He'll also take care of you
- Vs. 30b – "You of little faith!"
  - Why are we of little faith when we work to buy food and clothes?
  - We aren't trusting that God will take care of us
- The Gentiles seek after these things (food, clothing, other physical things) but God knows what you need
- Let's circle back around to the question I asked to start
- Vs. 25 – "Life is more than food and the body more than clothing"
  - What else is life besides food?
  - What else is the body besides clothing?
- He answers this in vs. 33
  - "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"
  - Why?
  - Because we can't serve both God and wealth
- We need to pick between them
- Jesus tells us here that we'll get what we NEED either way

- Maybe not what we WANT if we serve God...
- ... but God will take care of us
- We won't have to worry about any of this
- Does this passage mean that we should never be anxious and never worry about anything?
  - Worry (anxiety) is a human response to stress, and there are plenty of things to stress about
  - It's going to happen
  - When we do get anxious, we need to take that to God and lay it at His feet
  - 1 Peter 5:7

# CHAPTER 7

## *Judging others (Matthew 7:1-6)*

- After talking about anxiety and trusting that God will provide, Jesus moves into judging others
- Seems to move into another subject entirely
  - However, we can see from vs. 5 that He's still at least cursorily referring to hypocrites, as he did in Matthew 6:1-18
- Vs. 1 – “Do not judge so you won't be judged”
  - That's where people usually stop
  - “Who are you to judge me?”
  - “You don't know me!”
- Jesus qualifies this in the very next verse
  - Vs. 2 – “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”
- The “standard of measure” is a term we still use today, but not very often
  - If you go to a gas station, on the pump somewhere there's a sticker that looks like the one below
  - Notice the name of the state department
  - Arizona has a set of “standards of measure” of what 1 gallon is, what 1 pound or gram is, etc.



- Why does that matter?
  - Luke 6:37-38 – Luke's “version” of the Sermon on the Mount explains it a bit better

- If we use a “standard of measure” that isn’t true, then Jesus is saying that the same crooked standard of measure will be used against us as well
- This was very common practice by merchants, especially those in the Temple selling to visiting Jews
- Jesus is taking this very concrete idea and applying it to a spiritual principle
  - If we use a crooked standard to judge someone, then that same standard will be used against us
- We’d better make sure we’re using a “fair” standard then
  - I wonder where we could get one of those ...
- Jesus really isn’t saying we can’t judge other people
- God CALLS us to make judgements all the time!
  - 1 John 4:1
  - Revelation 2:2
  - Philippians 3:2
  - 2 Timothy 2:14-15
- It’s not a matter of judging, but what standard we are using to judge
- Jesus then uses another ridiculous, but concrete example (or maybe I should say wood example) to get His point across
- Your brother has a speck in his eye, but you have a beam or log in your own
  - “Hey! You’re being a bad boy for driving too fast!”
  - “I never thought you’d notice because you’re too busy robbing banks and beating up old ladies for their lunch money.”
- If we are going to take someone to task about something, we’d better ...
  - Make sure our own house is in order; and/or
  - Take book, chapter, and verse to them from God’s Word
- What does vs. 6 have to do with this?
  - "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."
- In verse 6, Jesus is calling for us to make a judgment!
- Don’t give holy, precious things to dogs and swine
  - Who are dogs and swine?
  - I think it’s people who have already turned their back on the gospel message and are unrepentant
  - Do we “waste” more time on them or try to keep hammering away? It’s a judgment call, isn’t it?
- There are some people who sin and don’t really care that they’re sinning
  - Telling them to “shape up” isn’t going to do any good
  - Do we still have to preach the gospel to them?
  - Absolutely!
  - But once that’s done, move on if they continue to be unrepentant

## *The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:7-12)*

- Jesus truly does finish up His discussion of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees with verse 6 and judging others
- He now switches topics completely and starts talking about God, the Kingdom (and Heaven), and what we should be basing our faith upon through the rest of the sermon
  - While this isn't about hypocrisy anymore, He still uses the scribes and Pharisees as a bad example of righteousness
- In verse 7, He squares up on prayer again, though He never uses that word here
  - In fact, Jesus uses this same series of examples in Luke 11:9-13 right after He talks about prayer
- 7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”
  - Ask who? What will be given?
  - Seek what? What will we find?
  - Knock on what? What will be opened?
- If we ask God, we'll get what we ask for
- If we seek for righteousness, we will find it
- If we knock on His door, then He will open it
- God will ALWAYS accept the person who diligently seeks Him and is obedient to do His will
  - In contrast to the dogs and swine in Matthew 7:6, Jesus looks at someone here who CAN see the value in the holy things presented to him
- In vs. 8, Jesus just restates what He said in vs. 7, but instead of commands (as in vs. 7), these are statements of fact
  - Why should I ask things of God?
  - Because He WILL give them to you
  - Same for the last two – seeking and knocking
- Lots of people use this as their “putting God to the test”
  - “I've asked and I didn't get so forget this Christianity stuff.”
  - Even that attitude shows they're doing it for them, not God
- We must understand that Jesus isn't giving us a blank check that God will cash no matter what
  - If we are Kingdom-minded, then we can ask with an expectation to receive
  - But (James 4:3) we often ask with the wrong motivation (we ask for selfish reasons)
- In vs. 9 and 10, Jesus uses 2 examples to explain why God would give us what we ask for

- Who asks for bread and their father gives them a stone?
- Who asks for a fish and is given a snake?
- Luke 11:12: Who asks for an egg and is given a scorpion?
- What do these examples do? What does Jesus seek to accomplish with them?
  - Establishes that God is our Father and He is all good
  - He WANTS to do what's in our best interests because that is His very nature (unlike us humans, who are evil)
- Now the “Golden Rule”
  - “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”
- Except we get it backwards!
  - In the Greek, it's “as you want people to treat you, so you should treat them”
  - It's a small thing with the same general meaning
- However, Jesus is really saying that we need to think about how we want people to treat us and then do likewise
- This is, of course, a shot straight at the scribes and Pharisees (and lots of people today too)
- They got it backwards, in that they thought of themselves first (and perhaps only about themselves) and then did what was best to attain those goals
- What does “for this is the Law and the Prophets” mean?
  - That's short-hand for “The Old Testament”
  - Matthew 22:36-40
  - Romans 13:8-10
  - Galatians 5:14

## *The Narrow and Wide Gates (Matthew 7:13-14)*

- After speaking about what we call “the Golden Rule”, Jesus talks about how to get to Heaven (sort of)
- It’s not so much the how to get to Heaven, but the process you must go through to get there
- In verse 13, Jesus says the road to destruction is broad with a huge gate; lots of people using this gate
- In verse 14, He says the way into Heaven is on a narrow track and the gate is small
- This isn’t so much a discussion of the difficulty of getting into Heaven as it is a discussion on a need to look for the way
- What I mean by this is that Jesus isn’t saying the road is difficult or the gate is impossible to find and then enter
- Jesus is saying that you’re going to miss it if you go along with the crowd
  - We NEED to be actively searching for the narrow path and small gate if we hope to gain eternal life
  - Matthew 11:30 – “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light .”
- Again, we need to consider the audience
  - Mostly people who couldn’t read or write, and they just did what they were told by their “religious leaders” who were filling their heads with incorrect doctrine
- Jesus is telling them that they can now take control of their own salvation
- Jesus gives His audience the “Golden Rule”
  - Treat others in the same way as you would want them to treat you
- After that, He mentions the wide and narrow gates
  - If we want to make it into Heaven, then we MUST act differently than how most people (including the scribes and Pharisees) act
  - We need to search for the way instead of just following the crowd
- Then Jesus switches tracks again and mentions trees and their fruit, but He starts with a warning

## *A Tree and its Fruits (Matthew 7:15-20)*

- Vs 15 – Beware false prophets who look like sheep, but are really wolves
  - What would these false prophets be teaching?
  - Why do they dress in sheep's clothing?
  - How are they ravenous wolves?
- “I want to watch out for wolves, Jesus! How can I know them from regular sheep?”
- Vs 16 – “You’ll know them by their fruits.”
  - Jesus clearly teaches here that people can SAY anything they want, but that doesn’t mean they’re being honest
- It’s their ACTIONS that will show you their true form/motivation
- Uses an agricultural example to make it clear
  - Grapes don’t grow on bushes
  - Figs don’t grow on thistles
- In verses 17 & 18, Jesus gives us a basic principle we can use to apply to anyone
  - Good trees give good fruit. Bad trees give bad fruit.
  - Good trees don’t produce bad fruit. Bad trees don’t produce good fruit.
- But that’s wrong, isn’t it?
  - I sin, and that’s bad fruit. Does that mean I’m a bad tree?
  - Don’t people who want to “pull one over” on others do lots of good things to “sucker in” their marks before fleecing them?
  - Jesus’s analogy isn’t saying every single fruit they produce is good or bad, but rather their overall produce is good or bad fruit
- In vs 19, Jesus tells His audience what happens to trees that don’t produce good fruit
  - They’re cut down and thrown into the fire
- Who are these “bad trees”?
  - Scribes and the Pharisees; others who claim to be from God or of God, but consistently produce bad fruit
- Why does Jesus add this to the overall comparison?
  - The people producing bad fruit aren’t “getting away” with anything
  - They’re going to be judged for producing the bad fruit

## *“I never knew you!” (Matthew 7:21-23)*

- These next verses are an expansion on the “thrown into the fire” part of the good/bad tree comparison
- “Not everyone who calls me Lord will enter the kingdom of Heaven”
- Is Jesus talking about then or now or both?
  - Who might He have been talking about then?
    - Scribes and Pharisees
  - What about now?
    - Anyone who claims to be Christian but isn’t living like it or isn’t actively seeking out His kingdom (as we saw in the narrow and wide gate analogy)
- How do we know who IS going to enter the kingdom of Heaven?
  - The person who does God’s will is going to enter
- Jesus mentions people who did lots of stuff in Jesus’ name; but He then says, “I never knew you!”
  - How does this amplify the comparison with the trees?
  - We may see something as good fruit, but that doesn’t mean it is as far as God is concerned
  - Again, the Pharisees looked righteous on the outside, but Jesus calls them whitewashed tombs
- Taking this last verse along with the trees, are we going to know those trees that are “good” and those that are “bad”?
  - We might not know that the tree is good or bad
  - Some hypocrites are really good at hiding their hypocrisy

## *Where to build your house (Matthew 7:24-27)*

- Jesus wraps up His sermon by talking about where you should build your house
- This is something that everyone in the audience would have known
  - Being trained as a carpenter by Joseph, he would have very intimate knowledge about housebuilding, and where to do it
- Verse 24 – Jesus starts with “Therefore ...”
  - Relates back to the last thing He said about God saying, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, lord’ ...”
- In other words, Jesus is saying in these last couple verses, “If you want to make sure you’re accepted into the Kingdom of Heaven, do this”
- What are they supposed to do?
  - “Everyone who hears these words and *acts on them...*”
- Why is this last part of Jesus’s “if” statement important?
  - Lots of people just heard them; hearing isn’t enough
  - The scribes and Pharisees “heard” the Law of Moses and still weren’t considered righteous by God
  - Lots of people today read the Bible, but they don’t put into practice the things that God expects of His children
- Jesus makes a comparison between two men
  - Wise man builds his house on a strong foundation
  - Foolish man builds his house on (essentially) no foundation
  - What happens when the rains come?
- How does this analogy work into Jesus’s message?
  - What is the rain?
    - The storms of life; bad times
  - What is the house?
    - Your life; your existence
  - What is the rock (and sand)?
    - The rock is God’s word
    - The sand is the world’s idea of how to live your life

# CHAPTER 8

## *A Willingness to Heal (8:1-4)*

- After the Sermon on the Mount, the crowds followed Jesus
  - There's just a mass of people all around Jesus, wanting to see what He's going to do next
- A man with leprosy comes up to Him and says, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean (heal me)."
  - Remember, lepers are unclean and had to maintain a distance from anyone and yell out that they were unclean
- This is faith the likes of which we haven't seen in Matthew yet
  - He doesn't ask if Jesus can heal him – he's already convinced that Jesus can – IF Jesus is willing to do so
- Jesus reaches out AND TOUCHES this leper
  - Did Jesus have to touch the man to heal him? Of course not!
  - So why did he?
  - Doesn't say, but I think that Jesus wanted him to know that He understood the man was a human being
  - This man probably hadn't had someone touch him since he contracted leprosy
- Jesus says, "I am willing. Be clean."
  - The leper said, "If you're willing to do it, you can heal me."
  - Jesus says, "I'm willing."
- Then Jesus tells him not to tell anyone, but to go show himself to the priest as the Law of Moses commands
  - There's people all around them! Why should he not tell anyone?
  - Jesus didn't want people focused on the miracles, but instead to focus on His mission of spreading the word concerning the Kingdom of God
  - He is using this to control the timing of His ministry
- The first picture we get of Jesus in Chapter 8 is that He's willing to heal; He WANTS to heal you
- You're not going to come to Jesus for healing and He turns you away
- In our filthiness and sin, Jesus isn't going to recoil from us in disgust
- Instead, He's going to reach out to us willingly

## *Authority to Heal (8:5-13)*

- The next picture we get of Jesus is of Him in Capernaum
- A centurion approaches Jesus and asks Him to heal his servant
- Jesus says, “I’ll come heal him.”
- Jesus would become unclean according to the Law of Moses if He entered the centurion’s home
- The centurion says, “I’m not worthy of that, but I know authority when I see it, and you can give the command right here, right now, and it will happen.”
- Jesus is amazed by the centurion’s faith and says, “Go; your servant is healed.”
- Notice again that Jesus is willing to heal the servant
- The centurion understands that Jesus has authority over sickness and disease
  - This is the same understanding the leper had in the first 4 verses
- What Jesus says in verses 11 and 12 – that many from the east and west will recline at the table while the sons of the kingdom are cast out – is the first indication we get in Matthew that Gentiles are going to be a part of the kingdom, but not all of physical Israel will be

## *Ability to Heal (8:14-17)*

- The last picture we're given in this section of Chapter 8 is that Jesus has the ability to heal whatever afflicts us
- Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (infection of some kind); He casts out demons; He heals all who were ill of whatever they had
- Matthew says that this was all done to fulfill the prophecy out of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:4)
  - Matthew quotes this to show that Jesus is able to take cure our greatest sicknesses and is the solution to our greatest need – our sin!
  - So, Matthew shows that Jesus is willing to heal us, He has the authority to heal us, and He has the ability to heal us
    - We all have a sin problem, but Jesus can rid us of that problem
- However, most people don't see Him as worthy of their time; they think He's useless to them
  - Instead, we prioritize our jobs, a search for wealth, of getting more stuff
- If we want what Jesus has to offer, we have to follow Him
  - This leads into the next section of the chapter

## *Following is Uncomfortable (8:18-20)*

- In the next section, Jesus tells His followers that they are going to the other side of the Sea of Galilee
- A scribe comes to Him and said, “I’ll follow you wherever you go!”
- Jesus responds that foxes have holes and birds have nests, but He has nowhere to lay His head
- Interestingly, there is no praise of this scribe for his declaration that he will follow Jesus anywhere
- Instead, Jesus warns Him that if he wants to follow Jesus, his life isn’t going to be comfortable; he’ll have to forfeit the comforts of the world to follow Jesus
- Following Jesus isn’t easy and it will make us uncomfortable
  - There are commands that Jesus gives that are hard to follow, they go against our human nature and what sounds good
- Think about what Jesus says here and how the gospel is presented in many places – (e.g., the Prosperity Gospel – that if we are faithful enough God will bless us with enormous worldly wealth)
- Jesus is telling us we might have to give up all our possessions and comfort and ease; we might be required to lose all this world sees as valuable
- Would you still follow Jesus if you couldn’t have a home? A bed? A car?
- Would you still follow Jesus if you had to do things and go places that made you uncomfortable and you didn’t want to go?

## *Following is Immediate (8:21-22)*

- After the scribe vows to follow Jesus anywhere, another person tells Him that he'll also follow Jesus, but "first let me go bury my father."
- Jesus's response is, "Follow me, and allow the dead to bury the dead"
- In the Jewish culture of the time, the dead were immediately buried; they didn't wait for a few days before the burial
  - If his father was already dead, he wouldn't be there following Jesus around
- However, he also isn't asking Jesus for a few years to take care of his dad
  - It would seem his father's death is imminent
  - He's asking for a short delay of maybe a week or a month and then he'll follow Jesus
- Notice that Jesus doesn't say, "I understand your family obligations. Take the time that you need!"
- Jesus isn't going to wait for the man
- He doesn't tell him to catch up once everything in his life is in order
- Jesus tells him, "You can't delay in following me"
  - Why can't Jesus wait? Or tell him to catch up later?
- This is such a common issue for those that claim to follow Jesus
  - Something else ALWAYS comes up to delay us
  - If it's burying his father this time, the next time it'll be taking care of the inheritance; after that it'll be his wife and kids; after that it'll be his job
- We have to prioritize following Jesus
  - If we let one thing delay us, then we will always let things delay us from following Him

## *Following is Frightening (8:23-27)*

- Jesus and His disciples get into a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee
- He goes to take a nap and a storm starts up and the boat is being swamped by the waves
- It gets so bad that they're convinced they're going to die
- When they wake Him up, Jesus isn't concerned or surprised
  - In fact, He says, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?"
- He then calms the storm and everything is okay
- They are amazed because Jesus even has power over the weather
- These are disciples who are willing to leave with Jesus immediately, they're willing to be uncomfortable, but now they are terrified
- What does their fear have to do with their lack of faith?
  - They were willing to trust Jesus when times were good, but when their life was on the line and they were terrified, Jesus being in the same boat wasn't enough; they needed Him to be awake and terrified with them
- Are we willing to follow Jesus even when we're afraid?
  - Just because we're with Jesus doesn't mean we won't experience fear
- Are we willing to trust Him even with our lives?
  - These are the times that most people get shaken away from following Jesus
- Jesus is in control, though, and has more power than the things that make us afraid

## *Following is Giving Up Control (8:28-34)*

- Our last picture of Jesus in Chapter 8 is about our following Jesus means giving up control of our lives
- Jesus and His disciples get to the other side of the sea and encounter 2 demoniacs who are so violent that no one can pass by them
  - They are confused why Jesus is there but guess that it must be to cast them out, so they ask to be sent into the herd of pigs nearby
- Jesus tells them to do so, and the pigs drown in the sea
- The swineherds go into the city and tell them what happened
- The city folk go out to Jesus and beg Him to leave them alone
- You'd think that, since Jesus just got rid of this problem they had of the 2 men that wouldn't allow anyone to pass nearby, they'd be ecstatic about Jesus being there
- Why would they ask Him to leave?
  - They're afraid of the authority that Jesus has just demonstrated in casting out the demons
- Seeing that authority can give us comfort in following Jesus or it can make us not want anything to do with Him
- Why? Because it upsets our lives. We are forced to accept that Jesus is the authority, and that means that we're going to have to scramble our lives up to put Him where He belongs – in charge of us!

# CHAPTER 9

# *The Power of Jesus to Change Lives*

- In Chapter 8, Matthew showed us that Jesus:
  - Is willing to heal us (8:1-4)
  - Has the authority to heal us (8:5-13)
  - Has the ability to heal us (8:14-17)
- But, those that want His healing must follow Him
- Following Him:
  - Means we'll be uncomfortable (8:18-20)
  - Must be immediate/your top priority (8:21-22)
  - Will be frightening at times (8:23-27)
  - Means giving up our control to Him (8:28-34)
- In Chapter 9, Matthew continues showing us that Jesus has the power to change our lives
- First, in vss. 1-13, we see what Jesus offers and what He wants
- In vss. 14-34, we see 4 miracles that reveal more about Jesus and answer a question brought up in vss. 14-17
- Vss. 35-38 (and into Chapter 10) show us how we should be as we use Jesus as an example for our lives

## *What Jesus Offers (9:1-8)*

- Jesus goes back to his home area of Capernaum
- Now that He's back, people start bringing the sick to Him to heal again
- A paralytic is brought before Him to heal, and instead of healing him at first, Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven"
- The scribes start belly-aching about how Jesus blasphemes because only God can forgive sin
- He knows their heart, though, and asks, "Why do you think evil in your heart?"
  - What's evil about them wanting to hold Jesus accountable for his "blasphemy"?
  - They are actively denying Jesus as the Messiah, despite all the miracles He's already performed, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him at His baptism, etc.
- His question shows they are not genuinely concerned about the holiness of God and keeping His law
  - They have evil thoughts, but they look pious
- Jesus asks, "Is it easier to forgive sin or to heal someone?"
- "Forgive sin" is their answer; why?
  - He can say it, but there's no way to check if it happened
- To prove He can forgive sin, He heals the man as well
- Jesus was always going to heal him, but He needed everyone to know He had the power to forgive sin as well
- The crowd is awestruck about the healing, and they glorify God because of it
- So, Jesus offers forgiveness of sin

## *What Jesus Wants (9:9-13)*

- Jesus finds Matthew (Levi) in a tax booth and tells Matthew to follow Him (which he does)
- Matthew has a party for Jesus, and Jesus is reclining at the table with many sinners
  - “Sinners” in those days weren’t good people who occasionally did bad things
  - They were known to constantly sin through prostitution, thievery, assault, scam artists, etc.
- When the Pharisees question this, Jesus answers with, “The healthy don’t need a physician”
  - In other words, “I’ve come to forgive sin, so I need to go to the sinners”
- Jesus then states the main thrust of this whole section
- It’s a quote from Hosea 6 (vss. 1-6)
  - “Go and learn what this means: I deserve compassion and not sacrifice.”
- To understand how big a mic drop this is for Jesus, we need to look at the context of the quote
- In the first 3 verses of Hosea 6, it seems like the people really do want to return to God –“He’ll heal us, He’ll restore us”
- God’s response, though, is, “What am I going to do with you? You say the right things, but then your devotion disappears in the next moment”
- His final response is what Jesus quotes
  - “What I want is compassion, not sacrifice”
- First, God wants people who really want Him, not those that pretend to want Him
  - They have evil motives and evil thoughts, so they are pretending to worship God to look good
  - God is more than commandments, though
  - He wants our heart and devotion

## *What the Pharisees Needed to Learn (9:13)*

- Second, He wants that devotion to last
  - He doesn't want our faith to take fits and starts
  - Remember what God said through Hosea
- Third, God wants us to show mercy to others the way He showed mercy to us
  - It's impossible to have a real, meaningful relationship with God if we don't have a heart that wants to help other people come to the Lord and find forgiveness like we did

## *The Question to Be Answered (9:14-17)*

- John (the Baptizer)'s disciples bring a question to Jesus
  - “The Pharisees fast, and so do we. Why don't your disciples fast too?”
- Jesus says that fasting is for times of sorrow; you don't fast when you're hopeful
- When the groom is at the wedding celebration, it's a time of feasting, not fasting
- Two points Jesus is making
  - The Jews fasted as they awaited the Messiah; He's here now
  - Fasting now that He's here would be completely inappropriate; the fasting will return once He's been taken away
- He then gives 2 different illustrations as to why they are feasting instead of fasting
  - You don't put an unshrunk patch on an already shrunk garment or it will pull away when it shrinks and cause a worse tear
  - You don't fill old wineskins with new wine because the wine, as it ferments, releases gas that will cause the old wineskin to explode
- In context, these don't make sense unless you view them as Jesus intended – these are inappropriate things to do, just like fasting when Jesus is with them
- Jesus brings something new with Him that makes it inappropriate to fast
  - This “new” thing Jesus brings is what the 4 miracles show

## *The Miracles – Desperate People (9:18-34)*

- Rather than looking at each miracle separately, let's look at the commonalities between all 4
  - Synagogue official's daughter (Jairus)
  - The woman bleeding for 12 years
  - Healing of 2 blind men
  - Casting out a demon from a man-made mute by the demon
- The first commonality across these 4 miracles is that Jesus dealt with desperate people
  - In all 4 cases, there is no one else who could solve their problem; only Jesus

## *The Miracles – Deep Faith (9:18-34)*

- The second commonality is that all 4 people have a very deep faith in Jesus
  - The synagogue official acknowledges his daughter is already dead, but says that Jesus can touch her and she will live again
    - Why does He think Jesus can raise someone from the dead?
    - The last time it happened was 800 years earlier with Elijah and Elisha
    - He understands that Jesus is the Messiah
  - The woman is convinced if she can just touch Jesus's cloak, then she'll be healed
    - She believes it doesn't even have to be a conscious act on His part
  - The two blind men
    - They call Him "Son of David", a theme through Matthew's gospel, and a term reserved only for the Messiah
    - The friends of the demon-possessed mute man
    - They believe that Jesus can overcome the dark power that has taken over this man's life

## *The Miracles – Direct Confirmation (9:18-34)*

- The 3rd commonality in 3 of the 4 miracles is that there is direct confirmation as to what is happening and that their faith is required to receive what Jesus is about to do
  - In verse 24, Jesus tells the noisy crowd to leave, as she's just asleep and not dead
  - The bleeding woman is specifically told (in vs. 22) that her faith has made her well
  - Jesus asks the two blind men if they believe He can heal them; when they answer in the affirmative, Jesus says, "It shall be done for you according to your faith."

## *The Miracles – Divided Reaction (9:18-34)*

- The last commonality among 2 of the miracles is that there is a divided reaction to the miracle
  - When Jesus tells the crowd she is just sleeping, they laugh at Him
  - When He casts out the demon, the Pharisees are quick to accuse Him of doing so by the prince of demons; others are amazed by the miracles and spread the fame of Jesus
- Verse 33 shows us the message about Jesus clearly – nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel
- And what is Jesus bringing that allows His disciples to feast rather than fast?
  - New Life!
- Jesus gives all of these people (and countless others) a new lease on life
- He completely up-ends the life they knew, but they have to have faith that Jesus is the Messiah
- Of course, the same is still true today
- Jesus teaches us the important truth – “Your faith has made you well.”

## *Compassion and Harvesting (9:35-38)*

- Verse 35 summarizes what we've seen in the gospel of Matthew so far
- When Jesus saw the people, He was filled with compassion, not disgust
- He saw people that were helpless and led astray – like sheep without a shepherd
  - The Pharisees and scribes were supposed to lead people to God as their leaders
  - Instead, they were only in it for themselves
- We have to be aware of how we consider people in the world ourselves
  - Are we disgusted by sinful people? Angry at them?
  - We should have compassion on those people led astray by Satan
- Are we a church where people can come to feel safe and hear the gospel message?  
Are you someone who people would feel safe talking to about their sins and their lives?
- Notice what Jesus says in vs. 37 – “The harvest is plentiful”
  - There's a lot of work that needs to be done; billions of people who need to hear the gospel message
- He also says, “but the workers are few”
  - The problem isn't that there's not much to harvest anymore, it's that we don't have enough people wanting to do the work of spreading the gospel

# CHAPTER 10

## *Be the Answer (10:1-4)*

- At the end of Chapter 9, Jesus tells His disciples that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few
- At the beginning of 10, He sends out His disciples with the authority to cast out demons and heal any kind of sickness or disease
- In other words, Jesus doesn't just say there aren't enough workers for the harvest; He made them the answer to the need by sending them to do the work

## *Be Ready for Two Responses (10:5-15)*

- He sends them out with explicit instructions
  - Only preach to the House of Israel
  - Preach that the kingdom of Heaven is near
  - Be compassionate and heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons
  - Don't accept any money – freely you give, freely you receive
  - Stay in houses of good reputation
  - Be ready for 2 responses
    - Some will hear and accept you with peace
    - Others won't listen; shake the dust off your feet
  - If people keep listening, keep working with them
  - If they stop listening/don't listen, move on to others that will listen

## *Sent Compassionately*

- Jesus began the work by proclaiming the good news of the kingdom
- Here in Matthew 10:1-15, He sends His apostles out to do the same
- In Matthew 28:19-20, He sends us to continue that work
- Jesus looked at sinful people and had compassion on them
- He tells His apostles to show compassion on those they come into contact with through healings and other miracles
- We must also have compassion towards those we are preaching the gospel to as well
  - They need it just as much as we did when we were told it

## *Prepare for Resistance (10:16-22)*

- He prepares them for the resistance they're about to face in the next section
  - You are sheep among wolves
- This is still an accurate picture of what it is to evangelize in the world today
- Jesus tells them (and us) to be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent and harmless as doves
  - Be wise and innocent; shrewd and harmless
  - Don't be naïve and gullible but do be innocent and gentle
- "You are sheep and they are wolves, but you still have to go"
- He then describes what they're going to suffer
  - Floggings, arrested, dragged before government leaders
- Why are they going to have to endure all of this?
  - To be able to witness to everyone
  - Bad things happen so we can preach the gospel; ever think of it that way?
  - Think about how many times this happened in the book of Acts
- That's not all, though
  - Brother will betray brother; father will betray child; children will rise up against their parents
  - The gospel will cause strife and difficulty; it will cause friction
- They/we will be hated for the gospel's sake
  - It casts a light on the sins that people commit, that they need to be rescued, and that Jesus is the only answer
  - They want to live according to their own desires and "wisdom"
- Jesus says the one who endures to the end will be saved, though
- He follows that up (in vs. 26) by telling them to be fearless
- How are we supposed to be fearless?

## *Be Fearless (10:23-33)*

- We can be fearless because all these things happened to Jesus as well
  - A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master
  - If they maligned Jesus, they'll do the same to us
  - If they called Jesus names and the devil, they'll do it to us
  - We can be fearless because we KNOW that these things will happen
- We can also be fearless because God sees what's happening
  - God sees everything, even the things done in the dark
  - He doesn't promise divine protection (all the apostles but one died horrible deaths), but He promises that God sees it happening
  - Stephen's death in Acts 7 is a good example of this
- We should also be fearless because our fear is misplaced
  - We should be afraid of God, not people – they can't destroy our souls
- The final reason we should be fearless is because we are valuable to God
  - Sparrows were sold 2 for a penny
  - They were worth almost nothing
  - But not one of them falls to the ground without God realizing it
  - God knows how many hairs are on our heads
- Jesus gives a final promise at the end of this section
  - If you recognize me before men, I will recognize you before God
  - If you deny me before men, I will deny you before God

## *Sacrificing Self (10:34-39)*

- Jesus begins vs. 34 by saying that the gospel won't create peace but division (same point He made in vss. 21-23)
- He makes 3 points here
  - We must be loyal to Jesus over our families
  - We must be loyal to Jesus over our own comfort
  - We must be loyal to Jesus over our very lives

## *Great Reward (10:40-42)*

- The first thing Jesus says in the last part of Chapter 10 is that one who receives a prophet receives a prophet's reward
- One who receives a righteous person gets a righteous person's reward
- So, the righteous person doesn't get the reward, but the one who listens to him
- We are providing others with the same reward we got when they did their work
- While there's danger in the work, the reward for doing it is great
- He also says that even the smallest efforts pay dividends, though

# CHAPTER 11

## *The Teachings of Jesus*

- Chapter 11 begins a new section in Matthew's gospel
- Every "section" of Matthew's gospel ends with words like "When Jesus finished..."
  - The Messiah starts His ministry – Matthew 7:28
  - Jesus's ability to heal and forgive sin – Matthew 11:1
  - The Parables and teachings of Jesus – Matthew 13:53
  - The Rejection of Jesus – Matthew 19:1
  - Jesus, the King – Matthew 26:1
  - Jesus Fulfills His Purpose

## *Expectations of Jesus (11:1-6)*

- John the Baptizer is in prison and sends a message to Jesus by way of one of John's disciples and asks if Jesus truly is the Messiah
- A truly interesting question, as he was proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah in Matthew 3!
- So why does John ask the question?
  - Because he has doubts
  - Jesus isn't doing the things the Jews thought the Messiah should be doing
- Jesus doesn't express His disappointment in John, but rather answers by quoting Isaiah 35:5-6, which refers to the work the Christ will do and says that those things are being done
- Note how Jesus ends His response, though
- "Blessed is any person who does not take offense at Me."
- Jesus reassures John that He is the Christ, but also challenges Jewish expectations of what He's on Earth to do
- One of the key truths about Jesus (God) and the gospel is that they don't work on our expectation level
  - What Jesus did constantly challenged people's expectations of Him
- This is something we'll come back to as we look through this section of Jesus's teaching and parables

## *The Expectations of John (11:7-15)*

- Jesus switches things up by asking the crowds what they expected out of John the Baptizer
- His question about the reed in the wind (v. 7) implies that they expected John to be swayed by popular opinion
- He asks about soft clothing (v. 8), implying he wouldn't be working hard but instead living a cushy life
- In v. 9, He asks if they expected John to be a prophet; He then confirms John was more than that
  - But the least in the kingdom is greater than John
- Confirms that John is the return of Elijah as prophesied in Malachi 3
- John is in prison now, though, because the people refused to hear his message

## *The Problem with Our Expectation (11:16-19)*

- Jesus uses an illustration to explain the problem with our expectations
- He compares us to children who complain because others people aren't doing what we want them to do
- When John came, he wasn't feasting; he was in the wilderness eating locusts and honey
  - The people concluded he was possessed by a demon
- Jesus came eating and drinking
  - The people concluded he was a glutton and a drunk
- Jesus is saying that the problem isn't John or Jesus or the gospel; the problem is our expectations
- Jesus essentially says that He and John could never have lived up to their expectations because they'd find something they didn't like and reject them for it
- This is where we first return to Jesus's point in verse 6 – "Blessed is any person who does not take offense at Me."
- Are we going to abandon Jesus because He doesn't meet our expectations, or are we going to change our expectations to meet Jesus?

## *Who Will Respond? (11:20-24)*

- Jesus renounces the cities he's performed miracle in to this point
  - Chorazin
  - Bethsaida
  - Capernaum
- Says if Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom had the same miracles performed, they would have repented
  - All Gentile cities
- They will be better off in the coming judgment than the Israelite cities
  - Why?
  - Doesn't say, but the implication is Gentiles would have repented and the Jews, who have waited for the Messiah, refuse to do so
- Notice what Jesus says
  - Many great miracles are being performed in these cities and yet they refuse to repent
- People think all they'd need is a sign to believe, but this proves that's just not true
  - We tend to think that great works of God would change us, but they very rarely do
  - Miracles DON'T automatically equal belief and repentance
- Our first big thought for this section – don't waste your wakeup call! Don't throw away your opportunity to repent.

## *Will You Respond? (11:25-30)*

- Their indifference to God's call leads Jesus to a prayer and an invitation
- His prayer is in vss. 25-27
  - Says that God has hidden the gospel call from the wise, but revealed them to infants
  - Says that this is what is pleasing in God's sight
  - 1 Corinthians 1:18-21 (Isaiah 29:14)
- God's message will stay hidden from those who are wise in their own estimation
- God crafted the message this way because He wanted people to have to look at themselves, the world, and God differently
  - It's only by looking at all these things differently that we see what Jesus is truly offering
- That's why so many people failed to respond to the miracles
- Only the humble will come to Him
- This brings us to the invitation in vss. 28-30
- Jesus makes an offer – everyone carrying around a heavy burden is welcome to take rest with Jesus
  - Rest is not elusive; its available and promised
  - But it's not available by pursuing the ways of the world
  - Only available if you go to Jesus
- Notice, though, that we trade our burdens, pain, grief, guilt, hurt, sin for 2 things
  - Jesus's yoke – which is comfortable
  - And His burden – which is light
- That means we exchange the burdens we have for the one He carries
  - We don't just dump everything on Him and get to walk away
- Why comfortable and light?
  - Jesus knows the Father; He will be our "Godly GPS" to know where God wants us to go
  - His way is much easier than the way the world tries to go
- The catch is that we have to listen to Him; follow His directions
- Only Jesus allows and offers this sort of access to God
  - John 14:6

# CHAPTER 12

## *Teachings of Jesus – The Sabbath (12:114)*

- One of the temptations of our faith is that we want to boil it down into a set of rules and precepts
- The problem with that is we then tend to focus on the rules rather than the reasoning and purpose behind the rules
  - We miss the intent of faith by focusing on the “how we do it”
- At the beginning of Chapter 12, the Pharisees show that they’ve fallen into this trap with the Mosaic Law
- The disciples are going through the fields on the Sabbath and picking ears of grain to eat from other people’s fields
  - Deuteronomy 23:24-25 gives allowance for this, but not on the Sabbath
  - Harvesting was considered work – a definition of “work” that had been decided and passed down for 1000 years at this point – but not one as defined in the Law of Moses
- What was the intention of the Sabbath? To limit what Jews could and could not do?
- Jesus give 2 examples in verses 3-5 to show that their thinking about the Sabbath was incorrect
  - In vss. 3-4, He mentions David, who in 1 Samuel 21, are running for their lives from King Saul
  - They’re hungry and go into the Temple and eat the show bread, which was for the priests only to eat
  - Jesus is not saying that it was lawful for David to do this, but it was justified because he and his men had a need
  - In vs. 5, Jesus says that priests working in the Temple on the Sabbath are not in violation of the Law even though they are preparing a sacrifice
- The point is that even the most conservative of Pharisees would agree that there is “work” that is acceptable on the Sabbath
- In vss. 6-8, Jesus explains the purpose and intention of the Sabbath
  - First, He says that something greater than the Temple is here
  - Note, He doesn’t say someone but something
  - The Temple was the place of worship and atonement for Jews; it’s where the presence of God dwelt
  - Jesus says He is greater than the Temple, and He’s revealing that the importance of the Temple takes precedence over the Sabbath
  - That’s Jesus’s point in vs. 5 regarding the priests’ work in the Temple on the Sabbath
  - Next, He quotes Hosea 6:6 – “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”
  - He said if they understood this, they wouldn’t have condemned His innocent disciples, who were hungry and needed food

- Lastly, Jesus says that He's lord of the Sabbath
- Quite a declaration because no mere human can claim to be above the Law
- God gave the Jews the Sabbath to allow them to have a day of rest, not to keep them from working when needed
- In vss. 9-14, He proves His teaching by entering the synagogue and healing a man with a withered hand
- The Pharisees ask Jesus if it's okay to heal on the Sabbath
  - The Pharisees would say no, that's "work"
- He asks a question, proving that they break the Sabbath when they need to or it's convenient for them to do so
  - His question shows that the animal's welfare is greater than the Sabbath law
- Then He says that a person is of more value than an animal
- Therefore, it's lawful to do good on a Sabbath and heal someone
- After He heals the man, they conspire to kill Him
  - They should have been overjoyed that this man's deformity was removed
- What can we learn here?
  - First, none of God's laws are random; He has a purpose for all of them
  - God can't be boiled down to a mere set of rules as the Pharisees did
    - This is important to realize because we tend to break the laws we see as nonsensical \*cough speed limit cough\*
  - Second, we should seek out God's purpose in the laws He gives us
  - We need an accurate knowledge of why God gave us a command or law to properly apply it to our lives
  - Finally, we should view all of God's commandments through a lens of love, compassion, mercy, and grace
  - In Matthew 22, Jesus tells the Pharisees that the Law and the prophets are built upon the commandments to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself

## *Who Jesus Is and What He Does (12:15-21)*

- Interestingly, Matthew seems to hit the brakes on Jesus's teachings for these 7 verses to explain who Jesus is and what He does, and he quotes a passage out of Isaiah 42:1-4 to do it
- Verse 18 contains many description of the Christ that were seen in Jesus
  - He is God's servant
  - He was chosen by God
  - The Holy Spirit descended on Him when He was baptized
- Jesus is the Savior and servant we need
- What task is given to Jesus to fulfill?
  - He proclaims justice to the Gentiles (vs. 18, 20)
  - He works in humility; He doesn't argue, fight, or shout (vs. 19)
  - Luke 9:51-56 records an incident where a Samaritan village rejects Jesus, so James and John want to call down fire to destroy the town, but Jesus says no
  - He will do His work gently (v. 20)
  - He won't break a reed or extinguish a smoldering wick
  - He will bring hope to the world (v. 21)
- Matthew places this here to show that, just because the Pharisees are plotting to kill Him, Jesus won't strong-arm them with legions of angels, or smite them for their rejection
  - He just moves on to other people who are willing to have faith

## *Fruit Says Something (12:22-37)*

- In vs. 22, a blind and mute man is brought before Jesus
- Jesus heals him so he can see and speak
- The crowd is so amazed that they (rightly) consider Him to be the Messiah
- In vs. 24, the Pharisees make a ridiculous accusation against Jesus
  - “He casts out demons in the name of Beelzebul”
- This is one of the most ridiculous lines of reasoning in Scripture – He is casting out demons by the power of Satan
  - Important to note that people reject Jesus for completely illogical reasons
- He just miraculously healed two people and they reject it out of hand
- In vss. 25-29, Jesus takes this accusation and hammers them
- Jesus is clearly doing work that is against Satan, so He can’t be doing His work by Satan’s power, because then Satan’s kingdom would be divided
  - Probably not a bad reminder for us in the United States right now
- Without saying it yet, Jesus is saying “Actions mean something; A man’s fruit says something about the man.”
- What Jesus’s actions proclaim is that Satan is bound like the strong man while He plunders the strong man’s house
  - 1 John 3:8, Hebrews 2:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:56-57
- We have no need to fear Satan because Jesus is on our side

## *A Warning (12:30-32)*

- In vss. 30-32, Jesus gives us a warning
- Whoever is not with Jesus is against Jesus; there is no neutral ground
- This leads to vss. 31-32
  - This scripture scares a lot of people, and it is taught hundreds of ways
  - “What is the unforgivable sin and have I committed it?”
- Look at what Jesus says in 31 – I’ve come to forgive all sins and blasphemy
  - There are no loopholes for forgiveness of sin
  - There’s no “gotcha!”
  - He’s conquered Satan, bound him up, and we don’t have to fear him
- So what sin can’t be forgiven?
- When you have a heart so closed and hardened that you attribute the work of the God to Satan and demons
- The Pharisees accusation made a statement about their fruit and who they are
- If you’re asking the question of whether you’ve committed the unforgivable sin, then no you haven’t because you still have a heart that cares for God and His teachings
- Their heart is so closed they are unwilling to listen
- Many people today still do this today by declaring God, His laws, and His works as evil

## *Fruit Says Something (12:22-37)*

- Jesus returns to the idea that your fruit says something about you in verse 33
- “Make the tree good and its fruit good, or the tree bad and its fruit bad because a tree is known by its fruit”
- Fruit says something – our words tell what treasure is in our hearts
- That’s why, in vss. 36-37, Jesus says our words justify or condemn us
- The Pharisees’ accusation essentially tells everyone that they are children of Satan and will never repent
  - One thing to reject Jesus; quite another to attribute God’s work to Satan

## *Rejection (12:38-50)*

- The scribes and Pharisees' request for a sign seems reasonable, but Jesus has been performing miracles all along
  - Important to note that this is the same audience as the previous points
- This request for a sign is their answer to Jesus's saying they are bad fruit
- They just got a sign that was so significant many people are wondering if Jesus is truly the Messiah
- The question isn't about Jesus verifying Himself as the Messiah, but instead that these signs will never be enough for them
  - They're essentially saying that these miracles aren't enough for them to believe that Jesus is the Son of God
  - This still happens today
- "If God would just do xyz, I'd believe!"
- The problem is that the heart of someone like that will never believe because they'd always explain it away as something it's not
  - This is really "I want God to meet me on my terms because I'm not going to meet Him on His terms"
- In vs. 39, Jesus says, "You'll get your sign, though – the sign of Jonah"
  - Resurrection after 3 days
- In vss. 41-42, Jesus mentions the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South who understood the importance of what they did, but the Pharisees will stand condemned because Jesus is greater than Jonah and Solomon, yet they reject Him
- In vss. 43-45, Jesus gives an illustration of what a rejection of the heart looks like
- He mentions unclean spirits, but this is really about a person's rejection of Jesus
  - We can see this because He mentions in vs. 45 that this is the way it will be with this generation
- They have purged the wickedness in their lives, but they haven't replaced it with God
- Instead, they left the house vacant and ready to be recaptured by the evil and his friends
  - Their exile left Israel purged and cleansed, but they didn't return to God afterwards, but instead replaced it with sin, as Jesus mentions over and over
- This is a worse condition because you deceive yourself into thinking not doing certain sins means a clean life and closeness to God
- We can cleanse ourselves of sin, but if we don't also devote ourselves to Christ, then we're going to be a spiritual shipwreck

- God wants people whose hearts are filled with a love for Him
- The Pharisees have only gone halfway by purging some sins but still not understanding what Jesus quotes at the beginning of the chapter
  - Matthew 12:7
- Knowing God's word doesn't automatically translate into being His servant
  - 2 Peter 2:20-22
- While Jesus is still speaking, His mother and brothers show up to take Him away (probably home and into hiding, where He won't embarrass them)
- Just like with the illustration of the unclean spirits, Matthew is showing that Jesus has created a new reality where His blood relations aren't His true family
  - Those that listen to Him and do God's will are His family

# CHAPTER 13

## *Parable of the Sower (13:1-9)*

- When a crowd formed to hear Jesus teach, he got in a boat to separate Himself just a little bit, but then started talking to them in parables
- Parable of the sower is the only one recorded here (vss. 3-9)
- Sower is casting seed
  - Some lands on the road and birds ate that seed
  - Some lands on rocky ground with no soil, so it sprouts but withers quickly
  - Some lands among thorns/weeds, and gets choked out
  - Some lands on fertile ground and produces grain – 100x, 60x, and 30x
- Ends with, “Whoever has ears, let him hear”
  - That’s it! No explanation given!

## *Why Parables? (13:10-13)*

- His disciples then come and ask why He teaches in parables
- He starts His answer by saying His disciples already have an understanding that the crowds don't have
  - They've been given the knowledge to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; the disciples have and more will be given to them
  - Less will be given to those who have nothing
- He goes on to say that they see but don't see; they hear but don't understand
  - In other words, they're seeking Him out, but not because they are truly interested in the kingdom of Heaven and obedience to God
  - Instead, they are there for what they can get out of Jesus (miracles, healings, etc.)

## *Proving His Point (13:14-15)*

- He then quotes Isaiah to show that the Jews are still the same in Jesus's time as they were 700 years earlier in Isaiah's time
- The hearts of Jews are dull and hard; they're hard of hearing and their eyes are closed
- Notice that it's not that they can't look, or hear, or seek God; it's just that they are lazy and unconcerned about it enough that they don't want to
- So why does Jesus use parables in teaching the crowd?
  - He wants to know who would look deeper into what Jesus is saying
  - Who wants to open their eyes? Who wants to really start listening? Whose heart becomes soft and open to the seed?
- What Jesus isn't doing is dumbing down the gospel message so the crowds will respond to it
  - Doing the opposite, in fact
- He's teaching God's truth in a way to see who really wants to learn it and who will be dismissive of it because it's "too hard"
- Same goes for us today
  - We can't water down the Bible or pull its punches so people will respond
  - They deserve the whole truth on which to make an informed decision about the gospel message and the work they'll have to do for God after that

## *The Sower Explained (13:18-23)*

- Jesus then explains the parable of the sower to His disciples
- He makes it clear through the explanation that He was speaking about spiritual things with the parable
- Use His explanation to honestly assess what type of soil you are
- The hard path is when someone hears the word of the kingdom but doesn't understand it, Satan comes and snatches it away from them
  - These are the ones with dismissive hearts who don't care what God wants
- The rocky ground is someone who receives it with joy, but then their faith stops growing and dies
  - When life gets difficult through trials and persecution, they leave God
  - We don't grow the roots of our faith and God stays superficial
- If someone's been a Christian for a while, they aren't in the hard path category
- Why would someone be a part of the 2nd group?
  - Hebrews 6:1-6 tells us – because we remain in the elementary principles of God's word rather than rolling up our sleeves and digging into the hard stuff
- We can't stay with shallow roots and expect to remain in Christ
  - One duty of the Church is to help new Christians grow their root system enough that they are able to stand on their own
  - But we have to do our part!
- The thorny ground is someone who hears the word, but the worries and concerns of life choke it off before it grows fruit
  - We can't be concerned about material things or we are in danger of becoming unfruitful for God
  - Notice that Jesus doesn't say we fall away; we just remain unfruitful
- Lastly, we have the good soil; this is the person who hears the word and understands its power
  - This is the person, going back to 10-11 that truly wants to be obedient to God
  - They dig deeper into the word to get answers, to learn how to love like God, to be productive for God
- We can grow and yield an amazing crop of 100x, 60x, or 30x
- If you're not bearing fruit, you're one of the other types of soils
- If you're not reaching out with the gospel to others, you're one of the other types of soils
- Be honest about this with yourself!

- You CAN become one of the other types
- It's not a once this, always this sort of thing

## *Parable of the Weeds (13:24-30)*

- Contains a picture of God's sovereignty
- A man sows good seed, but his enemies also sow weeds among the wheat
- Servants ask if they should weed the field
- "No, you might get good stuff, too. We'll wait until it's the harvest, then separate out the good from the bad then."
- Vs. 30 is the key
- God would rather let evil exist than cost someone who believes their faith

## *Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven (13:31-33)*

- Jesus then gives 2 short (one line) parables about the kingdom of Heaven
- The mustard seed
  - This tiny seed grows into a tree so big that birds nest in its branches
- The leaven
  - A woman mixes leaven (yeast) into about 50 pounds of flour until it was all leavened
- What's the message Jesus is trying to convey here about the kingdom of God?
  - That something small and insignificant (starting with His 12 apostles) could completely diffuse through human societies to become so significant as to change the course of the world

## *Purpose of the Parables (13:34-35)*

- Interestingly, these verses say that Jesus didn't teach the crowds in anything EXCEPT for parables
- Matthew then quotes Psalm 78:2
- Psalm 78:1-4 is about the hidden secrets of the past being told to the coming generation
  - In other words, Jesus is telling these parables to explain the hidden things of God
- Understanding these parables requires effort, though
  - As mentioned before (Matthew 13:10-17), Jesus doesn't want everyone to follow Him – just those truly desirous to do be obedient to God

## *The Parable of the Weeds Explained (13:36-43)*

- Again, notice that Jesus offers no explanation to the crowds about the meaning of the parables
  - He's not trying to "dumb down" the teaching of God's truths
- His disciples come in and ask Him to explain the parables, though
  - The one who sows the seed is Jesus
  - The seed He sows represents the sons of the kingdom of God
  - The weed seeds represent the disobedient majority of people
  - The field is the world
  - The harvest is the coming Judgment where all people will be "harvested" and judged
- Our goal is not to pull the weeds, but to transform the weeds into wheat

## *The Parables of Hidden Treasure and the Pearl (13:44-46)*

- Just teaches that the kingdom of Heaven is a treasure hidden in a field, which a man finds and then sells everything he owns to buy the field
- Then He mentions that it's like a merchant buying pearls and he finds one of great value, so sells everything to buy it
- The picture Jesus gives us is that the kingdom of Heaven is worth everything we could give for it – it's priceless
  - The problem is that most people don't see it that way
  - Isaiah 53:3 – Isaiah prophesied that this would be the case
- Notice in both parables that the person that finds the treasure and pearl are searching for those things; they didn't just stumble upon them

### The Parables of Hidden Treasure and the Pearl (13:44-46)

- Another point to make here is that spiritual treasures are hidden and need to be sought
  - In both of the explanations Jesus gives in this chapter, He mentions that He speaks in parables because they're HARDER to understand
- This leads to the last point to be made, and that is that we have to give up everything for this treasure
  - Luke 9:23
  - Colossians 3:9-10

## *The Parable of the Dragnet (13:47-50)*

- The parable of the dragnet is essentially the same as the parable of the weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13:36-43)
- The net will catch all kinds of “fish” and when it’s finally been collected, the good fish will be separated from the bad fish

## *Do You Understand? (13:51-52)*

- After explaining all the parables, Jesus asks His disciples if they understand
- They say, “Yes”
  - Do you think they really did?
  - I’m not convinced...
- He then mentions that every scribe that becomes a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a head of household who brings out treasure that’s both new and old
  - The scribes understood the Law of Moses
  - They could apply what they knew from the Law to show Jesus as the Messiah

## *Returning to Nazareth (13:53-58)*

- Jesus went back to Nazareth to teach in the synagogue
- It says they were astonished by His wisdom and His miraculous powers, but that they also took offense at Him
  - “We know Jesus, the son of the carpenter. Where would he learn all of these things?”
- He left without performing many miracles because of their unbelief
- This is probably Matthew’s account that parallels Luke 4:16-30

# CHAPTER 14

## *John the Baptizer is Killed (14:1-12)*

- John baptized Jesus in Matthew 3
- Arrested and jailed right after that in Matthew 4:12
  - Matthew doesn't explain why John was arrested in Chapter 4, but we learn here that Herod Antipas had John arrested for condemning his marriage to Herodias
  - Herodias had divorced herself from Herod's halfbrother, Herod II (also called Philip) to marry Herod Antipas
- John sends his disciples to ask Jesus if He is the Christ in Matthew 11
- Now, John is killed by Herod Antipas
  - Son of Herod the Great, the king that killed all the children in Bethlehem and its vicinity when Jesus was born
  - Herodias's daughter dances for Antipas during his birthday
  - He's so pleased by it that he promises her anything; she asks for John's head on a platter
- Herod believed that John had been raised from the dead and could do miracles
- Herod arrests him but doesn't kill him for fear the people will revolt
  - They regarded John as a prophet
- After John is beheaded, his disciples claim his body and bury it
- They then went to report his death to Jesus
- Note that John wasn't killed over a misunderstanding
  - He was killed because his message that Herod and Herodias were unlawfully married was heard loud and clear, and Herodias didn't like it

## *Feeding the 5,000 (14:13-21)*

- When He hears about John, Jesus moves to a secluded place by Himself
- The people find Him anyway, and He feels compassion for them and starts to miraculously heal them
- Evening comes and they are in the middle of nowhere
- It's well passed dinnertime, so the disciples tell Jesus to send them away to buy food for themselves
- Jesus tells them to give the people something to eat
  - He knows they don't have enough food to feed the crowd
  - This is a test for the disciples, and they fail it spectacularly
- They say we don't have anything but 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish
- He blesses the food and tells his disciples to distribute it
- Everyone ate all they wanted and there were 12 baskets of food left over
- There were 5,000 men who ate
  - Total amount of people, including women and children, was probably between 10,000 and 15,000 people
- This is our first picture that Jesus is the bread that satisfies
  - People think they have to leave Jesus to be satisfied; to get what we want or need
- Not only does Jesus provide for His followers, but He gives abundantly beyond what they need

## *Walking on the Water (14:22-33)*

- Jesus immediately makes His disciples get in the boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee while He dismisses the crowds
- They start out (remember, it's after 6 p.m. now and pretty dark) while He goes up on the mountain to pray
- Early in the morning, somewhere around 3 a.m., the disciples are struggling against a contrary sea and Jesus comes toward them walking on the water
  - Mark 6:48 says that He intended to pass them by as they struggled in the boat
- They see Him, though, and are frightened because they think He's a ghost
- He says, "Take courage; it's me."
- Peter wants proof, so he tells Jesus to command him to come out of the boat and walk to Him on the water
  - That is a courageous and bold request!
  - It's also a faith-filled request
- Jesus says, "Come!"
  - Would you have the faith to step out of that boat?
  - It's the middle of the night, the waves are high, the weather's not great, and Jesus could be a ghost
- So Peter does! He walks on water towards Jesus!
- But then he sees the wind and the waves and starts to sink
  - Calls out, "Lord, save me!"
- Jesus grabs him and says, "Why did you doubt?"
- Why did Peter doubt?
  - Peter doubted because of what he saw – the wind and waves, the situation he found himself in
  - He doubted that Jesus would save him, or keep him from sinking, or help him
- Time for Jesus to do some teaching
- In verse 32, after they get back in the boat, the wind stops
- They worship Him, clearly attributing the calming of the wind to Him
- Jesus is in full control of the situation at all times
- Trust in Jesus all the time, no matter what is happening in your life because He is in control

## *More healing (14:34-36)*

- When they get to the other side, the people there recognize Him and spread the word to bring their sick for healing
- Jesus heals them
  - They plead with Him to touch the hem of His cloak
  - He allows it and they are healed
- We must recognize Jesus as the Son of God
  - He can provide for us, satisfy us, give more abundantly than we need
  - He can calm the storms around us
  - He can heal us
  - We can trust Him with our lives

# CHAPTER 15

## *Invalidating the Word of God (15:1-9)*

- Jesus is in the Galilee area, yet some scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem come to ask Him a question
  - This is around a 95 mile trip from Jerusalem if you don't go through Samaria
  - FOR A QUESTION!
  - They've traveled this far to try and challenge Jesus
- They ask, "Why do your disciples break the traditions of the elders?"
  - They acknowledge that these are traditions passed down by the Jews of old in regard to washing hands before they eat bread
  - The Law required that priests ceremonially wash their hands before making sacrifices for the people
  - There's nothing in the Law about "normal people" washing before eating food
  - The Jews of old probably bound this instruction for priests on everyone

- It's not a bad idea to wash your hands before you eat, right?
  - We know now that it helps curb the spread of disease, which they didn't know then
- But it wasn't the Law!
  - We do the same thing today, taking things told to a specific group of people and making it apply to everyone
  - This is binding something that God didn't bind
  - Same thing the Jews tried to do to Gentile converts, culminating in Acts 15
- Look at Jesus's response
- He doesn't answer the question directly, but instead essentially says, "Why are you breaking God's actual Law for the sake of your traditions?"
- The Pharisees had created a tradition that they could dedicate their money to the temple contribution so they didn't have to take care of their parents financially
  - Do you think they really helped their parents or do you think they just said they were going to?
- This, Jesus says, contradicts God's Law to honor your parents
- He then says they're acting like hypocrites, just like the Jews of old did in the days of Isaiah, and then quotes Isaiah 29:13
- Worship with the wrong heart is worthless and a waste of time
  - The Pharisees have made laws out of their own human rules
- Jesus's real accusation against them (vs. 6) is that they've invalidated the Word of God
- Why is that such a big deal?
  - We are setting up our own rules and making them equal to God's rules
  - We are also making rules that are contrary to God's rules and then using those to justify why we don't do what God wants
- There are tons of different examples of this in today's world
  - Sexual immorality is probably the biggest one
  - Adultery, homosexuality, the purpose for baptism, how we are saved, etc. are others

## *The Heart of the Problem (15:10-14)*

- Jesus calls the crowd together to make an important teaching
  - It's not what goes into the mouth, but what comes out of the mouth that defiles a person
- The disciples come up in vs. 12 and ask if He knew that the Pharisees were offended by what Jesus said
  - Notice that Jesus is unapologetic about this
  - He wasn't being offensive, but rather telling a truth the Pharisees didn't like
- Jesus responds by saying God will uproot any plant He didn't plant
  - How? Through His word
  - Jesus's teachings are sorting people just like He said it would
  - They're offended by Jesus teaching the truth, then they aren't planted by God
  - Leave them alone or they will lead you straight into a pit

## *An Explanation (15:15-20)*

- Peter asks for an explanation of this
- After a slight rebuff, Jesus explains
  - Food is digested by the body and eliminated
  - Food laws and ceremonial cleansing laws were about the need to be Holy before God
  - What comes out of the mouth comes from our hearts
  - Sin comes out of the heart
- Jesus has taught about the heart now on 5 occasions
  - Matthew 5:8
  - Matthew 6:31
  - Matthew 12:34
  - Matthew 13:15
  - Matthew 15:18
- Why?
  - It's easier to look righteous than be right in the heart
  - It's easier to look pure than to be pure
  - It's easier to look good than be good
  - Worshipping God with the wrong heart is a waste of time!
  - Doing Godly things with the wrong attitude doesn't store up treasure in Heaven
- We allow ourselves to maintain defiled hearts while keeping the outside looking good
  - White-washed sepulchers
- This is a critical obstacle to faith and having hearts that draw near to God

## *The Caananite Woman (15:21-28)*

- Jesus leaves Galilee to go to the region of Tyre and Sidon
  - He leaves Israel proper to go to a Gentile area nearby
- A Caananite woman from there calls out for Jesus to drive a demon from her daughter
  - Caananite – Implies an historical enemy of the Jews
- Jesus completely ignores her to start
  - Jesus will do this at times to test the asker's faith
  - Matthew 9:27-30, 20:29-34
- In fact, it's His silence that brings the disciples to Him to tell her to leave them alone
  - It would make sense that if He isn't going to respond to her incessant shouting, the least He could do is send her away so they can hear
- Jesus says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel"
  - Curious because they didn't ask Him to heal her, and we see that He's not going to send her away without helping her
- She finally makes it before Him and asks for help yet again
- He rebuts her by saying, "You don't give the kids' bread to the dogs"
- She replies with, "Even the dogs get some crumbs, though"
- He tells her she has great faith and heals her daughter
- Her knowledge and faith in Jesus are remarkable because she understands that the Messiah wasn't just meant for Israel, but for everyone
- She is persistent and refuses to leave without what she's asking for
- Only Jesus will satisfy her, and she even remarks that the crumbs from His proverbial table are enough to satisfy her
- Her response and faith set up the rest of the chapter as a call to come to Jesus's table

## *Healing the Crowds (15:29-31)*

- He leaves that area and returns to the Sea of Galilee, but stays on the Eastern (Gentile) side of the lake among the Decapolis
  - Perhaps He only went there to encounter this woman?
  - Mark 7:31
- These Gentiles bring their sick and afflicted for healing
- He heals them without saying, “I’m here for Israel” like He did to the woman
- After He heals them, they start glorifying the God of Israel
  - Remember, these are Gentiles who have heard of Jehovah God but they don’t worship Him – until now

## *Feeding of the 4,000 Men (15:32-39)*

- Notice the parallels between this section and Matthew 14:13-21 with the feeding of the 5,000 men
- Jesus feels compassion for the Gentile crowds that have been with Him for 3 days with nothing to eat
  - His compassion for the Gentiles matches His compassion for the Jews
- The disciples ask, “Where are we to get loaves for this large a crowd?”
  - DID THEY LEARN NOTHING!?!?!?
- Jesus asks, “How much do we have?”
- They answer with “7 loaves and a few small fish”
- Jesus does the same thing here He did in Matthew 14
  - Gives thanks and starts passing it out
- Everyone eats their fill
- Seven large baskets of food are collected this time afterwards
- The message we saw in Matthew 14 is that Jesus provides, satisfies, and gives more abundantly than we need
- We see the same message here, but this is specifically related to Gentiles now, not just the House of Israel
- Gentiles receive equal compassion and equal provision from God
- After feeding them, Jesus sends the crowds away and gets in a boat to the region of Magadan
  - Most people think this is an alternate name for Magdala, where Mary Magdalene is from
  - Not her last name, but a location identifier

# CHAPTER 16

## *Hard Teachings of Jesus (16:1-12)*

- The Pharisees and Sadducees come to Jesus to test Him
  - The only other time we read of these two groups together is with John the Baptizer in Matthew 3
  - They completely disagreed with one another theologically, but they had a hatred for Jesus in common
- They ask for a sign from Heaven
  - As if all the other miracles He's performed aren't good enough or what they're looking for
  - What's the test here?
  - They wanted Jesus to "perform" for them on command
  - They didn't come seeking truth; this was a power play
- Jesus tells them that they can interpret signs very well through the example of the weather He uses
  - Essentially, He says, "You've got all the signs you need"
  - If this was an issue of belief, then I think He would have given them a sign
  - But it wasn't that at all
- Instead, He calls them an evil and adulterous generation
  - They've already committed adultery on God and followed the lusts of their hearts
  - They've already made up their minds that they don't want what God has to offer in Jesus as the Messiah
- However, He tells them, "You'll get your sign – the sign of Jonah"
- The sign of Jonah
  - Jonah didn't perform miracles or signs – Jonah IS the sign
  - Spent 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the fish
  - Many people think Jonah died and was resurrected when the fish spit him up on dry land
  - I don't see any evidence for this in the book of Jonah myself
  - Jesus spent 3 days and nights in the belly of the earth before being resurrected
- Jesus tells them without telling them that His resurrection would be the only other sign they'll get that He is God's Son
- They cross the Sea of Galilee but forget to bring bread
- Jesus warns them to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees
  - Because of the Passover where Jews had to get rid of any leaven in their house, it became a symbol for the spreading nature of corruption and evil
- Teachings are powerful and they matter
- We can't just "Love God and worship Him in our own way"
- Jesus tells His disciples (and us) that we need to pay attention to and scrutinize people's teachings because they can become corrupted and evil

- Just because a teaching is believed by most people or because some of the information is good doesn't make it all correct
- His disciples miss the point, though
  - They think He's talking about how they forgot the bread
- He says, "Don't you remember the 5,000 or the 4,000? How can you think I'm talking about bread?"
- Looking at verse 8, Jesus tells us that He takes this as more than just a misunderstanding – "O you of little faith"!!
  - This isn't a lack of listening issue; they lack faith!
  - They're focused on the physical; the fleshly
  - Jesus's concern is sooo much bigger than bread, though
  - It's easy to get distracted by the mundane and simple things of life and to stop thinking spiritually
  - Remember Martha in Luke 10? "Martha was distracted by her preparations"

## *Peter's Confession of the Christ (16:13-20)*

- When they got to Caesarea Philippi (on the coast), Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do the people say I am?”
  - John the Baptizer (returned from the dead), Elijah (returned from the dead), Jeremiah (returned from the dead), or one of the other prophets (returned from the dead)
- Then He asks, “And who do you think I am?”
  - The “you” is plural, so Jesus is addressing all the apostles
- Peter answers, “You’re the Christ!”
  - Do you think Peter was the only one that thought that?
  - Probably not
  - I think he answered for all the apostles, but he’s the only one that answered
- Some say that Jesus saying that God revealed this to Peter meant that God sort of poured the answer into his brain
- That would defeat the purpose of the question, though!
  - Jesus knows that God knows the answer already
  - He wants to know what the apostles believe
- What Jesus is praising is that this knowledge didn’t come through natural observation
  - Seeing Jesus and the miracles didn’t automatically lead everyone to this conclusion
  - They thought He was a lot of people, if they believed He was from God at all, but no one was thinking the Messiah
- The disciples knew God and drew this conclusion because they knew God
- What Jesus says next is very controversial and doesn’t need to be
- Jesus says, “You are rock and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”
- The question is if Jesus is going to build His church on Peter as the rock or the confession Peter made
  - The anti-Catholic crowd says it can’t be Peter because that would make him the first Pope
  - Absolutely nothing in this single verse (or the NT) says anything of the sort
  - You HAVE TO read that into this, if that’s how you take it
  - It can’t be the confession He means, though, because Jesus explicitly says in vs. 19 that He will give the keys of the kingdom to Peter
- Jesus is giving Peter charge of the kingdom while He’s away
- The rest of Scripture supports this!
  - Peter gives the first gospel sermon

- Peter is the first to bring Gentiles into the Church with Cornelius
- Peter is the first apostle that Paul visits/stays with after his conversion
- Peter's name is ALWAYS the first mentioned in the listings of the apostles
- Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16, Acts 1:13
- Peter consistently spoke for the apostles
- Acts 1:15, 2, 3:6, 3:12, 4:8, 5:3, 5:8, 5:29, 15:7
- After saying all of this, Jesus gives them "strict orders" not to tell others that He was the Christ
  - Why not? Wouldn't He want that?
  - Goes back to His not forcing anyone to believe He's who He is
  - He only wants to be followed by people who want to follow God

## *Foretelling His Death (16:21-23)*

- It's at this point that Jesus starts telling his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem to die
- Notice that this included His suffering at the hands of the Jewish religious elite, and that He would be killed and resurrected on the 3rd day
- In other words, none of what happened was a surprise to Jesus
  - He knew what He had come to Earth to do and how it would happen
- This had to come as a shock to His disciples
  - He's the Messiah! They literally just said that 5 verses ago!
  - He's supposed to drive Rome out of Israel and create the new Pax Solomoni!
- So, Peter takes Jesus aside and says, "There's no way what you just said is gonna happen!"
- I think Peter finally sees Jesus for who He is
  - Someone able to walk on water
  - Make food from 1 person's lunch for thousands and thousands of people
  - Raise people from the dead
  - Heal the sick without so much as a touch – just speaking the words
- Peter's saying, "They can't kill you. They can't even touch you, if you don't want them to!"
  - And Peter's right!
  - That's why Jesus says, "Get behind me, Satan!"
- Jesus could simply choose not to go to Jerusalem, and therefore not die
- He could use His Godly power and not allow them to even touch Him, if that's what He wanted
- This temptation of Jesus to not go to the cross as God's will invokes is very real to Jesus
- I think this is why Jesus also says, "You're not thinking of God's purposes, but men's."
- This is how nefarious Satan can be – Peter LOOKS like he has God's interests at heart because he wants Jesus to live, and to be the Messiah he knows Jesus is
  - Peter is doing what HE thinks is best for Jesus, but it's not what God needs and wants from Jesus

## *The Cost of Discipleship (16:24-28)*

- Jesus uses this opportunity to give a teaching we should internalize as quickly as possible – “You have to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.”
- This is a very controversial and countercultural teaching
  - We’re supposed to be able to do, act, think, say, believe whatever we want!
- Lots of people want to point at particular groups and say, “See! You can’t do that if you want to follow Jesus!”
- This is a call to everyone, though, not just those specific groups
  - Everyone has desires that must be denied; some of them are just more culturally accepted than others
- This is the message of the cross – “I died for you. Now you must die for me.”
- He explains in vss. 25-26 that we have a choice between 2 worlds and 2 lives
  - We can have this life in this world, or we can have eternal life in the world to come, not both
  - It’s one or the other
- The way of the world and the way of God are complete opposites
  - They’re not the same general direction or the same general path
  - A step in one direction means moving directly away from the other
  - That’s why most people don’t want to move from the starting square
- Jesus continues by saying, “Why accomplish great things here only to lose them in the life to come? Why enjoy the temporary and lose the permanent?”
- But Jesus also explains that there’s a reward for paying that price
- If we are faithful to God, then God will repay us for that; likewise, if we are not faithful, we’ll also be repaid for making the poor choice
- Jesus became the example of this when He was resurrected after being in the grave for 3 days, then God glorified Him and sat Him at His right hand; placed all things under His feet
- The cross is the symbol of our decision to choose God no matter what

# CHAPTER 17

## *The Transfiguration (17:1-13)*

- Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on the mountain by themselves
- He is transfigured before them
  - Face shines like the sun
  - Garments become as white as light
- Greek word here is “metamorph” – “to transform”
- Then Moses and Elijah are there and talking to Jesus
  - They KNEW it was Moses and Elijah, despite never having seen them before
- Peter offers to build each one of them their own tent
  - It seems like Peter wants to keep them there, as he wants to build them each their own living space
- Then a bright cloud overshadows everything and speaks!
  - All of this parallels an event out of Moses’s life from Exodus 34
- God says, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.”
- The last time we saw something like this is Jesus’s baptism
- Notice that God says, “Listen to Him” not “them”
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets
  - Moses represented the Law
  - Elijah represented the Prophets
- This is a picture of Jesus’s superiority over them
- What God says is a reference to Psalm 2:7 and His giving the nations as Jesus’s inheritance
- When they’re off the mountain, Jesus orders them not to tell anyone what they saw until Jesus has risen from the dead
- Peter mentions this event again in 2 Peter 1:16-21
- They ask Him why the scribes say Elijah must come first
  - He tells them that he must, and he did!
  - John the Baptizer was the reincarnation of Elijah
  - They killed him because they didn’t recognize him as such
- He tells them that He is going to likewise suffer at their hands
  - They didn’t recognize Jesus as the Messiah, just as they didn’t recognize John as Elijah

## *An Unbelieving Generation (17:14-21)*

- While Jesus, Peter, James, and John were on the mountain something was happening with the rest of His disciples
- As soon as they rejoin the other apostles and disciples, a man runs up to Jesus and falls on his knees and begs Jesus to cure his son
  - “Your disciples tried and couldn’t cure him from his seizures and suffering.”
- It isn’t that the disciples ignored the man and his son – they tried and couldn’t cure him
  - Remember Matthew 10:1 – Jesus gave His disciples authority over unclean spirits and to heal all diseases and afflictions
- Since they couldn’t heal his son, the man goes straight to Jesus instead of giving up and calling them phonies
- Why couldn’t they heal him?
- Jesus tells us in vs. 17
  - “You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?”
- The man asks for Jesus to heal his son, and Jesus’s response is, “You’re an unbelieving and perverse generation”
  - This isn’t addressed to the disciples, but the crowd
- This shows that there’s a problem with the people
  - We’ll get to the disciples’ problem in a few verses
- Jesus’s use of this address – “an unbelieving and perverse generation” – is a reference to a sermon Moses gave before his death
  - Deuteronomy 32:4-5, 18-20
- Jesus is connecting the people to the generation that died in the wilderness because of their lack of faith
  - They were a perverse generation because they dealt corruptly with God and then forgot Him altogether
- Jesus then casts out the demon and his son is immediately healed
- The healing isn’t the point of the passage, though
  - We don’t see the father or son’s response to the healing
  - Instead, we cut to the disciples coming to Jesus
- The disciples come to Jesus and ask why they couldn’t cast the demon out
  - Now we get to the problem with the disciples
- “Because of your meager faith”
- Notice Jesus doesn’t say, “This was a hard demon” or “This healing was a little bit tricky” or “You need more practice”

- It's just "You lack faith"
- Jesus continues to push this truth with His next example
- "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could move mountains"
  - Paul writes of having faith to move mountains in 1 Corinthians 13:2 as well
- Does He mean this literally or figuratively?
  - I think He's being literal, as with the fig tree in Mark 11
- Either way, though, His final word on the matter is what's important – with faith "nothing is impossible to you"
- This tells us that the problem wasn't the obstacle; the problem was a lack of faith
- Why is it that, with faith like a mustard seed, nothing is impossible to us?
  - Ultimately, it's because it is not our power that does the thing we're asking, but faith in God's power to act in our lives
- This is the same lesson He tries to teach them with the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 – faith can accomplish anything; nothing is too hard for God

## *The Temple Tax (17:24-27)*

- The last part of the chapter is an example of faith in action
- They arrive in Capernaum and someone asks Peter if Jesus is going to pay the two drachma tax
  - This doesn't specify it as the Temple Tax, by the way; most translations will still say that
  - Peter says he does
  - When he goes into the house, Jesus asks him, "Do the kings of the earth collect taxes from strangers or their sons?"
  - Peter answers, "Strangers"
  - Jesus says, "That's right. The sons are exempt."
  - This implies that Jesus didn't need to pay the Temple tax (since He's God's son)
- However, not to offend anyone, or stir the pot, or rock the boat, Jesus says He'll pay it
  - Instead of causing problems and an impediment to His teaching about God's kingdom, He'll pay the tax instead of dodging it, even though He doesn't need to pay it
- He tells Peter to go catch a fish in the sea, and the first one he catches will have a stater (or a shekel) in its mouth so he can pay the tax for them
  - A stater is worth four drachma, so it would pay the tax for Jesus and Peter

# CHAPTER 18

## *The Greatest in Heaven (18:1-5)*

- The disciples ask Jesus, “Who is the greatest in Heaven?”
  - A curious question, given everything Jesus has taught them about humility and submission
- Calls a child over and says, “Unless you become like this child, you won’t enter the kingdom of Heaven”
  - Notice that their question assumed entry, where His answer says, “Here’s the barrier for entry”
- Then He answers their question, “The one who can humble himself like a child is the greatest in Heaven”
  - Lots of debate on what Jesus means by this
  - He explains what He means, though – you need to humble yourself like a child is humble
- In the Roman world, children had no rights or status
- It’s easy to be dismissive of children, but Jesus says we need to lower ourselves to the point that we would welcome children
- This implies that we humble ourselves to the point where we lower ourselves to insignificance as well
- So, to answer their question, He basically tells them, “You’re worried about the wrong thing. The greatest is the most insignificant.”

## *Stumbling Blocks (18:6-7)*

- In the next 2 verses, Jesus talks about having the humility to not cause others to sin
- He bridges from the discussion of “Who’s the greatest?” by using the child already there to say, “Whoever causes a little one who believes in Him to stumble would be better off with a large millstone tied around their neck and tossed into the sea”
- To cause someone else to stumble and sin, to harm another spiritually, is a serious offense
- Why does Jesus add it here?
  - Because thinking you’re above someone – “Who’s the greatest?” is one of the primary ways we can cause others to fall away
- In vs. 7, Jesus says there are a lot of stumbling blocks we can encounter in the world...
  - ... but if we’re the reason that stumbling block appears in their path, that’s on us – we are going to be judged for that
- We have to make sure we’re not the reason that another person sins
- This is another picture of humility for us
  - We have to be humble enough to put others’ spiritual welfare above our own wants and desires
- How many people have been lost because...
  - ... a preacher said something from the pulpit that wasn’t the Word of God?
  - ... of the poor decisions or actions of elders?
  - ... we thought too highly of ourselves or only of ourselves?

## *Cut off Stumbling Blocks (18:8-9)*

- Jesus then shows us the humble extreme we should go to in removing stumbling blocks
  - If your hand or foot or eye causes you to sin (if it's a stumbling block), then cut it off
  - It's better to live maimed than to end up in Hell
- We should have the humility to not be stumbling blocks for other people, but we also need the humility to see and remove the stumbling blocks in our lives
- Much of the time, one of our stumbling blocks is thinking we're strong enough to fight sin on our own
  - We aren't going to make the radical choice to cut off a stumbling block because "I can handle it"
- We don't have the humility to realize we need help
- One of the foundational building blocks in the Anonymous programs (i.e., Alcoholics Anonymous) is that we can't do it on our own (Step 3) and to acknowledge that the addiction will always be a problem, so we have to avoid it, no matter what
- The really hard part of this is knowing that Jesus is speaking about people here
  - People are causes to sin
  - We have to have the strength to cut people out of our lives that are drawing us into sin and away from the Lord
- We must have the humility and strength to make the changes in our life to avoid all the sources of sin that we can

## *Humility to Not Be Dismissive of Others (18:10-20)*

- Jesus switches to another topic now – that of looking down on others
- The child is still in their midst, so Jesus says, “Don’t look down on these little ones”
  - Just like before “little ones” refers to those that believe in Him
- Jesus now switches to a sheep and shepherd analogy
  - If one of a hundred sheep goes astray, the man leaves the 99 to look for the 1
  - If he finds that one, then he rejoices over it more than the 99 that didn’t go astray
  - God is exactly like this, not wanting anyone to perish
  - This shows the heart of God – that He loves all of His sheep equally
  - He doesn’t ignore or despise the lost
- In vss. 15-17, Jesus lays out how our humility should drive us to seek out a brother who has sinned against us
- We don’t just dismiss the one who has sinned against us and done us wrong
  - We all know someone who gets hurt or wronged by someone, and they cut that person out of their life without a thought about who it is
  - That’s how the world responds to being sinned against
- As God’s children, though, we go to them and discuss it with them in private; then take a few witnesses if the first time didn’t work; then bring them before the church if that didn’t work
  - This has everything to do with humility, love, and understanding
  - We don’t want that brother thrown into Hell if we can help them
- This is a long process across week’s and maybe even months, giving them every opportunity to repent
  - All the while, we are humble in going to them over and over to try to help them see their sin and repent of it
- In vs. 18, Jesus says what we bind or loose in Heaven will be bound or loosed on Earth
  - Says the same thing to the apostles in Matthew 16:19
  - I think He means the same thing here as there
- The Church’s actions have power
  - If someone comes to you 3 times and says you’re sinning, you’re not okay with God
  - People will just go to another church to hide their sin
  - Have the humility to listen to your brothers and sisters who want to save you

## Forgiveness (18:21-35)

- The rest of the chapter is an answer to a question Peter asks Jesus – “How many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me?”
  - Notice that Peter’s question is essentially “When do I get to stop forgiving those who sin against me?”
- Jesus first responds with, “You never get to stop”
- Then he tells a parable to show why we don’t ever get to stop
  - A king is settling accounts with his slaves
  - One slave is brought before the King who owes 10,000 talents
    - When used as currency, 1 talent was 6,000 denarii (1 denarius = 1 day’s wages)
    - So 1 talent is ~16.5 years of work
    - This slave owed the king ~165,000 years of work (or 60,000,000 days of labor!!)
    - A 90 year old lives for ~33,000 days
- In other words, Jesus burdened the slave with an impossible debt
- The king orders him, his wife, and his children to be sold to repay the debt
  - Even that wouldn’t even come close to settling the debt
  - This slave owes everything to the king
- The slave asks the king for patience and says he’ll repay everything
  - No he won’t! There’s no conceivable way this slave repays everything
  - It would be like someone owing the US national debt and saying he could repay it with enough time
- The king feels compassion and sets the slave free and clears the debt – the slave owes nothing!
- Notice that the man asked for more time to repay a debt he could never repay; he doesn’t ask for his freedom or a clearing of the debt
  - The king is compassionate, though, and does both of those things anyway
- This is us!
  - Romans 3:23 – All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
  - Romans 6:23 – The wages of sin is death
  - It’s a debt we can’t repay, yet God sent Jesus to die for our sins, giving us life and clearing us of that debt
- This slave then walks out of the king’s presence and comes across a slave who owes him 100 denarii
  - Not a small amount, but it is a repayable amount
  - This slave says THE EXACT SAME THING as the first slave, but the freed slave shows no compassion
  - He begins to physically assault him and finally throws him in debtors’ prison until the 100 denarii is repaid

- When the king heard of this freed slave's actions, he summons him and is rightly furious
  - "How could you not show mercy to your fellow slave in the same way I did to you?"
- He hands the man over to the torturers until he repays his debt
  - Which will never happen
- Jesus wraps up the parable with a nice bow in vs. 35
  - God will do the same to you if you don't forgive each other FROM YOUR HEART
  - This isn't just paying lip service to forgiveness; you have to really, truly forgive them EVERY SINGLE TIME
  - Matthew 6:15

# CHAPTER 19

## *Divorce (19:1-12)*

- Jesus leaves Galilee and heads into Judea beyond the Jordan, with large crowds following Him
- Some Pharisees come to challenge Jesus by asking about divorce
  - “Is it lawful to divorce your wife for any reason?”
- Deuteronomy 24:1-4
  - “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens, if she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, that he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her away from his house,”
- Two schools of thought on what this means
  - Hillel – The “indecency” can be anything – if she burned the toast, you can divorce her
  - Shammai – Only “serious” offenses (such as adultery) constitute a proper “indecency”
- Both Hillel and Shammai were Pharisees who lived in the 50 BC – 30 AD range and wrote commentary on the Law
- Shammai’s interpretation of the Law was more prominent among Jews in Jesus’s day than was Hillel’s
- The Greek/Roman attitude on marriage very much aligned with Hillel’s interpretation – you could divorce your wife for anything – and they did!
- Much of the aristocracy and Jewish leadership also held to Hillel’s teachings on divorce
- Their test here was probably, “Is He going to side with Shammai or Hillel?”
- He created an option C
  - He quotes from Genesis 2:24 and Genesis 5:2
  - “What God has joined together, let no person separate.”
- We have 2 choices with which to view Jesus’s answer
  - His answer applies to the Law of Moses only, and so does not apply to us because we are not under the Law of Moses; OR
  - Jesus is speaking of what I’ll call God’s Universal Law of Marriage
- With His answer, He is essentially telling them:
  - You’re thinking too narrowly
  - Marriage isn’t just a Law of Moses thing
  - God’s intent in marriage LOOOONG before the Law of Moses was ever given is that a man and a woman are to be joined together forever
- They didn’t get this and go back to the Law
  - “Why, then, does Moses (in Deuteronomy) say that it’s okay to get divorced?”

- Now, we have to realize that when Jesus answers this question, He answers it in terms of the Universal Law of Marriage
  - Notice what He says in vs. 8
    - “From the beginning, it has not been this way”
  - By going back to God’s original intent in a marriage (one man and one woman forever), He’s condemning them for wanting to destroy God’s institution of marriage in that short window before sin entered the world
- It’s the first part of Jesus’s answer in vs. 8 that we need to consider
  - “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted the certificate of divorce”
  - God understood that sin had entered the world and we weren’t going to follow God’s Universal Law of Marriage
- The certificate of divorce was meant as a sort of escape clause when this happened
  - However, if you look at Deuteronomy 24 again, it was meant as an escape clause for the woman, not the man!
  - It offered her a measure of protection when a man no longer wanted her and tossed her out of his house
- Jesus says in vs. 9 that anyone who divorces his wife for anything other than sexual immorality and then marries another woman commits adultery
- Notice in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, God never specifies what the “indecent” is
  - This is one of the reasons why Hillel said it could be anything
- Jesus is the one that adds to this by saying “except for sexual immorality” or “fornication” (both here and in Matthew 5:32)
- Questions for thought
  - If fornication/adultery is the only acceptable reason for divorce, as Jesus says, then why didn’t God just say that in Deuteronomy 24?
  - Why allow people the wiggle room that He does to come up with an interpretation of this like Hillel did?
  - Also, if adulterers under the Law of Moses are to be stoned (Leviticus 20:10), and adultery is the only reason you could divorce your spouse, why would the certificate of divorce be necessary in the first place?
    - The adulterer is dead and you’d be free to marry again anyway
- In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the woman who gets the certificate of divorce is free to marry again, and a 3rd time, even!
  - Yet, if adultery is the only reason for a divorce, and even if she isn’t stoned for it, why would God allow her to get married two or three times afterwards?
- What if...
  - The only way to answer all of these questions and still be consistent with the Word of God is that there are other allowable reasons for divorce
  - Where the woman is still alive to remarry because she hasn’t been stoned, and therefore hasn’t committed adultery
  - I don’t think that Jesus wasn’t saying that the only reason a divorce could occur was fornication, but instead condemning the Pharisees for their cavalier, anything-goes attitude towards marriage and God’s intent that it should be one man and one woman forever

- If we are going to accept that the Law of Moses model of divorce and remarriage is the same as God's Universal Law of Marriage among imperfect people, then we must allow divorced women (at the very least) to remarry as well
  - When Jesus talks to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, He acknowledges all 5 of her marriages as real, legitimate marriages, so we can't take a "you only get one chance to marry and that's it" attitude towards marriage and divorce either
- If fornication wasn't the only reason allowed for divorce, what other reasons are there?
  - Deuteronomy 24 offers us no explanations, as we've already seen
  - We have to look at how Jesus continues His answer to the Pharisees in Matthew 19 and
  - Matthew 5:27-32
- In both cases, He states that divorce for fornication, and then remarriage is "adultery"
  - Adultery here and in all places in the NT is a form of the Greek word "moicheuo"
- "Adultery" as an English word didn't exist before roughly 450 years ago
  - First used in the Geneva Bible in 1585
  - Before this, English translations read "avouteria" – to break a vow – or "breaketh wedlock"
  - No sexual connotation to either of these
- Many people today base their view of marriage, divorce, and remarriage on the English translation instead of the Greek
  - Dangerous for 2 reasons
    - First, the Greek word "moicheuo" is translated in German bibles as "bricht die Ehe" meaning "breaks the marriage"
      - No implied sexual connotation there at all
      - Is the German or English translation right? Or neither?
      - We need to look at the original Greek to know for sure
    - Second, look at it the other way
      - Spanish phrase "Mi casa es su casa" translates into English as "My house is your house"
      - Does this mean I now own your house? Of course not!
      - We have to go back to the Spanish to understand how they use the phrase and ignore the English altogether
- We can't just look at the English definitions and base our understanding on that alone
- We have to go back to the Greek
- So what does "moicheuo" mean?
  - A look at any Greek lexicon will say it means adultery – no help at all
  - What we can do is look at where the Greek word "moicheuo" is used when quoted from the Hebrew
  - We have exactly that in Matthew 5:27!

- In the 10 Commandments that Jesus quotes, the Hebrew word “naaph” is translated as “moicheuo” in the Greek
  - English lexicons also translate this Hebrew word as adultery
  - Can look to see how the word was used in the OT to gain a flavor of its usage
- In many cases, like Leviticus 20:10, “naaph” is used to mean sexual activity outside of a marriage
- In many more cases, though, its used in the context of Israel “committing adultery” with idols and breaking their covenant with God
- This means that “naaph” cannot, in any way, be construed to only mean literal sexual acts outside of a marriage
- A far more reasonable English translation that includes both uses of “naaph” would be “to break a covenant” or “to break a vow”
- We can also see this in the way the word “moicheuo” is used in its various forms in the NT
- Uses of “moicheuo” in the NT
  - Matthew 16:4 – speaks of an adulterous generation
  - James 4:4 – describes those unfaithful to God but faithful to the world
  - Hebrews 13:4 – mentions both fornication AND adultery in the context of the marriage bed
    - There’s a distinction made here between fornication and adultery within the context of marriage itself
    - English “adultery” is a sexual act outside of a marriage
    - In this verse in the Greek, the word “porneia” is used as the sex act, and “moicheuo” is used to mean something else
- All of this shows that we can’t take “moicheuo” to only mean sexual activity outside of a marriage
- A much better translation would be “to break a vow or covenant”
- Let’s return to the question of, “If fornication isn’t the only reason for divorce, what other reasons are allowed?”
  - With our improved understanding of “moicheuo” to mean “to break a vow”, any means in which a husband or wife breaks the marriage vow means that the marriage is permissible to end in divorce
- We can’t leave it that open-ended, of course, or people will just fall back into the Hillel school of thought
- God has already shown us in His Word how this covenant can be broken
  - Ephesians 5:22-30, Colossians 3:18-19, and 1 Peter 3:1-7 all say a husband is supposed to love, honor, and cherish his wife like Jesus loves the Church
  - A wife is supposed to be in subjection to her husband
  - That’s how God always intended a marriage to be

- If a husband isn't loving, honoring, and cherishing his wife, and a wife isn't in subjection to her husband, then they are breaking their marriage covenant
- God has already given us at least 1 example in His Word how this covenant can be broken, too
  - 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 says if a husband or wife deprives their spouse of sexual intercourse except for an agreed upon time period, they've broken the marriage covenant
- While our society's traditional marriage vows aren't what they would have been in the OT or NT, I think they do encompass what God intends
  - Promising faithfulness through richer or poorer, sickness or health, etc.
- To summarize, I think Jesus was trying to impress upon the Pharisees that marriage isn't just a trifle to enter into willy-nilly
  - God intends for it to be a very solemn and far-reaching vow for a single man and a single woman who intend with every fiber of their being to live together for the rest of their days
- Having said that, though, we can see from 1 Corinthians 6:6-11 that the blood of Christ can forgive even fornicators and adulterers
- We live in a sinful, corrupt world and marriage is entered into by broken and sinful people
  - Even with the best of intentions, sometimes these unions don't work out
  - But we shouldn't have the attitude that the Jews had, which was "She'll make a great 1st wife"
- With this teaching to the Pharisees, Jesus's disciples come to Him afterwards and say, "If that's the way marriage is supposed to be, it's better that people don't marry!"
- He basically says, "Yep, that's true, but some can't live like that"
  - Paul echoes this same sentiment in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

## *Right and Wrong Attitudes (19:13-22)*

- Sometime after the Pharisees question Jesus about divorce, some parents bring their children to Jesus so He might pray over them and lay His hands on them
- The disciples rebuke them for it
  - The Bible doesn't say this, but I've always taken their rebuke as a, "Don't waste His time!"
- Jesus responds in vs. 14 by saying, "Leave the children alone; don't forbid them from coming to me. The kingdom of Heaven belongs to ones such as these."
- Most leaders and important people today are inaccessible; they're too important and busy
  - But not Jesus!
  - Jesus receives the lowly and insignificant
- What we see here is the correct attitude for people to have to receive and accept Jesus's offer of eternal life
- In the next section (vss. 16-22), we see the wrong attitude in the rich, young ruler
- If you look at his question, the rich, young ruler asks, "What must I do to obtain eternal life?"
  - This is the way we often think about it as well – we have to DO something
  - We want a list; we want to know the minimum requirements
- Jesus's response is, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good."
  - Jesus is trying to point out here that "good" is a pretty subjective term to most people, but there is only 1 objective answer
- God is good, and He's already given an answer to that question
  - Jesus says, "Keep the commandments if you want to enter life"
  - The man asks, "Which ones?"
  - Jesus says, "All of them"
  - That's what obedience is! We have to keep God's commandments!
  - Now, though, we live under a different set of commandments, but the ruler was still under the Law of Moses
- The man says he's been keeping the Law since he was a boy
  - This is truly a Pharisaical answer, as they had a list of things that you had to do each year, and a list of things to avoid each year, and if you managed it, you "kept the Law" that year
  - We can also convince ourselves we've done everything we need to do to be saved, and so we don't strive to be better

- Then Jesus drops the hammer – “If you want to be perfect, sell everything you have and give it to the poor. Then you can come follow me.”
- The man heard this and went away sad, because he had many possessions
- What we don’t see is Jesus congratulating or praising the man because he’d “kept the Law”
- What Jesus did do is expose the man’s heart – the possessions were more important to him than eternal life was
  - We can value family, tradition, money, pride and an unwillingness to forgive, an unwillingness to follow God’s commandments, and lots of other things more than we value eternal life, as well
  - Jesus exposes our hearts in that, too

## *Our Problem (19:23-24)*

- After this, Jesus tells His disciples it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven
- Our problem is that we don't like what God's commanding us to do , and there's no bending, loosening, or skirting God's commandments
- God won't lower His standard to make it easier for us to jump over, but we do it all the time, in hopes that God will give a wink and a nod because of it
  - That's just not how it works!
- If we want what God has to offer, then we have to take it on God's terms
  - No negotiating; no ifs, ands, or buts
  - It's either do it His way or don't bother doing it at all

## *The Solution (19:25-26)*

- Understandably, the disciples then go to Jesus and say, “Then who can be saved?”
- Jesus’s answer is, “With people it’s impossible, but with God all things are possible”
  - In other words, we can’t save ourselves; salvation is impossible for us to attain or earn or buy
  - If we are going to look to ourselves for salvation, God will find the idol in our heart; the glaring hole in our lives where we fall woefully short of God’s glory
  - However!!!! With God, all things are possible.
  - God can save us if we are humble enough to go to Him and acknowledge our sin
- If we look to ourselves, all is lost; if we look to God, we can be saved

## *The Reward (19:27-30)*

- Peter connects what Jesus told the rich man about selling all that he has and says, “We gave up everything and followed you! What will we have?”
  - They truly had given up everything to follow Jesus – families, careers, comforts, aspirations, life plans
- Jesus answers, but His answer doesn’t just concern future rewards; there’s also present rewards as well
  - Part of the future reward is reigning with Christ
  - We’ll also get many times what we’ve given up and eternal life
  - If I lose my house, my job, my car, etc., I know that those in Christ will help me however they can
- Jesus ends the section by saying there are going to be a lot of surprises about who belongs – the first are last and the last first

# CHAPTER 20

## *The Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)*

- This is a very unfortunate chapter break because the parable Jesus tells is directly related to the discussion at the end of chapter 19
  - This starts out “For the kingdom of Heaven is like...”
- He relates a parable to explain the reward for leaving everything and following Him
- A vineyard owner goes out early in the morning and hires some laborers to work his vines; promises them 1 denarius (a day’s wage)
- He went out at 9 AM and hires more; promises to pay them “what is right”
- Went again at 12 noon, 3 PM, and finally at 5 PM; again promised to pay them “what is right”
- When evening came (6 PM), the owner has his foreman call all the workers in, but wants to pay them in the opposite order, paying the last group first and the first group last
  - Does that sound familiar? It’s what Jesus said at the end of the last chapter
- He pays the last group that worked 1 hour a denarius
  - The first group thought, “Hot dog! We’re gonna get more money!”
- But he only pays them 1 denarius as well
- They get upset! “That’s not fair!!!”
  - “You made 1 hour’s work the same as 11 hour’s work!”
  - People do this all the time, even today
  - We can always find a reason why we deserve more, they deserve less, we’re above them, they’re below us, etc.
- The landowner’s response gives 2 rebuttals to their argument of being unfair, and then poses a question
  - First, he paid them exactly what he promised them; he didn’t break his agreement with them on what to pay them
  - Second, he gets to do what he wants with his money; if he wants to pay everyone the same amount, that’s his choice, not theirs
  - He then poses the question, “Is your eye envious because I’m generous?”
    - In other words, their anger at the landowner’s generosity is their problem, not his
- Then Jesus wraps up the parable by saying the same thing He did at the end of chapter 19 – “The last shall be first, and the first, last.”
- How does this relate to Peter’s question of Matthew 19:27?
- First, Peter’s reward will be the same one given to us

- They will sit on 12 thrones
- Reign with Him
- Have houses, mothers, brothers, and sisters
- Eternal life
- The Jews first, and then the Gentiles – that’s us!
- Second, entrance into the kingdom of Heaven isn’t earned – it’s given
  - Entrance isn’t measured by how long we were faithful, or the number of good deeds we’ve done, or the number of people we preached to, or ...
  - This goes back to the rich young ruler who asked, “What must I DO to have eternal life?”
  - Jesus makes the same point to Peter at the end of John (John 21:18-19)
- Last, God is exposing our hearts if we are jealous because everyone gets the same reward
  - If we are upset that we suffer more than others, or others are more materially blessed than us, or our life is harder, then we have a heart problem
  - God isn’t doing anything wrong in any of that; we agreed to follow Him no matter what
  - We said we’d do it for the reward of eternal life, and God will give that to us as long as we’re working for the kingdom, no matter what happens along the way
  - Think about the people in the Bible and what they suffered before thinking you’ve got it hard
    - Joseph was sold into slavery, accused of rape, and imprisoned for years
    - Paul lists his trials in 2 Corinthians 11 – read that and you can’t think you’ve got it bad!
    - John the Baptizer ate locusts and wild honey before being imprisoned and beheaded
    - Every single prophet was killed in some horrible way

## *One More Time (20:17-19)*

- As they're about to head up to Jerusalem, Jesus pulls the twelve aside one more time and tells them He's going to be arrested, handed over to the Gentiles, mocked, flogged, and crucified, but that He'll also be resurrected on the 3rd day
- He's been warning them of this since at least Matthew 16:21-23, and again in Matthew 17:22-23
  - They grieve it each time, but it never seems to sink in that it will actually happen that way because they're expecting an earthly kingdom all along
  - Even when He's in the tomb, they don't remember that He told them He'd be resurrected on the 3rd day
  - This is probably no more than 1 month out from the crucifixion (likely 2 weeks)
- It's worth noting that Jesus tells them exactly what's going to happen
  - He knows and He goes anyway

## *Position in the Kingdom (20:20-21)*

- When Jesus tells them what awaits Him in Jerusalem, James and John's mom asks Jesus to place one of her sons on His left hand and the other on His right hand
  - She essentially asks for Jesus to place them in the highest positions of power once He takes His kingdom
  - She understands that Jesus is going to be glorified at that time, and wants her sons to be in positions of authority when He does
- Jesus doesn't correct her thinking about Him about to take His place of authority
  - Instead, He corrects 2 different issues about her request

## *The Two Issues (20:22-28)*

- First, in vs. 22, Jesus says, “You don’t know what you’re asking”
- They are asking to be exalted in the kingdom, and Jesus knows that
  - They don’t know HOW that exaltation is going to come
  - He asks, “Can you drink the cup that I’m about to drink?”
  - He’s just explained that this is suffering, scourging, mocking, death
  - They say, “Yes, we can drink it”
  - He says, “You will drink my cup”
  - James is beheaded in Acts 12; John is exiled to Patmos for preaching the gospel
- Jesus says, “The right and left are for God to give to whom He prepared the places, not me”
  - Given the parable at the beginning of the chapter, it seems like everyone working the vineyard will get to sit with Jesus in glory
- The second issue Jesus has to deal with is that the other 10 apostles are indignant about James and John’s mom asking this of Jesus (vs. 24)
- Jesus calls them all together and tells them that people in the world desire power and authority, but that’s not the way it is with them
  - It’s sad that people who claim to be followers of Christ do this exact thing that Jesus says is not the way of believers
  - We shouldn’t care about being great among others and the world
- Instead, He says that greatness in the kingdom is found in serving, as He is about to serve everyone in the world with His death

## *Showing His Service (20:29-34)*

- As they head through Jericho, two blind men call out to Jesus to heal them
- The crowd tries to keep them quiet, but they cry out all the more
- Jesus says, “What do you want me to do for you?”
  - That’s a question a servant asks!
- Jesus is moved with compassion for them and heals them
- Jesus isn’t dismissive of them and then ignores them
- Instead, He uses his authority to heal them

## *Greatness in the Kingdom (20:20-34)*

- This whole section is about greatness
- Two key characteristics regarding greatness
  - Kingdom greatness requires following Jesus in His suffering
    - Jesus is exalted after His suffering
    - God brings us eternal glory through our suffering (2 Corinthians 4:17)
  - Kingdom greatness requires following Jesus in His serving
    - We are to be a people who show how authority is supposed to be used
    - We serve, not want to be served

# CHAPTER 21

## *Triumphal Entry (21:1-11)*

- Chapter 21 marks the beginning of the last days of Jesus before His crucifixion and resurrection
- It all begins with the triumphal entry
- Jesus sends two of His disciples across to Bethpage
  - You'll find a donkey and colt tied up as you enter town
  - Bring it to me
  - If anyone says anything, tell them, "The Lord needs them" and they'll let you take them
  - It all happens exactly as Jesus said
  - This wasn't some accidental happening
  - Jesus had planned for this
  - It is His proclamation that He is King
- Matthew points out that this was done to fulfill the Messianic prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9
  - The context of Zechariah 9 clearly shows that the prophecy speaks of the Messiah as the coming King
  - Jesus riding on the donkey would certainly bring this passage from Zechariah to mind as people saw it
- In verses 8-11, we see two different responses of Jesus's declaration as the Messianic King
  - The crowd that followed Him from Galilee and Judea spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road as a sort of "red carpet" for the king; they shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"
  - The people in Jerusalem say, "Who's this guy getting all this attention?"; these are the ones that ultimately reject Him to be crucified

## *Cleansing the Temple (part 2) (21:12-13)*

- Once Jesus enters Jerusalem, He enters the Temple and drives out all those that were “selling and buying”
- He overturns the money-changers’ tables and the seats of those selling doves
- Why would Jesus do this?
  - He answers this question by quoting (parts of) Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11
- The Temple wasn’t supposed to be about making money, but rather worshiping God
  - This is the second time Jesus has done this, though
  - Matthew, Mark, and Luke record it happening after the triumphal entry
  - John, however, records Jesus doing the same thing at the beginning of His ministry (in John 2)

## *Healing, Adulation, and Indignation (21:14-17)*

- After cleansing the Temple, people who are sick come to Jesus for healing and He heals them
- The children start shouting out the same thing the people did during the triumphal entry – “Hosanna to the Son of David!”
- The Pharisees see all of this and become indignant because the children are calling Him the Messiah (after He’s just trashed their business)
  - The way they ask the question clearly implies that they expect Him to stop them from saying it
- Instead, He quotes Psalm 8:2 to them and asks, “Have you never read that?”
  - He implies that they’re doing exactly as God wants
- Jesus then leaves Jerusalem to stay in Bethany

### The Fig Tree (21:18-22)

- Now that Jesus has declared Himself the Messianic King, He shows He has that authority through withering the fig tree
- The next day, they head back to Jerusalem and Jesus goes to a fig tree for fruit to eat
  - There’s nothing on it, so He curses it, and it immediately withers
  - Jesus isn’t mad at the fig tree
  - He’s exhibiting the authority He has as God’s Son
- This a lesson for His disciples about faith
  - They are amazed that the fig tree withered
  - Jesus tells them, “If you have faith without doubt, you could do this, too, or even cast a mountain into the sea”
- There are some who say that the fig tree represents the nation of Israel
- The disciples aren’t amazed at the miracle of the fig tree immediately withering when Jesus curses it, but are amazed at the prophetic meaning behind it – that Israel is going to be judged and fall suddenly and quickly
- Personally, I think it’s more a lesson on faith rather than a declaration by Jesus that Israel would be judged quickly
  - The disciples had a hard time making connections like that throughout Jesus’s ministry
  - They needed a lesson on the power of faith more than insight on how quickly Israel would be judged

## *Authority Challenged (21:23-27)*

- Jesus goes back into the Temple area and the chief priests and elders confront Him for the things He's doing
  - "By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you that authority?"
  - This goes beyond the teaching He's doing this day, of course, but the cleansing of the Temple, the healings He did the day before, and calling the Temple His Father's house, as well
- Notice that Jesus doesn't dismiss their question
- He says, "I'll answer your question if you answer mine first"
  - Even this demonstrates His authority over them; it's a power move
- He asks, "Where did John's baptism come from? From Heaven or men?"
- Now, the priests and elders aren't dummies
  - "If we say from heaven, then he'll ask why we didn't believe him"
  - "If we say from men, the people will revolt against us because they think of John as a prophet"
- So they settle on an answer of, "We don't know!"
- Jesus says, "You didn't answer my question, so I'm not going to answer yours."
- They sought to quash Jesus because they hadn't given Him the authority to do the things He did in the Temple, and they thought they were in charge
  - This is the same flaw in thinking that causes the Christian landscape to be littered with denominations
  - Many "Christians" hold a "God didn't get that part right, so I'll fix it" mentality on the Bible, changing the parts they don't like
- People look to themselves or those who have gone before for their authority instead of God
- If God is God, then we must figure out what He wants and do that
- People have come to think they can worship God however they want, regardless of what the Bible says
- Jesus saying, "You didn't answer my question so I'm not going to answer yours" is another power move, and demonstrates which party really has the authority

## *Three Parables – 1st Parable (21:28-32)*

- Notice there isn't a break in Jesus speaking
- He's going to tell three parables to these religious leaders who asked Him by whose authority He did these things
- The first parable is about 2 sons
- Dad asks 1st son to help out in the vineyard
  - He says, "No", but then feels guilty and goes
- Dad asks 2nd son to help out as well
  - He says, "Ok", but then doesn't go
- Jesus asks, "Which did the will of his father?"
  - They correctly say that the first one did
  - He says, "You aren't going to Heaven because you don't follow God's will"

## *Three Parables – 2nd Parable (21:33-46)*

- Parable of the landowner
- A man owns a vineyard and rents it to some people for a cut of the fruit
- When its harvest time, he sends some slaves to get it
  - The renters beat one, kill one, and stone a third
- The landowner sends more slaves the 2nd time
  - The renters do the same to that group of slaves
- Then the landowner sends his son, thinking they wouldn't hurt him
  - The renters plot and say, "If we kill him, then we can take his inheritance!"
  - It's important to note that this isn't how inheritances work! Not even back then would the murders of someone get the murdered person's inheritance
  - So they kill him, too
- Jesus asks the leaders, "What's the landowner going to do to the people renting his vineyard?"
- They (again, correctly) say, "He's going to bring them to a wretched end and rent the vineyard to others that will keep their promise to pay."
- Jesus then quotes Psalm 118:22-23
- The way Jesus tells the parable, it's obvious He's talking about His own crucifixion at their hands, and the slaves the renters had killed before are the prophets God sent
- Jesus brings all of this home in vss. 43-44 when He tells these religious leaders that the kingdom of God is going to be taken away from them and given to another people (nation)
  - This is more foreshadowing that God will include the Gentiles in the New Covenant and salvation
- After hearing this, they want to arrest Jesus but don't because they feared the people

# CHAPTER 22

## *Three Parables – 3rd Parable (22:1-14)*

- In Matthew 21:23, the chief priests and elders challenge Jesus's authority to do what He's doing (teaching and healing)
- He tells them 3 parables
  - 2 come at the end of chapter 21
  - The 3rd one is here at the beginning of chapter 22
- The parable of the wedding feast
  - A king's son gets married and sends his slaves out to invite everyone
  - Some did their own thing while others killed the man's slaves
  - The king gets mad and kills them all, burns the town – utter annihilation
  - Then he tells his slaves to go to the main roads and invite anyone they see
  - The king sees 1 guy who "slipped in" not dressed for the occasion; has him thrown out
- What do the wedding clothes represent and why does the king throw this guy out for not wearing them?
  - Jesus mentions that the good and bad are in the hall (vs. 10), so it's not a matter of being a sinner or not
  - Given His first 2 parables, it makes sense that the wedding clothes represent one's willingness to be obedient to God
- Jesus doesn't specifically say this is about the priests and scribes this time, but it's pretty clear that it is
  - The king (God) invited certain people to the feast (the Jews), but they said "Not interested"
  - In fact, they even killed those that the king sent (the prophets)
  - So God invited anyone who happened to pass by (the Gentiles)
  - However, those that come must be willing to be obedient to God

## *The Taxes Trap (22:15-22)*

- The Pharisees and some Herodians try to trap Jesus by asking if they should pay taxes
  - They try to “butter Him up” first by saying, “We know you preach the way of God in truth”
- The poll-tax was a once-a-year tax levied in the Roman Empire
  - Tertullian called it a “badge of slavery”
  - “Poll” is an archaic term meaning “head” or “top of the head”
  - Essentially, it was a tax the Romans placed on all adults for existing within the boundaries of the Roman Empire
  - Think income tax in the US
  - Notably, Roman citizens were exempt from the tax – it was only levied on Roman subjects
  - The Jews HATED it!
- The Pharisees don’t want to pay it, but they bring some Herodians who would represent Herod and the Roman government
- Asking Jesus if they should pay the tax or not was a trap because, if yes, then the Jews would revolt, and if no, the Romans had grounds to arrest Him for treason/insurrection
- So, as usual, Jesus goes with option C by teaching them about God’s principles
  - Give to Caesar what is his, give to God what is His
  - “Render” means to give back something that belongs to them
  - Paul reinforces this principle in Romans 13:7-8
- The principle Jesus teaches here is, “Give to everyone what you owe them. Pay your obligations.”

## *The Resurrection Trap (22:23-33)*

- Seeing the Pharisees fail to trap Jesus, the Sadducees take their turn later that day
- Ask a question about a hypothetical situation regarding the resurrection
  - A woman marries a man who dies and they have no children
  - His brother marries her then, as the Law of Moses says he should; he dies too
  - And the same with the next 5 brothers – all dead with no children
  - Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?
  - As Luke reminds us, they don't believe in the resurrection, so they set up a ludicrous hypothetical situation to try and point the ridiculousness of the resurrection
- Jesus gives them 2 different reasons why they're wrong
- First, Jesus says that the resurrection to come (at judgment) won't be a physical resurrection where we all get our earthly bodies back, and so marriage won't work then like it does now
- Second, He says that they're wrong about the resurrection not being real anyway because God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God isn't a God of the dead but the living
  - This implicitly implies that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive in some way and not dead
- What we need to notice here in the 2nd argument is that Jesus tells them they're wrong about the resurrection because they don't know their Scriptures very well
- Applying this to us, we can't be people who read the Bible but don't understand it; we NEED to study it in a way to always be learning

## *Greatest Commandment (22:34-40)*

- The Pharisees regroup and take another run at Jesus
- “Which law/commandment is the greatest?”
- Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 and says that’s the greatest
  - Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind
- Then quotes the last part of Leviticus 19:18 and says it’s the next greatest
  - Love your neighbor as yourself
- Then Jesus finally says, “All of God’s Word depends upon these 2 commands”
- This (for the 3rd time) shows that these religious leaders don’t really understand what God’s law is all about
- Everything in the Bible shows us how we are able to love God and others

## *A Question for Them (22:41-46)*

- Jesus then says, “Since you’re here...”
- He asks them, “Whose son is the Christ/Messiah?”
- They answer, “The son of David”
  - Remember, that’s what the crowds were calling Him back in Matthew 21
- He then out-logics them
  - If that’s the case, why does David call Him Lord in Psalm 110:1?
  - This was a widely accepted Messianic passage
- They have no answer and skulk away to plot His death
- Luke says that no one dared to ask Him any questions after this

# CHAPTER 23

## *7 Ways to be a Hypocrite (23:1-33)*

- In chapter 23, Jesus gives 7 ways the religious leadership of Israel are hypocrites
- 1st way – Teach God’s Law but don’t practice it
- Vss. 2 and 3 are the only positive thing Jesus says in the whole chapter
  - The scribes and Pharisees teach the Law of Moses
  - He tells the people to do as they say
- But He immediately warns them to NOT do what they do
- The first problem is that they don’t practice what they preach
  - If you look at the qualifications for the eldership and deacons, much of it isn’t that they can teach (that’s there too, though) but that their lives are something that all Christians can and should emulate
- In vs. 4, Jesus explains how they are hypocritical in this way
  - They lay heavy burdens on people and then are unwilling to do the same
- I always think of the ways they got around the Sabbath as the day of rest
  - Not allowed to walk more than ~3,000 feet on the Sabbath or it was considered work, so they had slaves carry them in litters if they needed to go farther
  - Can’t light a fire, made food, etc. and would have other people do that stuff for them, if needed
- Humans are very good at binding things on other people that they would never bind on themselves
- 2nd way – Doing things so you get praised for it
- They were concerned with “getting the credit” and having good reputations and titles
  - Put prayer boxes on their foreheads to show their piety
  - Lengthened the tassels on their clothes to show that they were important teachers
  - Made sure they had the best seats in the banquets and synagogues
- Jesus warns His audience not to do things like that
  - We have one teacher, leader, and Father
- We shouldn’t be doing things for the recognition it might bring us
- He says in vs. 11 that greatness comes through service
  - Jesus told His disciples this many times
- 3rd way – Making God unreachable for others
- This is Jesus’s first woe upon the scribes and Pharisees
- They shut the door to the kingdom of God in people’s faces
- At the end of the verse, Jesus even says that they aren’t going to enter the kingdom, and they’re making sure no one else can either

- Vs. 14 isn't in early manuscripts of Matthew, but it concerns their buying up widows houses while making long prayers (like Mark 12:40)
  - They don't show their love for others, even though they appear to love God
- Vs. 15 is along the same vein as vs. 13 – they will do anything it takes to make a proselyte for God, but then they lead them down the wrong path
- 4th way – Do everything you can not to keep a promise
- They taught that an oath you made was only binding based on what you made it by
  - The gold of the temple is binding, but the Temple alone wasn't
  - The altar wasn't binding, but the offering made on it was binding
- We have the same sort of ridiculous things now
  - If your fingers are crossed when you make a vow, you don't have to follow through on it
  - Swear on their mother's grave, except Mom isn't dead yet
- Jesus calls them blind for this
- Having an attitude that what we swear isn't binding is the problem
- 5th way – Focusing on the laws kept, not the laws broken
- Jesus points out that they are meticulous about tithing, but they aren't meticulous about keeping other, more important parts of God's Law
- They focus on the tithe but ignore justice, mercy, and faithfulness
- One of people's biggest problems in today's churches is focusing on the theology and teachings they like and hacking out the ones they don't like and tossing them in the trash
- We need to focus on keeping all of God's commandments, even if that means we have to study the Bible more or change the way we do things because we arrive at a better understanding of God's word
- 6th way – Pretending to be righteous
- Jesus says that the Pharisees look good on the outside, but inside they aren't clean
  - They had the appearance of righteousness without practicing righteousness
- Notice how Jesus teaches cleanliness
  - He doesn't say to clean the outside so the inside will become clean
  - We need to clean the inside so the outside will also be clean
  - Doing things that look holy and godly doesn't make the person godly
- Only a transformation of the heart can cause the outside and inside to be clean
  - If you don't get the roots, the weeds will just grow back
- 7th way – Condemning past sin while continuing to practice sin
- The last way Jesus says they are hypocritical is because they act pious by saying they'd never have killed the prophets if they were alive then

- While they think they would be different, Jesus says they're still doing the same kinds of things
  - Already killed John the Baptizer
  - About to kill Jesus as well
- We can do the same thing, too
  - Rather than learning from our past mistakes, we continue to do the exact same things over and over again, never learning from our sinful actions
- If we simply read and know God's word without letting it change our hearts and attitudes, it doesn't do us any good

## *Sending prophets (23:34-39)*

- In conjunction with the last hypocrisy, Jesus says that He will send people to them, whom they will kill, crucify, flog, and persecute
- All this to show them that they would indeed kill the prophets of old as well because they will kill the new ones sent to them
- He then gives a lament over Jerusalem because they are constantly killing anyone God sends to them
  - Again, Jesus is next!

# CHAPTER 24

## *The Disciples' Questions about Signs (24:1-3)*

- Matthew 24 is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied chapters in the whole New Testament (perhaps outside of Revelation)
- Jesus finally leaves the Temple area
  - He's been there since way back in Matthew 21 when the religious authorities challenged His authority
- His disciples begin to point out the Temple buildings to Him, so He tells them none of this will remain standing
- At the Mount of Olives, they go to Him in private and ask Him questions
  - When are these things going to happen (when will the Temple be destroyed)
  - And what will be the sign of His return and of the end of the age
- To understand Matthew 24 properly, we must realize they ask 2 questions with different answers, and Jesus answers both of them!

## *Jesus's Answer to 1st Question (24:4-35)*

- Unfortunately, Jesus doesn't give much of a clue that He's answering the 1st question and when He switches to answering the 2nd one
- He does answer the first one first, and the second after, though
- 1st question – “When will all of these things happen?”
  - Many will come in My name, claiming to be the Christ – they aren't
  - You'll hear about wars and rumors of wars – THAT ISN'T THE END!
  - Nations are going to fight, there will be famines and earthquakes
  - This is just the beginning
  - There will be tribulation and you will be killed; hated among the nations because of His name
  - Many will fall away
  - False prophets will arise
  - Love will grow cold, the gospel is preached worldwide, and then the end will come
  - When you see “the abomination of desolation”, then those in Judea must flee to the mountains
  - This is the first hint at “when these things will happen”
  - Those on the housetop shouldn't go in to get their things; those in the fields don't go back for a cloak
  - In other words, when you see this, you just run
  - Woe to those who are pregnant or nursing
  - Hard to flee when you're pregnant or carrying a child
  - Pray it's not on the Sabbath or the winter when they can't travel as much/fast
  - It's also important to realize that this CAN'T be talking about His return and the end of the age because, when He returns, the saints will be taken up into the clouds to meet him (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
  - When Jesus returns, it's all over – no time for anyone to do anything that He mentions here
  - If “those days” hadn't been cut short, no one would survive
  - Also cut short for the sake of the elect
  - Jesus then explicitly states, that His return will be over like a lightning flash across the sky
  - Verses 29-31 is the tricky part that most people take as Jesus switching to the 2nd question about His return
  - The pictures used are all from the OT where this apocalyptic language is used to show God's judgment and end of a nation
  - Easiest to see in Isaiah 13 where the same type of imagery is used to show that God is going to judge and destroy Babylon
  - These verses are Jesus saying that God is going to destroy the nation of Israel
  - He then starts back about signs with the fig tree

- He says that a sign of summer is that the fig tree grows its shoots
- When all of the stuff He's mentioned is seen, then the disciples can know that the Temple is about to be destroyed (and Israel is about to be judged)
- He then explicitly states that all of it will happen before that generation of people passes away
- THIS CAN'T BE ABOUT END TIME JUDGMENT AND HIS RETURN
- Before we move on to His answer to the 2nd question, let's clear up the "abomination of desolation"
  - Again, most see this as a sign of the end times
  - Matthew mentions Daniel (which the Jews would have understood)
  - Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11
  - In Daniel, this phrase is used each time to say that a foreign nation is going to enter Jerusalem and desecrate the Temple
  - In Luke's account of this sermon (Luke 21), Luke writes in Luke 21:20 that "when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near."
  - Luke's gospel is written to a Greek man and "the abomination of desolation" wouldn't be understood by him, so Luke just spells it out
- To sum up Jesus's answer to "when will these things happen", Jesus tells them that an army is going to attack Jerusalem, take it, and destroy the Temple before that generation passes away
  - We know now that the Romans destroy Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. after a 4 month siege of Jerusalem
  - This would have happened approximately 35 years after Jesus prophesied it

## *Jesus's Answer to 2nd Question (24:36-44)*

- Compared to the answer to the 1st question, His answer to the 2nd question is pretty short
  - No one knows when I'll return except for the Father
  - It'll be just like the days of Noah when life was clicking along just fine and dandy until it started raining
- While Jesus has talked about signs all along, the first question is really the lead-in to the second question
  - Once the Temple is torn down and Israel as a physical nation ended in destruction, Jesus could come again
  - Now it's a waiting game, but that leads into Jesus's warning in the last part of the chapter

## *Be Ready! (24:45-51)*

- Since we don't know when Jesus will return, and all the warning signs of His return have passed, we need to be on the alert
- Jesus gives two analogies to explain why
  - If the owner of the house knew when the thief was coming to rob him, he'd be ready to stop him
  - The master places someone in charge who he can trust to do what his master wants him to do, not someone who lives his life however he wants

# CHAPTER 25

## *Setting the Scene (25:1)*

- At the end of Matthew 24, Jesus tells His disciples that they need to be ready, for only the Father knows when He will return
- Chapter 25 is interesting because of verse 1
  - Nearly every single time Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven, it is in a present tense – “the kingdom of heaven is like...”
  - Matthew 13:24; 31; 33; 44; 45; 47; 52; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2
  - Here in Matthew 25:1, it’s “THEN the kingdom of heaven WILL BE LIKE...”
  - Notice that this is future tense
  - The two parables Jesus tells in this chapter regard how things will be once the Church is established (after Jerusalem and the Temple have been destroyed)
- Jesus teaches 3 different lessons in this chapter about what we need to do to be ready for His return, and they build on each other

## *The Parable of the 10 Virgins (25:1-13)*

- 10 virgins (or young women) await the groom
- 5 brought lots of oil for the lanterns, but 5 didn't bring any extra oil
- Finally at midnight, the groom arrives and they're called to meet him
- They all woke up and trimmed their lamps
  - The 5 virgins without oil asked the other 5 for oil because their lamps were going out
  - The prudent virgins said, "No, then we won't have enough. Go buy some more for yours."
  - The foolish ones go, but the groom arrives while they're gone and they get locked out
  - The groom says, "No, I don't know you."
- Jesus wraps up the parable by telling his audience, "Be on the alert, because you don't know the day nor the hour."
- The distinguishing characteristic between the wise and unwise virgins is that the wise ones made preparations for a delay
- 2 points to stress
  - First, no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return – only God the Father
  - If anyone says they know, or calculates something out, they're wrong
  - Second, we need to be ready for His return
  - If we aren't ready when He comes, there won't be time to get ready
  - We will be excluded from eternity with our Savior if we aren't ready for His arrival

## *The Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)*

- Another future tense telling – vs. 14
  - Doesn't read as such in the English very well, but the Greek is clearly future tense
  - Note that a talent was a sum of money, not an ability, so this is about a man who divides his wealth among his slaves when he leaves on a journey according to their abilities
- One slave gets 5 bags of gold, another 2 bags, and the last 1 bag
- The one with 5 bags and the one with 2 bags put the money to work, and they each double what they were given
- The slave with 1 bag buries it in the ground
- The master doesn't return for a long time (vs. 19)
  - Jesus continues to tell us that it will be a long time before He comes back
- Each slave comes before his master upon the master's return and explains how they used the wealth their master gave them
- The one with 5 bags of gold gives back 10 bags
  - Vs 21 – the slave is praised by his master and is to be placed in charge of much
- The one with 2 bags of gold gives back 4 bags of gold
  - Vs 23 – this slave is told the same thing as the other
- The slave with 1 bag of gold gives back the bag with nothing earned, but an excuse of "I knew you were a hard man, so I didn't want to risk your money and lose it"
  - Vs 26-28 – given a negative review (wicked and lazy) and stripped of what he had, and cast into the outer darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth
  - That's eternal punishment!
- In the 1st parable, Jesus says we need to be prepared for His return because no one but the Father knows when that will be
- In this parable, He tells us what that preparation looks like
  - We should consider what we're doing with what God entrusted us with
  - What are we doing with the physical blessings (wealth, property)?
  - What are we doing with the time?
  - Are we giving God a return on these blessings He's entrusted us with?
- The point Jesus is making with this parable is that we should be using what God gives us to do His work
- Jesus explains what that is in the last section of Matthew 25

## *The Goats and the Sheep (25:31-46)*

- We see in vss. 31-32 that Jesus sits on His throne with all the nations gathered before Him
  - This is clearly end-time judgment now, because it's not just Israel being judged
- He separates the sheep from the goats
  - The sheep on His right are blessed of the Father and can inherit the kingdom
  - Explains why in vss. 35-36 – they gave food when people were hungry, water when thirsty, clothed others when naked, visited them in prison and when sick
  - The righteous question Him in vss. 37-39 – “When did we do these things for You?”
  - Look closely at vs 40 – When you did it to anyone in the family of God, you were doing the same for Jesus Himself
  - What we do for others in the body of Christ, we are doing for Jesus as well
  - To be clear – our eternal outcome depends on how we treat others in the body of Christ
- The goats on the left are presented as the opposite
- They are tossed into eternal damnation in vs 41 right beside Satan and his angels; why?
  - Vss. 42-43 – They didn't give Jesus something to eat when He was hungry, water when He was thirsty, etc.
  - The wicked question Him about it in vs 44 – “When did we see you in these states and not care for you?”
  - Vs 45 – When they didn't care for those in the body of Christ, they didn't care for Jesus either
  - Are there those in the body of Christ that we consider beneath us because of personality, socio-economic standing, race, political affiliation, or anything else?
- Again, how we treat those in the family of God matters to God, and has eternal consequences

### **Pulling Them All Together**

- Parable 1 – Be prepared for His coming
- Parable 2 – Being prepared means giving Him a return on His blessings
- Parable 3 – We are to use God's blessings to help those in the family of God
- Eternal punishment was designed for the Devil and His angels, but we can end up there based on the choices we make while on this Earth
- People like to ask, “How could a loving God condemn someone to Hell?”
- That question looks at the situation backwards; let me give you an analogy of the real situation
  - Let's say you're trapped in a burning building and you can't find a way out

- Then, all of a sudden, someone kicks open a door and says, “Follow me to safety”
  - Would you follow that person?
  - You have the choice of staying right where you’re at and dying in the burning building, or you can follow the person who kicked in the door and get out of the burning building
  - That’s the real situation we are in as sinners
  - The moment we sin, we are deserving of Hell – we’re trapped in the burning building – but God sent Jesus to “kick the door in” and say, “I’m the only way out. Follow me.”
- So, the real question is, “Why would you choose to spend eternity in punishment instead of following Jesus?”

# CHAPTER 26

## *The Final Act (26:1-2)*

- Matthew starts chapter 26 with “When Jesus had finished all these words”
  - This is the 5th and final time Matthew writes this, marking it as the final section of his gospel
  - Matthew 7:28, Matthew 11:1, Matthew 13:53, Matthew 19:1, and here
- We’re now deep into the final week of Jesus’s life before His crucifixion
- Jesus has been telling His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem to be killed
- In Matthew 26:2, He tells them this truth again, but now He gives them a firm timeline – the Passover is coming in 2 days and then I’ll be handed over to be killed

## *The Plot to Kill Jesus (26:3-5)*

- Jesus's timeline doesn't quite line up with what the religious leaders were planning, though
- Verse 4 says that they did want to arrest Him and kill Him
- But verse 5 gives what they were planning
  - We'll arrest and kill Him, but we don't want to do it during the festival (the Passover)
  - They thought doing this during the Passover would start a riot among the people
- Jesus says it'll be during the Passover; the religious leaders want it to happen after the Passover
- This shows us that Jesus is in control of the events surrounding His death, as His timeline is the one that happens

## *Jesus Anointed (26:6-13)*

- While Jesus is in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper, a woman comes in and pours a very expensive jar of perfume on Jesus's head
- "The waste!" the disciples scream (John 12:4 – it was Judas Iscariot)
  - "We could have sold it and given the money to the poor"
  - Estimates are that the perfume probably cost around 1 year's wages
  - Not a small amount of money!
- Jesus responds to them by saying, "You'll always have the poor, but not me. She has prepared me for burial. Wherever the gospel is preached, her act here will be told along with it."
- Matthew records this so she is indeed remembered for all of time!
- John 12 records a very similar event, with a few key differences
  - Here, this happens 2 days before the Passover; John 12 states that it is 6 days before the Passover, so roughly 4 days earlier
  - Here, the woman isn't named; John 12 says it's Mary, the sister of Lazarus
  - Here, they're in Simon the Leper's house; John 12 has them in Mary, Martha, and Lazarus's house
  - Here, the lady anoints Jesus's head; in John 12, Mary pours the perfume on His feet and wipes them with her hair
- Is this a contradiction?
  - Entirely possible that Jesus was anointed 2 separate times in these final days
  - Also possible that Matthew and/or John collapsed things down some to keep the narrative going
  - This was not uncommon with writers (like Josephus) to alter chronologies to suit thematic organization, rhetorical devices, etc.
  - Not unlike movies "Based on a true story" but they aren't 100% historically accurate
- Because Matthew leaves the woman nameless, this study does as well
- Back to the woman anointing Jesus
- Two scenarios are possible
  - The woman did this because she had the opportunity; or
  - She listened to Jesus and knew He was about to be killed, so did this out of her faith in Him
- One thing to remember – they didn't bathe every day like we do
- They got pretty ripe after days and days of work with no bath
- They used perfume to keep from smelling as bad
  - The smell of the perfume would remain on Jesus through the crucifixion (probably)

## *Judas's Bargain (26:14-16)*

- After this, Judas went to the chief priests and asked, “What will you pay me to betray Jesus?”
- They settled on 30 shekels of silver
  - By weight, worth about \$500 in value today
  - Back then, that would have been equivalent to roughly 4 months of wages, so significantly more
- Judas then looked for an opportunity to betray Jesus to them

## *How Much Is Jesus Worth? (26:6-16)*

- We have a unique opportunity here within 10 verses to see the value that at least 2 people put on Jesus
  - The woman used a vial of perfume worth around 300 denarii to anoint Jesus
  - A shekel = 4 denarii, so about 75 shekels
  - Judas betrays Jesus for 15 shekels of silver
- The woman used 75 shekels of perfume to anoint Jesus but Judas betrayed him for 15 shekels
  - The woman “spent” about \$50,000 to honor Jesus
  - Judas betrayed Jesus for about \$15,000

## *How Much Is Jesus Worth to You?*

- Many Christians are really only asking, “Jesus, what will you give me if I follow you?”
  - There’s a mentality about their faith that shows it as a “me” based faith
  - This is what the “prosperity gospel” is grounded in
  - This thinking shows that people think God should be working for them
  - This is the way Judas thought – “I’ll follow Jesus for what I can get from Him, but if the price is right, I’ll give Him up.”
- As for the woman, and other Christians, their question is, “Jesus, how much can I give you?”
  - Nothing is too costly or extravagant
  - 1 year’s wages wasn’t too much – it was worth it to her so she could honor Jesus
  - He doesn’t want what we don’t have, but He expects to give what we do have

## *The Lord's Supper (26:17-29)*

- When the Passover arrived, His disciples ask Jesus where He wants to prepare for the feast
  - He gives them very clear instructions, and everything He tells them happens
- Even in this, Jesus shows His sovereignty over what's going on in this final day of His pre-death life
- The real Passover Lamb is set to be offered
  - Vs. 18 – “My time is near”
- Remember that the Passover is a time of celebrating God's saving the people of Israel from Egyptian slavery
- While eating this meal, though, Jesus says, “One of you will betray Me.”
- They were all grieved by it and asked, “It's not me, is it?”
- Their asking, “It's not me, is it?” was their way of saying, “I wouldn't do that!”
- So Jesus clears it up for them and points the finger at Judas
  - Judas says, “It's not me, is it?”
  - Jesus responds with, “You have said it yourself.”
- Again, we get very clear confirmation that Jesus knows exactly what's happening around Him
  - This is God's plan, not some unforeseen mistake because humans have free will
  - God knew!
- Even in the midst of His saying He's going to be betrayed, He pronounces woe upon Judas, trying to break through to him
  - Judas's heart is set on betrayal and that 30 shekels of silver
- With the betrayal of Jesus as a backdrop, He prepares a memorial for Himself using the food of the Passover
  - He takes the bread (we know it would be unleavened because Jews had to rid their houses of yeast during the Passover) and gives thanks for it, then tells His disciples to eat of it, for it is His body
  - Then He takes grape juice (not wine – there's leaven in wine) and blesses it, then has them share that, too, as it is “My blood of the covenant, which is being poured out for many for forgiveness of sins”
  - He has clearly shown that He is now the sacrifice to be used in the New Covenant about to be established
  - He is the Lamb that will be sacrificed to seal the New Covenant
- Verse 29 always causes a lot of consternation among people – What is Jesus talking about?
  - It shows that Jesus knew even before His death that He was going to rise
  - He would enjoy drinking the cup with them in His Father's kingdom

- When will this happen? Is it a spiritual feast in Heaven? On Earth?
  - The bulk of the NT written on the subject is clear that Jesus isn't even going to touch the ground when He returns
  - There won't be time for a memorial feast at that point
  - Could be in Heaven after all is said and done
- Personally, I think the answer is a little simpler than that
  - Jesus was risen for 40 days before He ascended to Heaven
  - The New Covenant began when Jesus died on the cross (the sacrifice this memorial is to memorialize)
  - Could He not have done this before He ascended into Heaven?
  - The Church may not have started until the Day of Pentecost, but that doesn't mean they weren't keeping the memorial before then

## *Predicting Peter's Denial (26:30-35)*

- After the feast, they head out to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane
- There, Jesus tells them they are all going to abandon Him that night because He was going to be betrayed
  - Quotes Zechariah 13:7
- Once He's been raised from the dead, He'll meet them in Galilee
- Peter (being Peter) says, "Not me! I'm never going to abandon you!"
- Jesus says, "Before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me 3 times"
- Peter (being Peter) says, "I won't, even if that means my death!"
  - Matthew mentions that all the disciples were saying the same thing as Peter – that they'd never leave Him

## *Praying in the Garden (26:36-46)*

- Jesus tells most of His disciples to stay in one spot while He prays
- Takes Peter, James, and John a little farther on, though
- Tells them, “I’m grieved to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me”
- Then He separates from them and goes to pray
  - He is distressed and anguished; He’s troubled by what’s about to happen
  - The humanity of Jesus is on full display in this section
  - Jesus knows He needs the Father now more than ever, and so He prays
- We’re not told everything Jesus prays, but we’re told the most important part – “Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me; but not my will but Your will be done”
- Jesus is experiencing the conflict of the flesh and the spirit that Paul talks about in Romans 7 and 8
- Jesus goes back to see His disciples sleeping
  - The problem is that Jesus has just told them their spiritual lives are on the line – they’re all going to abandon Him
  - They should be praying, not sleeping, even if it is well into the early morning hours
- Jesus tells them they should be praying, and then goes off again by Himself to pray more
  - He prays the same prayer as before, then comes back and finds them sleeping again
  - Leaves them there and goes off to pray the third time
  - Returns to them and rouses them, then says, “It’s show time!”

## *Betrayal (26:47-55)*

- Judas arrives with his soldiers and crowd of others carrying swords and clubs from the chief priests and elders
- They were waiting for him to kiss the one that was Jesus, and Judas makes haste to do it
- He greets Jesus by saying, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and then kissing Him on the cheek
  - Kissing on the cheek was (and still is) a very customary way to greet someone in the Middle East
- Even in his betrayal, Judas is driving a dagger home – pretending like its just another day traveling with Jesus
- Jesus simply responds by saying, “Friend, do what you’re here for”
  - “Friend” is translated from the Greek word for “companion, comrade”
- So, Jesus even continues to play the charade that Judas started off with like everything is “normal”
- They seize Jesus to arrest Him
- One of His disciples pulls a sword and aims to take the head off the slave of the high priest
  - He seems to have ducked away from it and lost his ear in the process
  - John 18:10 tells us the disciple who did this was Peter, and that the slaves name was Malchus
- Jesus stops him from fighting – “Those who take up the sword will perish by the sword”
- Tells them He could call down more than 12 legions (72,000) of angels
  - In other words, He doesn’t need Peter to defend Him
- Then states that this is all happening exactly as God has planned
- Jesus then points out that they could have arrested Him at any time they wanted, as He’s been teaching in the Temple all week
  - “Why did you come in the middle of the night like I’m some common criminal, armed with swords and clubs expecting a fight?”
- All of this shows that God is in control – things are going exactly as He has planned
- This section ends with the declaration that all the disciples left Him and fled once He was arrested

## *Tried Before Caiaphas (26:57-68)*

- They take Jesus to Caiaphas, the high priest; the high priests and scribes are all gathered there as well
  - Clearly, they knew they'd be needed for Jesus's "trial"
- The Sanhedrin tried to obtain false testimony about Jesus so they could have reason to kill Him
  - They haven't gathered together to find out the truth about Jesus
  - They are looking for a reason to reject and kill Him, even going to the point of taking clearly false testimony to give them a reason
- Someone finally comes forward and says, "He said He'd destroy the Temple and rebuild it in 3 days"
  - Which is mostly true – John 2:19 has Jesus saying, "Destroy this temple, and in 3 days I will raise it up."
- Jesus doesn't respond to the charge
- Finally, Caiaphas places Him under an oath by God to admit whether He's the Christ, the Son of God
- Jesus says, "You yourself said it, but from now on, you'll see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."
  - This is Jesus saying, "What you say is true, and I'm going to judge all of you for what you're doing."
- Caiaphas understood it to be a "Yes", so he tore his robes and asked the rest of the Sanhedrin what they thought
  - They all said, "He deserves death!"
- The death sentence wasn't enough, as they proceeded to slap, spit on, and taunt Him

## *Peter's Denials (26:69-75)*

- In the last passage of the chapter, we have Peter's denials of Jesus
- We see in verse 58 that Peter followed the crowd who'd arrested Jesus and then entered into the courtyard of the high priest and sat with them
  - You have to appreciate the position Peter put himself in by doing this – he was proverbially entering the lion's den to see what happened to Jesus
- First denial – a slave woman says, "You were with Jesus"
  - His response – "I don't know what you're talking about"; got up and left the area, probably in the hope that no one else would recognize him
- Second denial – another slave woman says, "This man was with Jesus"
  - His response – "I don't know Him!"
- Third denial – others said, "We know you were with Him because of your accent!"
  - His response – Swears and says, "I do not know Him!"
- And then the rooster crows
- Peter remembers what Jesus said and he left the area and wept bitterly
- I can only imagine the sting and pain that this realization of what he's done must feel like
- He probably remembered what Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33
  - "Acknowledge Me before others, and I'll acknowledge you before my Father in heaven. Deny Me before others, and I'll deny you before Him."
- Besides having denied one of his truest friends and companions, it had dire consequences eternally as well
  - As far as he knew now, he was out of fellowship with Jesus and no longer saved – and he was probably right! Good thing we don't have to have that debate

# CHAPTER 27

## *Judas's Remorse (27:1-10)*

- Once Judas sees that Jesus has been condemned to death and sent off to Pilate, Judas goes back to the Temple
- Vs. 3 says he felt remorse and went back to those he betrayed Jesus to
  - “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood”
  - Notice that Judas understands that he sinned – he doesn’t push the blame off on someone else
  - He also understands that Jesus is innocent of anything He’s been accused of
  - Their response – “That’s your problem, not ours”
  - He throws the money they paid him back into the Temple sanctuary and goes and hangs himself
- It’s worth comparing Peter and Judas at this point
  - Catastrophic failure gives you a choice
- Neither man could reverse or undo his sin – neither can we
  - Peter
    - Peter understood that, even though he denied Jesus, that wasn’t the end of his faith
    - He didn’t know how he was going to be forgiven, but he knew that Jesus wasn’t going to abandon him like he abandoned Jesus
    - Matthew 26:31-32
    - Once forgiven, he knew that the sin would be wiped away
  - Judas
    - Judas, on the other hand, saw no way that he would be forgiven for what he did
    - The only solution he could come up with to escape his situation was to hang himself
    - However, this did nothing for the state of his soul, or the sin he committed – he was still tainted by it
- The chief priests and elders (the Sanhedrin) knew they couldn’t take Judas’s money back and add it to the Temple treasury, as it was blood money
- Ended up using it to buy a field for paupers’ and strangers’ graves
  - We learn in Luke 1:18-19 that this is the field where Judas hanged himself
- Matthew shows that even this was directed by God
  - Quotes part of Zechariah 11:12-13
  - This prophecy showing Jesus as the Messiah isn’t something Jesus had anything to do with – His enemies did this all on their own, fulfilling the prophecy

## *Jesus Before Pilate (27:11-14)*

- Jesus is taken before Pilate
- Pilate questioned Him regarding the charges the Jews brought against Jesus and asking Pilate to enact the death penalty
  - “So you are the King of the Jews?”
  - Jesus answers, “It is as you say” or “You have said it”
  - Same answer He gave to Caiaphas regarding His being the Messiah in Matthew 26:63-64
  - We’d say, “Whatever you say” today
- As the Roman governor, if the Jews brought Him to Pilate and said He’s the Messiah or He blasphemed our Temple, Pilate wouldn’t care
  - They make a political accusation against Him (Luke 23:2)
  - Treason against Rome
  - This is something Pilate WOULD have to deal with
- The Jewish leaders continue to accuse Jesus of things
- Jesus makes no comments about any of it, to the point that Pilate says, “Don’t you hear all the things they’re accusing you of?”
- Jesus still doesn’t answer, which amazes Pilate
  - With the power of life or death, most people accused of anything before Pilate would make some kind of defense in the hopes they’d not be killed
  - This is to fulfill the prophecy out of Isaiah 53:7
  - We all know how hard it is to keep from saying something when we’re accused of something, especially when that something isn’t true
- Looking at the big picture, Pilate doesn’t have much to go on in adjudicating this
  - Jesus is accused of lots of things with no evidence and no admission of guilt

## *Jesus Before the Crowd (27:15-26)*

- Pilate goes a different route than just finding Jesus guilty
- It was a custom during the Passover for Rome to release a prisoner to the Jews that they chose
  - It's unclear from what records we have if this was a common practice across governors or something only Pilate did
- Pilate goes before the crowd of Jews and asks if they want him to release Jesus or Barabbas
  - Matthew points out that Pilate knew they handed Jesus over to be killed out of envy, and not because He committed any crime (vs. 18)
  - We also see in vs. 19 that Pilate's wife had a dream about Jesus and told Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus
- The chief priests and elders convince the crowd to ask for Barabbas, though, and to put Jesus to death
- Pilate essentially calls Jesus innocent by asking, "Then what do you want me to do with Jesus?"
- Their answer – "Crucify Him!"
- He asks again, saying, "Why? He hasn't done anything!"
- But the crowd was unrelenting in their desire for Pilate to crucify Jesus
- He washes his hands before the crowd and declares, "I am free of this man's blood!"
  - We know from records we've found that Pilate was particularly cruel, and his solution for about any problem with the Jews was military violence
  - This is his way of saying, "This man's death isn't on me!"
- They cried out, "His blood on us and our children!"
- Then Pilate releases Barabbas and has Jesus flogged and handed over to be crucified

## *Jesus is Mocked (27:27-31)*

- Once Pilate ordered Him to be flogged and crucified, Jesus is handed over to the Roman soldiers to carry out those orders
- They do what they always do when handed a prisoner under a death sentence – have a little fun with them!
- They stripped Him to His loin cloth and mock His title as King of the Jews
  - Put a red cloak on Him
    - Probably the same sort of cloak a Roman officer would wear into battle
  - They created a crown of thorns and pushed it into His head
    - The scalp bleeds profusely, so Jesus would have blood streaking down His face from this
  - Place a reed in His right hand as a “scepter”
  - Kneel down and hail Him as royal
- Then they spit on Him and beat him on the head with the reed scepter
- Matthew mentions the flogging, but John goes into more depth on the exchange between Pilate, the Jews, and Jesus
  - Pilate tried to use the flogging as a “He’s been punished enough; now let me release Him”, but the Jews cried out for His crucifixion
- Once all the torture had been carried out,
- Jesus is stripped of the cloak and dressed in His own clothes again, then led out to be crucified
- Because of everything Jesus suffered, He was unable to carry the crossbeam of his cross
- The Romans force Simon of Cyrene to carry it for Him
  - Rome didn’t ask people to do things; they told them to do things
  - Simon was forced to carry the cross for Jesus

## *Jesus is Crucified (27:33-44)*

- They arrive at Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull
- Probably at the base of the hill near the road that went out from the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, not on top of the hill
  - Matthew 27:39 and Mark 15:29 say that those passing by “were speaking abusively to Him” and “hurling abuse at Him”
  - John says that Pilate wrote “King of the Jews” on a plaque in 3 languages and hung it on His cross
    - Not legible from afar
  - The wine mixed with bile (or gall) was not a numbing agent as some say it was
    - The Romans didn’t want those crucified not to experience the pain – it was meant as torture
  - If they wanted to kill someone quickly, they could behead them (like Paul), just stab them with a sword, or a dozen other ways that would be quicker and less painful
- The wine and bile was meant as more insult and mockery
  - Fulfills the prophecy in Psalm 69:20-21
- Vs. 35 – “And when they had crucified Him...”
  - So short and succinct
  - Easy to miss
- Roman crucifixions could use either rope to tie the victim to the cross, nails to nail them to the cross, or both
  - We know that Jesus was nailed to the cross because Thomas said he wouldn’t believe that Jesus was alive until he put his fingers in the nail prints
- Once the 3 men were hung on their crosses, the Roman soldiers overseeing the crucifixion turned their attention to the men’s garments
- They cast lots for the clothing
  - Clothing was hand-made and expensive in the 1st century
  - Especially a tunic that had no seam, so they cast lots to see who would get the whole tunic, rather than tear it apart
    - This fulfills Psalm 22:16-18
- Pilate places the charge above Him on the cross – “King of the Jews”
- Now we have a series of people that insult Jesus
  - First, those passing by speak abusively to them and shake their heads
    - Psalm 22:7
  - Then Matthew records that the chief priests, scribes, and elders mock Him
    - They even quote Psalm 22:8-10
  - Finally, we see that that criminals crucified with Jesus are also insulting and mocking Him in the same way

- The irony in all of this is that they think Jesus's crucifixion vindicates their belief that He is NOT the Son of God He claims to be
  - Hanging on a tree means you're accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)
  - God wouldn't allow His Son to die on the cross (they thought)
- We know that they didn't is that this was God's plan for our salvation

## *Jesus Dies (27:45-54)*

- From the sixth hour to the ninth hour (from noon to 3 p.m.), darkness fell across the land
  - Even without knowing the symbolism of darkness meaning God's judgment, everyone knows that darkness from noon to 3 p.m. isn't natural and probably isn't good
  - An eclipse wouldn't last for 3 hours, so it can't be that
- Jesus cries out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"
  - Around 3 p.m., Jesus cries out, quoting Psalm 22:1, emphasizing that He is now living through that prophecy
  - Already seen several times that the Psalm 22 parallels what is happening to Jesus
  - In the Psalm, David is dying at the hands of his enemies, and yet he still trusts that God will save him
  - By the end of the psalm, God HAS saved him
  - Jesus is now experiencing the same thing – rejection, ridicule, and ultimately death, but He's still not letting go of His obedience to God
- The people think He's calling out to Elijah and want to see what happens
- Someone offers Him more sour wine on a reed
  - Fulfills Psalm 69:21
- With His work finished, Jesus cries out with a loud voice and gives up His spirit – He's dead
- God's signs that Jesus was His Son
  - The temple veil that separates the Holy of Holies (where God's presence resides) from the rest of the Temple is torn in two from top to bottom – access to God is now available for all
  - There was an earthquake
  - The tombs were opened and the dead are raised
- With all of that happening, the centurion and the other Roman soldiers who are there guarding Jesus come to the only conclusion they can – "Truly, this was the Son of God"
- It isn't the Jewish religious leaders that come to this conclusion; it's a bunch of Gentile soldiers who had just mocked Him and divided up His garments
- Jesus was right to trust in God, even through His death
  - John 16:32
  - John 8:28-29
- God will NEVER abandon us

## *Jesus Buried (27:55-61)*

- We see in verses 55 and 56 that there were “many women” who were disciples of Jesus and ministered to Him that watched
  - 3 of them are named in verse 56 – Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John
- Since it’s the Passover and a Sabbath, the bodies of Jesus and the criminals need to be taken down
  - Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’s body
  - Pilate granted his request, unusual because most crucifixion victims went in a mass grave
    - Probably because Pilate realized Jesus didn’t deserve death
  - Joseph wraps the body in clean linen and laid Him in a new tomb (never used before)
  - Rolls a large rock in front of it and then leaves
  - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sit opposite the tomb
  - Fulfills Isaiah 53:9

## *The Tomb Secured (27:62-66)*

- The next day, the chief priests and Pharisees go before Pilate and ask him to secure the tomb to ensure that Jesus's body can't be stolen by His disciples to make it look like He was resurrected
- Pilate tells them to make it as secure as they can
  - "You have a guard" is a promise that he'll provide Roman soldiers
  - He wouldn't have cared if the Jews used their own people to police the area, and they wouldn't need to ask him
  - They also seal the tomb – they stretch a rope across the stone sealing the tomb and put a big glob of wax on the ends of the rope to secure it

# CHAPTER 28

## *The Resurrection (28:1-10)*

- The tomb is sealed; the Roman guard is in place
- It's now Sunday following the Sabbath
  - The women can go to Jesus's tomb and properly prepare Jesus's body for burial
  - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (not His mom), but the one mentioned in Matthew 27:56 who is the mother of James and Joseph, are on their way
- A severe earthquake occurs and the stone is rolled away from the entrance
  - An angel of the Lord descended from Heaven to take care of the problem
  - Sits on the stone
- The guard are so afraid that they shake and became like dead men
  - Probably means they couldn't move and were as white as ghosts
  - Remember, these were Roman soldiers who went into battle and saw awful things
  - For them to be petrified like this is really saying something about how scared they were
- The angel has a message for the women, though
  - "Don't be afraid. You're looking for Jesus, but He's not here"
  - "He's risen from the dead, just as He said He would"
- He also encourages them to look into the tomb to see that He's gone
  - Important note here – the stone wasn't rolled away so Jesus could get out
  - It was rolled away so they could see He wasn't there!
  - He walks through a wall to appear in the upper room – He doesn't need a door
- Then the angel tells them to go back to the disciples and tell them to meet Jesus in Galilee
- They leave "with fear and great joy" to go back to the disciples
- As they went, they meet Jesus
- They recognize Him, so they fall down at His feet to worship Him, take hold of His feet
  - Important to realize that He's not a ghost – He has a physical body still
- He also tells them to go tell "My brothers" to meet Him in Galilee
  - Despite their failures, abandonment of Him, etc. – they're still His family!

## *The Cover-up (28:11-15)*

- While they were on their way to the disciples, some of the men from the guard went to tell the chief priests what happened
- Once the Sanhedrin was assembled, they decided to pay the soldiers off and to tell them to lie about what happened
  - “Tell everyone that His followers came and stole the body while you were asleep”
  - Also promise that they’ll smooth things out with Pilate if he hears about this and keep them out of trouble
- What does this concocted story imply?
  - The Roman soldiers failed at their mission
  - They fell asleep while on duty (at least 1 of them did)
    - Roman soldiers held 4 watches through the night lasting 3 hours each
    - A group would take the watch while the rest slept
  - A bunch of country bumpkins bested a trained unit of Roman soldiers
- None of that is flattering for them
- But they took the money nonetheless
  - They’d have been executed if they just went back to the Roman garrison having failed to keep Jesus’s body protected
  - At least there’s a promise that they’ll be safe
- They also spread the lie that Jesus’s body was stolen by His followers
  - Matthew comments that it’s a widely spread story among the Jews even as he writes the gospel (around 20 years later)
- Probably the most bizarre (though certainly not unbelievable) part of all of it is that the religious leaders **STILL** aren’t convinced that Jesus is the Messiah!
  - Instead of realizing everything He said would happen did happen, they’d rather believe an idiotic and implausible lie about it

## *The Great Commission (28:16-20)*

- When the apostles get up to Galilee, they meet Him where He told them to go
- They worship Him, but some doubted
- He gives them the Great Commission
- “I have all authority in Heaven and on Earth”
  - Daniel 7:14; Psalm 2:7-9
  - “Go and make disciples of all the nations”
  - The ruler with all authority has given us a mission to make disciples of everyone we can
- “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”
  - This is how we make them disciples
  - This is a command – and for some reason baptism’s necessity is a major point of contention among Christians
  - Can we willfully ignore a command of Jesus and still be considered His disciples?
  - This goes for the command to make disciples as well as being baptized
- “I am with you to the end of the age”
  - The One in authority of everything is with us as we go out to do this work that He’s set before us
  - We’re not on our own; He’s right there with you!
- The whole gospel of Matthew is pointing to this last command
  - Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
  - He died for you
  - You can be His disciple and brother/sister as well