

**WEST VIRGINIA
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**THE KING AND
HIS KINGDOM
IN MATTHEW**

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DEDICATION

The apostle John stated that when some one dies ‘in the Lord,’ his works do follow them. This would certainly be true of John Cunningham. On April 19, 2003, John finished his earthly work and went on to receive his reward. He was ninety years old. His works live on.



When someone mentions the Church of Christ in Chester, John and Gaynell immediately come to mind. He and Gaynell were married on September 15, 1945. For many years, John served as an elder. He was active in every phase of the work of the congregation where he served as a deacon, a Bible class teacher, a personal worker and an elder. He gave spiritual leadership to the congregation that he loved so much.

The Cunningham home was characterized by hospitality and their door was always open to others. John always emphasized that our growth as a congregation is tied to our getting to know each other better.

His love for the church was unquestioned. He loved to hear the Bible taught and traveled many miles to support faithful preachers. John knew the truth and expected preachers to uphold it. He was able to work well with his fellow elders and made a real contribution to the decisions they made.

He was a strong supporter of West Virginia School of Preaching and believed in the work it is doing. Preachers, both young and old, found a friend in him.

While his life on earth is over, his works continue.

Frank Higginbotham

**“Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour”
(Romans 13:7).**

Elders to be Honored

The brethren planning the 2003 Lectureship decided to honor two men who have served as elders of the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ. Brethren Walt Masters and Howard Sole have served together for 38 years. They have worked together and with others in a very cooperative manner. The peace and harmony of the church at Hillview Terrace, the success of the West Virginia School of Preaching, along with the many mission areas that have benefited from their generous financial gifts, attest to their live for the souls of men. May God continue to bless them always in the service of Jesus Christ.

Preacher to be Honored

The brethren planning the 2003 Lectureship also decided to honor a preacher. Brother John Hamilton was born September 23, 1918 at St. Joe, Ohio. He was married to Delrose McCoy also of St. Joe, Ohio on May 31, 1946, and they have a daughter, Nancy Joella.

John and Delrose became Christians in 1939. He attended Freed-Hardeman University, received the B.S. degree from Abilene Christian University and his M.A. from Eastern New Mexico University.

John began his preaching career at Portalis, New Mexico in 1950. His local work took him to Portalis, NM; Rifle, CO; Bloomington and Martinsville, IN; Chelsea, MI; Woodsfield, Massilon and Shadyside, OH.

In addition to his local work, John has held numerous Gospel meetings in a greater number of states. Needless to say, John and his good wife remain faithful to the Lord and we extend hearty congratulations to this great Christian couple. May God continue to bless both of you in your service to the Lord.

PREFACE

The Book of Matthew is the foundation for the 2003 “Victory” lectures. This study seems to be most appropriate because of the great amount of confusion in our day with regard to the church and the kingdom. Matthew clarifies much of it.

Matthew the evangelist and apostle was a Galilean Jew who wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Nearly every chapter has a prophecy from the Old Testament with 43 direct quotations.

Matthew presents Jesus as the offspring of David, the prophesied Messiah and predicted King. He is presented as the one through whom man is reconciled to God.

J.W. McGarvey wrote: “Matthew has enriched his narrative with such a selection of gems from the treasury of the Great Teacher, as must ever make his book the most frequently read of all the books of the New Testament.”

The recorded parables emphasize the kingdom of heaven.

Since the book is believed to have been written about 60 A.D. to 64 A.D., it had to precede the fall of Jerusalem. He climaxes his record of the Gospel with what we call the Great Commission, showing that all of every nation, Jew and Gentile, should be baptized.

The sermon of the Mount is an example of the great discourse of the Master, presented with beauty and fullness.

The question, “But whom say ye that I am?” is answered thoroughly.

Denver E. Cooper

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JESUS, HUMILIATION AND ABUSE

By Roy H. Lanier, Jr.

Let it be understood at the very first that humiliation and exaltation of Jesus relates only to his human nature. Such things cannot be attributed to his Divine nature. The Divine nature is immutable, and therefore it is incapable of diminution or increase. His humiliation was temporary, his exaltation is permanent. His humiliation began with his birth and ended with his death. This dual-natured Person, though humiliated by taking on humanity, was exalted above all, and now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, all things subject to Him (Hebrews 1:3).

The Emptying, Kenosis

One of the most glorious passages about humility in the Bible is when Paul calls for Christians to follow Jesus.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11 KJV)

This is the cardinal passage in the New Testament that describes the humiliation of our Lord. The concept is beyond the finite mind of humans to understand fully, but several considerations can be grasped:

1. In context, Paul is appealing for unity and humility – vv 1-4.
2. The appeal is to have the “mind” of Jesus. The Greek uses *tou=to fronei=te, touto phroneite*, translated literally as “this think ye.” A modern translation uses “Your attitude should be” (NIV).
3. This would be what Paul means when he later speaks of their working out their own salvation – v. 12.
4. Paul appealed to Christians in Philippi to have this mind, or attitude, and it would make full his joy – v. 2.
5. Jesus, previous to his incarnation, existed in the pure spirit form of Deity.
6. He “thought it not robbery” (KJV) to be in this equal spirit form, or as another translation states: “counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped” (ASV) – v. 6. The NASB adds a footnote: “i.e., laid aside His privileges.”
7. He “made himself of no reputation” (KJV, NKJV), or “emptied himself” (ASV, NASB), or “made himself nothing” (NIV) in such way as to leave heaven and pure spirit form in order to accomplish incarnation – v. 7.
8. This resulted in taking the form of a servant, being made in likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man – vv. 7-8.
9. Since the Son of God had now, in some way, added a human person to his Divine Person, he

thus was subject to death, and he accepted this obediently – 8.

10. This voluntary humiliation gave him a highly exalted place and name – v.9.

11. This emptying will resound in that day when all shall confess his name to the glory of God the Father – v. 11.

The term used for “made himself of no reputation” or “emptied” is *ekenosen*, a third person singular Aorist from *kenoo* (Moulton 124).

12. The verb form indicates a completed action in past time.

These are the simple facts stated by Paul, but the comprehension and true depth of them are beyond finite ability. Somehow, some way, the Creator of all became as one created. He who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent and eternal subjected himself to limited qualities of created human beings. “...though he was of divine nature or condition, he did not eagerly seek to retain his equality with God, but took on him an humble condition – even that of a servant” (Barnes 170).

This staggers the mind of thoughtful Bible students, but the facts must be accepted by faith.

Faith requires that one understand that this Person was in every way divine, yet was also in every way human. The attributes of Deity were still evident in this Jesus, yet the limitations of humanity were also present. How could this be? Only faith will suffice for students of the Word today.

This is incarnation!

What This Kenosis Cannot Mean

This is a divine paradox. He emptied himself by taking or adding something to himself. This was not a case of a human baby being born to Mary, and then a Divine Nature being added to him. He was “made in the likeness of men”; it was not a human baby being made in the likeness of God.

He came to earth as a servant. He did not come in all his rightful glory. He did not lose or change any attribute of Deity. He was and is still God in every respect. The theory that he laid aside divine attributes cannot be true for many reasons.

First, it would violate the nature of the Trinity for Jesus to lay aside any of the eternal attributes. The Second Person of the Godhead cannot be severed from the First Person or the Spirit, all three of whom are equal in nature. The three Persons possess the same numerical substance or essence, and they must be “consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal” (Boettner 107). Jesus claimed eternal work along with the Father, and the Jews understood this to be a claim of equality as Deity (John 5:17-18). Jesus claimed consistently to be “one” with the Father (John 10:30; 17:21). If this were not so, it would lead one to the conclusion of “Tri-theism” or a triad, unfortunately what many brethren actually understand about the nature of God. Father, Son and Spirit cannot be separated. They are three-in-one, a Trinity, not Tri-theism (Muller 83-84).

Second, it would negate the true Deity of Jesus. If he gave up any attribute of Deity (how could God give up being God?), he would no longer be God. He would have been just a man. An attribute is an inherent characteristic. A God who gives up omniscience is no longer God (Muller 84). All Scripture cries out against such a concept. Jesus consistently claimed Deity; who is the one ready to say that Jesus was a liar? (Matthew 4:7; 26:62-64; John 10:31-38; Luke 22:70).

Third, giving up an attribute of Deity would violate the immutability of God. God never changes; he cannot change by the very nature of Godhood (Muller 84). “I am that I am” is immutable (John 8:58; Hebrews 7:24; Revelation 1:17-18). Many of his promises are conditional, depending upon the responses of men. Therefore, sometimes it is expressed as if God repented (Genesis 6:7; Exodus 32:14),

while the change was always in the person or persons, never in God. He never learns anything, he never changes his mind, he never fails in his promises.

Fourth, Jesus would not be able to be the true mediator (1Timothy 2:5) between God and man. He would not be equi-distant (Muller 84).

Fifth, he would not be qualified to be the “Lamb of God,” the absolute, sinless, and perfect offering for propitiation (John 1:29; Hebrews 7:26-28).

Sixth, Jesus could not be an object of worship, for we are to worship only the “Lord your God” (Luke 4:8).

Seventh, Jesus would not be the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” nor the one in whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:3, 9).

Eighth, this kenosis was not the birth by Mary of a human baby who was exalted to Deity; it was the Son of God who voluntarily humiliated himself, descending to the plane of man, and sharing all human experiences.

What This Kenosis Does Mean

It is important to realize that this adding of the human person to the Eternal Son of God did not produce a double person. He was and continues to be both God and man. He is in two distinct natures but one person forever more. “He was perfect God; he became perfect Man” (Caffin 59).

This person is of a dual nature, both human and divine, but some concepts of duality are outside the realm of Scripture in some important considerations.

Jesus did not have two personalities or two minds, one human and the other divine. He did not have two wills, two emotional abilities or two souls. He did not act or speak as a man at times, while at other times acting and speaking as God. Such is not in accord with true concept of incarnation. He was simply the God-man in all instances and situations

He did experience everything necessary to a normal life that a human being would. He was born of a woman (Matthew 2:1). He “advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). He was “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus wept (John 11:35), hungered (Matthew 4:2), wearied (John 4:6), thirsted (John 4:7; 19:28), slept (Matthew 8:24), sorrowed (Matthew 26:37), prayed (Matthew 14:23), had compassion (Matthew 9:36), was moved with indignation ((Mark 10:14), suffered (Luke 24:46; Hebrews 2:10; 5:8) and finally he experienced death (Matthew 27:50; 1 Corinthians 15:3).

How the Deity could experience all these things is beyond the imagination of humans. The very Son of God, now a helpless baby in the arms of Mary, can grow in favor with God? The very Creator of all things was at one time a needy infant in his mother’s arms; how could this be? The Omniscient One at one time subjected himself to advancing in wisdom? The puzzlement continues, but it is beyond finite comprehension.

Yet, this is what incarnation involved. The reality of Jesus’ human nature and the genuineness of human life are illustrated endlessly through the Gospels. He is truly one with us in our humanity, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but he was also one with the Father as Deity.

Many of the puzzlements of incarnation will always escape mankind, but true believers must rely on faith. These facts are what the Bible says about his nature. We accept them by faith.

One Oft Overlooked Humiliation

He is the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8); a multitude of angels burst the heavens with “Glory to God in the highest” when he was born, and his face shone forth in his transfiguration with glory from the Father (2 Peter 1:17-18; Matthew 17:2). Yet, Jesus was not recognized by the

world for the glory that was rightfully his. He is the Lord of Glory, yet suffered as if incognito, and as if he were just a man, son of Mary and Joseph. How often he suffered the slights of villages, persons in his hometown of Nazareth, his own step-brothers, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, scribes and even the Sanhedrin! None were willing to give him the glory that was deserved by the Son of God.

Jesus, burdened in prayer to the Father just prior to the death experience in Jerusalem, asked the Father to “glorify Thy Son” (John 17:1). Twice more in this prayer Jesus asked the Father to glorify him with the glory that he had “before the world was,” (v. 5), and that the apostles would “behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (v. 24). Jesus deserved the honor and recognition, but the world denied him (John 5:23).

Jesus gave all glory to the Holy Spirit even in working his miracles. He did not use his own omnipotence, but rather he was anointed by the Holy Spirit to work the signs and wonders (John 1:32; Acts 10:38). He was “full of the Holy Spirit” and was “led by the Spirit” into the wilderness for fasting and temptations. When the Pharisees spoke against his miracles, Jesus warned them that this was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, not against him, and that this kind of blasphemy was without forgiveness (Matthew 12:31-32; Luke 12:10)

This failure of the world to recognize the majesty and glory of Jesus, giving him the proper recognition that the Creator and Sustainer of the world deserved, brought an exclamation from Jesus when he entered Jerusalem that final week. When the Pharisees asked him to rebuke his disciples as the throngs in Jerusalem praised him as the “King that cometh in the name of the Lord,” he burst forth with “I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40).

How sad, how terrible, how humiliating it was that the Son of God suffered these ignominies!

Paradoxes Abound.

This Person is eternal, yet he was born. He is omniscient, but he advanced in wisdom. He was of the seed of David, yet he was the Eternal Son of the Father. As the Ancient of Days, he was born as a babe in Bethlehem. He was the son of Mary, yet he is God over all. He could be wearied from journeys, but he also upholds all things in creation by the word of his power. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, but he increased in stature and favor. He is the Prince of Peace, yet his soul was troubled. He knew what was in man, but asked who touched his garment. He was received up into heaven, yet continues to be with his disciples always.

A Rarely Understood Permanence

Jesus Christ is still a man, a God-man. His human nature did not disappear at his resurrection or his ascension. This life was not just a theophany. That soul that could be tempted in all points as are we did not disappear somehow, sometime prior to his return to heaven. Was a human soul annihilated? No such annihilation is within the concept of the incarnation. Then what happened to that human soul, a human soul that came into existence at the pregnancy of Mary? That soul still exists; he is still a God-man today. This is a major significance of his name: Jesus (humanity) Christ (Deity).

Even that physical body in which he lived was resurrected, changed and ascended into glory. His body, now changed, is the same as our bodies will be. Note some interesting Scriptures.

“For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed

to the body of his glory” (Philippians 3:22-21). Jesus has a body in glory, immortal, incorruptible, heavenly and spiritual. Whatever nature of body he has in glory is what Christians one day will also share. Prior to incarnation, he had no body; he was pure spirit God.

“But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). In Paul’s discussion of the resurrection and the changes effected in the resurrection body, he claims that Christ led the way for others who follow. Whatever his resurrection in body form included, the same change will occur for those who follow. “Firstfruits” implies that the same kind of fruit will follow.

“For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). A true mediator is both God and man. Paul affirms that as the true mediator, Jesus is still a man. The Greek word used is *anthropos*, a word referring to mankind. So, as long as he is our mediator, he is also a man. The dual nature of Jesus is again affirmed, though he now is in eternity, in heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

“...inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). We will be judged in that day by a man. The Greek word used here refers to the male sex, *andri*. Paul clearly claimed this, and such a claim could be true only if the adding of a human nature to the Son of God is permanent.

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is” (1 John 3:2). We will not be the same as Jesus, for we will not be divine. Yet, we will be similar in some way. The Greek word for “like” is *homoioi* that

simply refers to similarity. One of those similarities will include a glorified body.

Conclusion

Staggering though this truth might be, it might suggest that one of the greatest of all concepts of humiliation is the fact that the incarnation is irreversible. The Son of God remains also forever the Son of Man.

One day all human beings will confess the glorious name of this One, and all will bow in recognition and worship of him as God, to the glory of God the Father.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Roy H. Lanier, Jr. was born in Abilene, TX, the son of Roy H. Lanier, Sr., also a Gospel preacher. He lived his early years in Waxahachie, TX; Roswell, NM and Fort Worth, TX, before moving for his junior and high school years to Abilene. He attended Abilene Christian High School, Freed-Hardeman College, Florida Christian College and Abilene Christian College. Lanier began

preaching appointments in 1945 while still in high school. Freed-Hardeman University awarded Lanier an LLD in May, 2002.

Lanier's local work includes six congregations: Cedar Rapids, IA (1951-1953), Plant City, FL (1953-1956), Central church in Norman, OK (1956-1962), Brandon and Branford, FL (1962-1966), Eastside church in Midwest City, OK (1966-1971) and Hoffman Heights church in Aurora, CO (1972-1976). Since 1976, Lanier has engaged himself in fulltime writing and evangelism, presently under the oversight of the Broadway church in Garland, TX (since 1988).

Lanier taught at the Bear Valley School of Preaching for eight years and presently directs and teaches the School of Bible Emphasis in Missouri, Illinois, Georgia, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, Michigan and California.

Lanier has conducted radio programs and appeared in television productions. He also founded the *Rocky Mountain Christian Newspaper* and has authored several books, as well as articles that have appeared in many brotherhood journals.

Lanier married Patricia Boswell of Lakeland, FL (1951) and they have one daughter, Lee (Mrs. Mark Hanstein) and two grandchildren.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM IN MATTHEW

Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7

By Louis Rushmore

Backdrop

According to the Gospel of Matthew, the “kingdom of heaven” was the obvious topic of the preaching by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:17, 23) and the apostles (Matthew 10:7). “Both Jesus and John began their ministries preaching that ‘the kingdom of God (sic, heaven) is at hand’ (Matthew 3:2:4:17). The establishment of the church [kingdom] at this time was only about 3 years away.” (Morrison 20). Lenski writes regarding the grammatical structure of Matthew 3:2, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” that it “has been drawing near and is thus now at hand.” (93). Further, Jesus Christ decreed that “the gospel of the kingdom” was to be the permanent topic of preaching until the end of time (Matthew 24:14). The phrase “kingdom of heaven” appears exclusively in the Bible only in the Gospel of Matthew, 32 times; the companion and equivalent phrase “kingdom of God” appears 69 times in the New Testament, four of which are in Matthew. Even Matthew used the phrases “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” interchangeably (19:23-24). “The nuance ‘of heaven’ suggests that the essential meaning is ‘reign’ and that this kingship does not arise by human effort.” (Kittel)

The Greek word for “kingdom” is *basileia*, which means “properly, royalty, i.e. (abstractly) rule, or (concretely) a realm (literally or figuratively).” (Strong). *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says of *basileia*, it “denotes the lawful king (usually hereditary, later distinguished from the tyrannos, ‘usurper’). ... This

term refers to the being or nature or state of a king, i.e., his dignity, and secondarily the expression of this in the territory he governs.” (Kittel). W.E. Vine concurs that *basileia* first refers to the concept of being king and then by implication to the area of his governance:

Basileia is primarily an abstract noun, denoting sovereignty, royal power, dominion, e.g., Rev. 17:18, translated “(which) reigneth,” lit., ‘hath a kingdom’ (R.V. marg.); then, by metonymy, a concrete noun, denoting the territory or people over whom a king rules, e.g., Matt. 4:8; Mark 3:24. It is used especially of the Kingdom of God and of Christ. (Vine)

When John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and the apostles preached the “kingdom of heaven,” there was a biblically based and popular expectation that the Messianic kingdom of prophecy was about to be established. However, any concept of a spiritual kingdom was overridden among the masses by the erroneous and shallow national desire for the restoration of a physical kingdom — to rival Solomon’s and overthrow the stiff yoke of Roman domination. Remarkably, the Roman Governor, Pilate, understood better than the Jews (including the apostles) that the kingdom Jesus preached was not a physical kingdom (John 18:36-38), but an internal or spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21). Had Pilate believed Jesus intended to be a king over a physical kingdom, then the governor could not have publicly declared, “I find in him no fault at all” (John 18:36) and remained a loyal Roman appointee. In contrast, the apostles still believed as far along as Ascension Day that Christ came to establish a worldly kingdom (Acts 1:6).

The language in which they were accustomed to describe this event was retained by our Saviour and his apostles. Yet they early attempted to correct the common

notions respecting his reign. This was one design, doubtless, of John in preaching repentance. Instead of summoning them to military exercises, and collecting an army, which would have been in accordance with the expectations of the nation, he called them to a change of life; to the doctrine of repentance — a state of things far more accordant with the approach of a kingdom of purity. (Barnes)

The *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary* accordingly notes respecting the preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, "...it was fitted at once both to meet the national expectations and to turn them into the right channel."

The phrases kingdom of heaven, kingdom of Christ, kingdom of God, are of frequent occurrence in the Bible. They all refer to the same thing. The expectation of such a kingdom was taken from the Old Testament, and especially from Daniel, Dan 7:13-14. The prophets had told of a successor to David that should sit on his throne 1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; Jer 33:17. The Jews expected a great national deliverer. (Barnes)

Jews who were conversant with the Jewish prophecies relative to the establishment of "the kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of God," nevertheless anticipated the advent of the Messiah and the commencement of his kingdom. The Gospel of Luke introduces two such godly souls contemporary with its introduction of the Christ child.

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him

by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel ... And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:25-32, 36-38).

In addition, after Jesus dies on the cross, Luke identifies a Jewish ruler who likewise "waited for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:51).

Generally, though, from the masses to the disciples schooled by Jesus himself, the widespread expectation of great change through the fulfillment of kingdom prophecies was as widely misunderstood. During his ministry, some among our Lord's auditors sought to take him by force and make him king over an earthly kingdom (John 6:15). Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles asked a question of our Lord that was indicative of their same misunderstanding regarding the nature of the Messianic

kingdom: "...Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). McClintock and Strong make the observation that the kingdom was expected to the degree that neither John the Baptist nor Jesus Christ had to define what they meant by the word "kingdom" in their preaching. Under religious circumstances of which the Jews were abreast through the Old Testament prophets, the Jews both understood what was meant by "the kingdom of heaven" and expected to see it come into fruition any moment. "In view of the Jewish Messianic expectation, it is no surprise that Matthew highlights the King and His Kingdom." (Jackson 36).

There is reason to believe not only that the expression kingdom of heaven, as used in the New Test., was employed as synonymous with kingdom of God, as referred to in the Old Test., but that the former expression had become common among the Jews of our Lord's time for denoting the state of things expected to be brought in by the Messiah. The mere use of the expression as it first occurs in Matthew, uttered apparently by John Baptist, and our Lord himself, without a note of explanation, as if all perfectly understood what was meant by it, seems alone conclusive evidence of this. (McClintock and Strong)

The whole of Judaism for its adherents who were attuned to its purpose rested on the hope of a future Messiah, whose advent could be traced to a historical time period outlined in the biblical prophecies (Daniel 2:31-45).

Daniel explained that in the days of the kings represented by iron, i.e. the Roman kings (100 B.C. to 450 A.D.), the Lord's kingdom would be set up or established. ... The kingdom the prophets saw was divine in

origin, first century in establishment, universal in scope, monarchial in government, and indestructible in nature. (Winkler 46, 48)

Consequently, from the beginning and throughout his ministry, Jesus was devoted to revealing the kingdom in his preaching and teaching. For instance, many of Jesus' parables were "introduced with the phrase *kingdom of heaven*: ... Sower ... Mustard Seed ... Leaven ... Hidden Treasure ... Pearl of Great Price ... Net ... Unmerciful Servant ... Householder ... Marriage Feast ... Ten Virgins ... and ... Talents" (D. Stevens 85).

The entire ministry of Jesus is understood in relation to this important declaration of the presence of the kingdom. His ethical teachings, for example, cannot be understood apart from the announcement of the kingdom. They are ethics of the kingdom; the perfection to which they point makes no sense apart from the present experience of the kingdom. Participation in the new reality of the kingdom involves a follower of Jesus in a call to the highest righteousness (Matt 5:20). ... The acts and deeds of Jesus likewise make sense only in the larger context of proclaiming the kingdom. (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*)

The College Press commentary, citing Edersheim, portrays the substance of both testaments as primarily relevant to "the kingdom of heaven." If we ignorantly miss or purposely disallow "the kingdom of heaven" in either testament of the Bible, then the Bible is emptied of its purpose and left hollow. The whole Bible is about the King and his kingdom!

Messianic Prophecies

The Old Testament contains several hundred prophecies about the King and his kingdom. Every prophecy about Jesus Christ (even the once veiled prophecy of Genesis 3:15; cf. Galatians 3:16, 19, 29; 4:4), because he is the King of “the kingdom of heaven,” at least indirectly pertains to Jesus Christ our King. In the best book of which I am aware in which Messianic prophecies are explained at length, D. Gene West, in great detail, addresses 75 of those approximately 333 prophecies. “The kingdom of heaven” that John the Baptist and Jesus heralded cannot be comprehended apart from the biblical prophecies. “The idea of this kingdom has its basis in the prophecies of the Old Testament, where the coming of the Messiah and his triumphs are foretold (Ps 2:6-12; 101:1-7; Isa 2:1-4; Mic 4:1; Isa 11:1-10; Jer 23:5,6; 31:31-34; 32:37-44; 33:14-18; Ezek 34:23-31; 37:24-28; Dan 2:44; 7:14,27; 9:25,27).” (McClintock and Strong). That “the kingdom of heaven” is **foretold** in biblical prophecies is apparent and serves as one of the primary evidences of the divine inspiration of the Bible. For instance, Adam Clarke notes, “[The kingdom of heaven is at hand] Referring to the prophecy of Daniel, Dan 7:13-14, where the reign of Christ among men is expressly foretold.”

Many of the Old Testament prophecies relative to the King and his kingdom are more easily discernible through New Testament scriptural verification and application to Jesus Christ. Psalm 2:7 reads “...Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,” and is applied to Jesus Christ in Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. Psalm 145:10-14 acknowledges the place of the Messiah’s reigning over a kingdom being Jerusalem. Earlier, God apprised David that through one of his descendants, he would establish an everlasting kingdom (2 Samuel 7:8-16).

Messianic prophets such as Isaiah wrote much respecting the Christ, our King, and his kingdom. Isaiah

9:6-7 prophesies that God would set up the Christ King, a descendant of David, over an everlasting kingdom. Isaiah 11:1-12 cites the Messiah as a descendant of Jesse who would rally Jews and Gentiles to the holy mountain (Jerusalem). Isaiah 24:23 says that the Messiah would reign in Jerusalem. Isaiah 65:17-19 describes the prophesied kingdom with the words “new heavens and a new earth” in “Jerusalem.”

Jeremiah 23:5-6 states that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David. Jeremiah 31:31-34 (see Hebrews 8:6-13) chronicles the law or covenant of the kingdom of heaven over which the Messiah would rule. Jeremiah 33:14-18 refers to the Christ King as a descendant of David in Jerusalem. In one of the more prominent Old Testament prophecies of the King and his kingdom, Daniel 7:13-14 couples “the Son of Man;” the “kingdom” of prophecy; “all people, nations, and languages” and “everlasting dominion”; Daniel 7:27 speaks of “an everlasting kingdom.”

Amos 9:11 corresponds to Acts 15:13-17 respecting the kingdom of prophecy. Micah 4:1-2 (and Isaiah 2:2-3) records that all nations (not just the Jews) were to be a part of “the kingdom of heaven” and that the kingdom would go forth “from Jerusalem.” Zechariah 6:12-13 is a well-known prophecy that notes the Messianic King would be both king and priest. Zechariah 14:9 reveals the scope of the King’s reign is “over all the earth.”

Summarizing all the prophets who spoke and wrote respecting “the kingdom of heaven,” Acts 3:24-26 records:

Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be

blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Jesus himself used the words “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably (Matthew 16:18-19) and the apostle Peter applied all Old Testament kingdom prophecies to the establishment of the church on the Pentecost following the Ascension of Jesus Christ. Subsequently, the apostles Paul and John used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably and noted that the kingdom existed in the first century (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

The Special Prophecy

One ancient prophecy of the King and especially his kingdom outdistances all other prophecies in its eye-opening disclosure of precisely when “the kingdom of heaven” was to be established. Winkler rightly says of this passage:

Daniel 2:31-45 is a special prophecy concerning the kingdom. ... Daniel’s interpretation and prophecy constitute one of the most amazing kingdom-prophecies of the Old Testament, establish faith in the inspiration of the scriptures, as well as deepening respect and appreciation for the kingdom (which is the church... (45-56)

Nebuchadnezzar, great king of Neo-Babylon, experienced troubling dreams (Daniel 2:1); God was behind his dreams, one learns from the context, unlike too much pizza, unwisely watching a horror movie before bedtime or some traumatic experience spawning bad dreams in us. Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream and could not relate it, though he remembered that a terrible dream troubled him. Therefore, he required his court magicians and other wise

men to recall the dream for him and interpret it — or face death (2:2-12).

On behalf of God, the prophet Daniel recounted the dream for the king.

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31-35).

Next, God working through him, Daniel proceeded to provide the interpretation.

This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over

all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay (Daniel 2:36-43).

The crux of the prophecy specifies that the "heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18) was to be established during the fourth world kingdom from and including Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure (Daniel 2:44-45).

This kingdom of God would "never be destroyed" and "stand forever." Unlike the worldly kingdoms of Daniel's

prophecy, the Lord's kingdom would not be displaced by another, more dominant superpower.

Historically, the rise and fall of empires that held sway from the lands ringing the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf from Nebuchadnezzar's time forward are incontestably documented.

Daniel prophesied that the kingdom would be established after the four-world kingdoms came into existence. They would be the Babylonian Empire (587-536 B.C.), the Medo-Persian Empire (536-330 B.C.), the Grecian Empire (330 B.C.-63 B.C.), and the Roman Empire (63 B.C.-476 A.D.). (E. Stevens 67)

Max Miller, in a series of articles, amply documents the historical detail of the Assyrian kingdom that immediately preceded the Babylonian kingdom, as well as the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires. His synopsis of information regarding these kingdoms in prophecy merely touches the highlights of available historical data. Each of the kingdoms involved in Daniel's prophecy were real, discernible and historical. Further, the fact that these prophecies predate their fulfillment up to several hundred years validates the Bible overall and the prophecies in particular as divine inspired and reliable.

The biblical record refers to nations before as well as after Daniel's prophecy. The prophecies of Daniel chronicle the development of Babylon and name the Persian and Grecian kingdoms (Daniel 2:31-45; 8:20; 10:1, 13, 20; 11:2), even naming the future king of the Persians, "Cyrus" (Daniel 1:21; 6:28; 10:1).

Nineveh became the capital of **the ancient kingdom of Assyria**, though it was first inhabited about the time of the Genesis 10 Table of Nations by a grandson of Noah 100 or more years earlier. "Assyria's national history began

about 1810 B.C.” and Assyria rose to world dominance through “pitiless conquests” and “inhuman treatment of defeated foes.” (Miller, *Assyria* 8). Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel futilely tried to resist the Assyrians, which battles are recorded in the Monolith Inscription and on the Black Obelisk. Eventually, Assyria carried away Israel (721 B.C.) and significantly vanquished Judah, except that Assyria was unable to breach the walls of Jerusalem. Assyria ruled most of the people ringing the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. Finally, the Medes and the Babylonians joined forces to capture Nineveh in 612 B.C. (Miller, *Assyria* 9, 15).

Babylon exercised great power on two different occasions, the first about 2000 B.C. and the **Neo-Babylonian kingdom** from about 612 B.C. when it succeeded in capturing Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Egypt attempted to challenge the Babylonians and Medes, but failed to prevent them from assuming control of the lands formerly controlled by Assyria. Babylon also conquered the kingdom of Judah in 606, 597 and 587 B.C. The first of these three years marked the beginning of the 70 years captivity and the last of these three dates was when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. However, the Babylonian kingdom triumphed for only about 80 years before it was overcome by the Medes and the Persians in 539 B.C. A quick succession of weak kings after Nebuchadnezzar spelled doom for Neo-Babylon.

Belshazzar and his father, Nabonidus, were the kings of Babylon when Persia assaulted Babylon. Nabonidus was away and Belshazzar was involved in a drunken banquet when Persian soldiers marched into Babylon, without resistance (Daniel 5:25-28).

The Medes dominated the Persians until 550 B.C. when Cyrus revolted. The Medes and the Persians underwent a roll reversal where the Persians dominated the Medes.

Cyrus wisely ordered an administration that shared power with the Medes, thus, the **Medo-Persian Empire**. Persia became a vast collection of states and kingdoms reaching the shores of Asia Minor in the west to the Indus River valley in the east. It extended northward to southern Russia, and in the south included Egypt and the regions bordering the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. (Miller, *Persia* 6)

About two years after the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon, Cyrus permitted people enslaved and deported to Babylon by its former kings (including the Jews) to return to their homelands. The Jews were able to return with the Temple instruments taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. This event was the subject of divine prophecy.

One hundred years before his birth, while the temple yet stood, Isaiah (sic, Jeremiah) calls him by his God-given name, Cyrus, and defines his role in Israel's return to Palestine. Cyrus' decree in 539 B.C. set free the captives Babylon had taken during its harsh rule (Ezra 1:1-4). (Miller, *Persia* 7)

Under the auspices of various Persian kings, the Jews were able to rebuild Jerusalem, the Temple and the walls surrounding Jerusalem. Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were prophets during this period and the anonymous Book of Esther was penned in this era. (Miller, *Persia* 22).

The Persians overextended themselves by trying to muscle the Greeks into their empire. However, Alexander the Great overcame the Persians in 331 B.C. and instead incorporated the Persian Empire into the rising Grecian Empire. With this turn of events, the second kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's dream faltered and the third came to the forefront.

Other than references in Genesis 10 about the Table of Nations relative to people settling in Greece, and Daniel's prophecy of the ascendancy of Greece in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the Bible says nothing about the rise, exploits and demise of the **Grecian Empire**.

...the histories of the Greek nation occurred in a time when there was no oral or writing prophet in Israel. The age of Biblical inspiration closed before the rise of Greece as the nation of our interest came to the fore as a great power. The Old Testament closes with the Persian period, about 450 B.C. It opened again in New Testament times with the Roman Empire holding sway over the world. It was in this period of Biblical silence, the Greece of our interest occurred. (Miller, *Greece* 6)

Following civil wars in Greece, after which they were united, Greece successfully thwarted Persia's effort to expand its borders into the Greek world. Alexander the Great led 40,000 soldiers and 7,000 cavalry against a Persian army of 250,000, routing the Persians and killing between 40,000 and 90,000 of them, while losing only 500 Greek soldiers. Alexander's army was comprised of well-trained, disciplined volunteers. Alexander was merciful to the cities and nations he vanquished and unrelenting against all that resisted. In his day, Greece was invincible and conquered Phoenicia, Gaza, Egypt, Persia and parts of India. Alexander the Great achieved all in less than 13 years and died at the age of 33 in Babylon. After Alexander's death, his kingdom was divided among his generals. The Grecian Empire's greatest contribution to the world was a universal language, which provided the opportunity for the Gospel to be preached beyond the Jews

when “the kingdom of heaven” was established. (Miller, *Greece* 22).

Italy experienced civil wars, after which Rome began to rise to a point of world dominance. The **Roman Empire** dominated the world from about 100 B.C. to 450 A.D. The Roman general, Pompey, conquered Palestine for Rome in 63 B.C., foolishly having been invited by brothers leading armies against each other in a Jewish civil war. The Roman Empire harshly conquered and sustained control over the nations ringing the Mediterranean Sea by brute force. It was during the reign of this kingdom, of which Daniel prophesied, that “the kingdom of heaven” came to fruition. When Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire and Herod the Great was his appointee in Palestine. Emperor Tiberius later appointed Pilate to govern Judea, before whom Jesus came and was sentenced to crucifixion. The Book of Acts was penned during the respective reigns of Claudius and Nero, and “the kingdom of heaven” or the church was established in Acts 2.

Nero ordered the retaking of Palestine after Jewish zealots successfully organized armies against Roman soldiers there and enjoyed several victories beginning in A.D. 66. Generals Vespasian (later an emperor) and Titus laid siege to Jerusalem and destroyed it in September 7, A.D. 70. (Miller, *Rome* 8-9).

Rome became and continued to be a persecutor of Christians, irrespective of their race, though initially Christians were almost exclusively Jews. Finally, unable to eradicate Christianity, Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity (A.D. 313) and rewarded persons who would espouse it. Still later, Rome itself fell from a combination of internal decay and being overrun by their northern barbarian neighbors.

Conclusion

Truly, Jesus Christ is “King of kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16). Scripture affirms that he is reigning now, and he will continue to reign over his kingdom until the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Our Lord’s kingdom is everlasting, unlike the kingdoms cited in both the biblical and historical records.

In contrast to the Babylonian kingdom which fell to the Medes and Persians, in contrast to the Medo-Persian kingdom which was superceded by the Grecian or Alexandrian kingdom, and in contrast to the Grecian kingdom which fell to the Romans, the prophets affirmed God would set up a kingdom that would be indestructible. (Winkler)

The kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, all came to the dust of history. They are no more. The eternal kingdom came on Pentecost Day as recorded in the Book of Acts. (Miller, *Babylon* 17)

Armed with the knowledge of “the kingdom of heaven,” discernible in both testaments, each accountable soul urgently needs to acquire citizenship in it with all that is entailed thereby, for this life and eternity to come. “The *law* of the kingdom is the New Testament ... The *king* of the kingdom is Christ ... The *citizenry* are Christians...” (Winkler).

The fundamental principle of the Kingdom is declared in the words of the Lord spoken in the midst of a company of Pharisees, “the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you,” Luke 17:21, marg., that is, where the King is, there is the Kingdom. Thus at the present time and so far as this earth is concerned,

where the King is and where His rule is acknowledged, is, first, in the heart of the individual believer, Acts 4:19; Eph. 3:17; 1 Pet. 3:15; and then in the churches of God, 1 Cor. 12:3, 5, 11; 14:37; cp. Col. 1:27, where for “in” read “among.” (Vine)

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

By Jason E. Ridgeway

Jesus, the Master Teacher, reveals the mysteries of the kingdom through the teaching of parables. But what is a “parable” and why did Jesus choose this method of teaching? A parable is “literally something laid alongside of another thing, to measure, compare or explain it” (Boles 285). Parables are always set forward as a representation of some reality in nature. We find Jesus presenting His message through the use of realistic and common scenarios not through mystical fables (Boles 285). In studying the parables of Jesus, the reason for their use becomes quite clear. Parables are a very efficient means of impressing a message upon the mind’s eye. The mention of a parable immediately brings a mental picture. People of Jesus’ time as well as today not only imagine but relate to the lost son in Luke 15 as he feeds the swine and struggles at the lowest point in his life. The message of the Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13) will come alive to even a novice gardener as he recalls the importance of the quality of his garden’s soil. It is this type of understanding that Jesus desired for his disciples.

A theme common to the Parables of Matthew 13 is the understanding of the kingdom of heaven. This is evident through Jesus’ use of such phrases as “the kingdom of Heaven is like” and “to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.” Jesus had to conquer many misconceptions regarding the kingdom especially among the Jews. The Jews thought that the Messiah was to set up the kingdom to deliver them from the Romans. The Jews were very excited to hear about the kingdom, which is very apparent by the “great multitudes” that “were gathered together to Him

(Matthew 13:2). They felt as though they had the only rightful place in any God-ordained kingdom. However, when Jesus used common illustrations to open the door of the kingdom to all people, possessing open and receptive hearts, the Jews would not hear and thus were not able to understand (Matthew 13:14-15).

One of the most well known parables of Jesus is that of the soils. This parable is, for the most part, one of the easiest to understand because Jesus himself defines its meaning. Jesus began this parable with the attention grabbing strength of the word “behold (v.3).” Translated from the Greek word “ἰδοῦ,” behold is “used to call attention not only to that which may be seen, but also heard, or apprehended in any way” (Berry 48). Right away, the Jews were attentive to what Jesus was about to say. The strength of this word could have very well caused them to look around to see just whom he might be speaking of. In Mark 4:3, Jesus used not only “behold” but also “listen (NKJ)” or “hearken (KJV).” These terms were used to announce “that our Lord was about to communicate something of unusual importance” (Lockyer 175).

The Sower

Although the emphasis of the parable is placed on the soils rather than the sower, we cannot overlook the importance of the latter in understanding the parable. In Matthew 13:18, Jesus in fact referred to this teaching as “the parable of the sower.” Jesus paralleled the sower to a messenger taking the “word of the kingdom (v. 19)” to the hearts of men and women. Jesus left a message for today, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). In Matthew 28:19-20, he said, “go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you....” Everywhere and in every place, we are to sow the seed. Elders, Deacons, Preachers and all members of the church

must be active as sowers. When great trial faced the church in Jerusalem, the Scriptures teach that the Christians went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:1, 4). In addition, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all sowers of the seed. The Father imparts his Word through the Holy Spirit to holy men to write as they were directed (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus the Christ will refer to himself as the sower in Matthew 13:37.

Jesus did not limit the method of the sower. The seed is sown through many means, spoken, written or sung that convey the Word of God. It is our responsibility as the sower to attempt to communicate God's will to everyone. We are to sow the seed everyday and in every aspect of our lives — at home, office, school, during recreation or whenever we have opportunity.

The Seed

Simply put, the seed is the “word of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:19). The seed is infallible. Many have tried but failed to find error in Scripture. “All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God...” (2 Timothy 3:16). The word “inspiration” literally means, “God breathed” out the words (Berry 46). Every word came from God and must be trusted. There is no other writing comparable to the Bible. There is no author other than God with the ability to pen such a perfect and complete message with relevance alive to all ages. The Bible does not only apply to everyone but is written so that all can understand. However, the perfectness of the seed itself cannot guarantee growth. Development depends also on many factors including the condition of the soil.

The Soils

The weight of the message to be revealed in this parable lies in the description of the soils and their

comparison to the hearts of men. Jesus characterized four types of soil each representing varying mindsets of man. Most people will fall easily into one of these categories, “the wayside,” “the stony places,” “among the thorns” or “on the good ground.” As long as we continue to sow the seed of the kingdom, we will find people ranging from obstinate to accepting. Individuals will determine their eternal future through the condition of their hearts. Regardless of the prospects or the outcome, Jesus requires of us the effort to sow.

“And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside” (Matthew 13:4, 19). The wayside represents those who hear however do not choose to consider. In the original language, the word translated to understand does not refer to the ability to comprehend but to the desire to do so (Berry 96). The wayside, for example, may represent one so encompassed by a denominational teaching that he is unwilling to submit himself to the authority that God’s Word alone possesses. This heart may be the one that finds it difficult to look beyond his own desires and embrace the truth. For example, the loving widow may be unwilling to accept the fate of her husband who was not baptized, therefore rejecting such passages as Acts 2:38, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The seed never made it into the soil but was on top of it. The seed left exposed is easily devoured by the “birds,” the “the wicked one,” “the devil” (Luke 8:12). In displaying such an obvious weakness, she allows Satan to devour the Word of the kingdom. Once she has rejected the Word, the door is open for Satan to lead her away from God.

“Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles” (Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21). The stony places represent those that receive the Word of the kingdom with great excitement and joy, but because they have no “root” in the truth, survive only until trials and temptations arise. A new convert must not rely solely on emotions, but, either alone or with the help of others, study to strengthen his faith. For example, a young person caught up in all the emotions of a Bible Camp may obey the Gospel joyously. Upon leaving the cocoon of this camp, to return home, he may find ridicule from family and friends. His parents may express disapproval of his new found allegiance and he may allow such to unravel his enthusiasm for the Word. Tribulation may not only involve ridicule but may as well include personal tragedy. Every Christian must expect to suffer tribulation and persecution. Paul wrote, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).” Also in Acts 14:22 the Scriptures teach, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” An honest and persevering heart will find himself in the palm of God’s hand instead of the grasp of Satan.

“And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (Matthew 13:7, 22). Those among the thorns represent those that hear the Word, believe and mature, but allow worldliness to become too important in

their lives, destroying their Christianity. We live in a very affluent society. Because of this prosperity, it is easy for us to get caught up in the worldly rather than the spiritual. Our desire to please ourselves has left us with little time to focus on our eternal future. Thus, developing weakness in our spirituality, we allow “thorns” to choke us out. Jesus gave examples of two thorns; (1) “the cares of this world” and (2) “the deceitfulness of riches” (v. 22). In addition, Paul writes, “For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). Worldly concerns may range from the obviously offensive such as pornography, adultery and drunkenness to the seemingly acceptable such as bending a few tax laws or accepting a Sunday work schedule to earn Saturdays off. Riches may deceive us to believe ourselves self-reliant, independent of God. Our energy, attentiveness and care that previously nurtured the growth of faith may now be used up in the pursuit of riches. As our faith weakens, these sins grow as “weeds” overpowering our ability to remain fruitful. As Christians, we must focus on the heavenly goal as if to wear blinders. We all have weaknesses that we work day in and day out to combat. Prayer and an honest heart will see us through to salvation. God will not give us any temptation that we are not able to overcome (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:8, 23). This is the heart that loves God and embraces his Word, giving him precedence over everything in this life. This Christian “bears fruit and produces” (Matthew 13:23b). Luke adds to this by writing that he hears “the word with a noble and good heart” and “keeps it and bears fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). What kinds of fruits can we bear? One author gives a list for us: (1) “The fruit of

winning souls to Christ” (Romans 1:13), (2) “The fruit of practical holiness” (Romans 6:22), (3) “The fruit of sharing material things” (Romans 15:27), (4) “The fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22), (5) “The fruit of good works” (Colossians 1:10), (6) “The fruit of praise and thanksgiving” (Hebrews 13:15). (Copeland) Through study, this Christian grows stronger with time. Because his heart is open to God’s authority, he understands and becomes full of love for God.

Jesus does not specify the quantity of fruit that is acceptable. Whatever our ability, we should use it to the glory of God. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), the Lord gives to each man according to his ability to produce. The Lord was aware of what each one was capable of. By stating “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (v. 23), Jesus proves his fairness in asking only that which we have the ability to give.

Conclusion

Jesus quickly establishes the perfectness of the Word or “seed” for it is the one constant throughout the parable. The variables that ultimately determine the fate of the Christian or “plant” is his own heart or “soil.” Jesus deals only with the current state of the heart and its ability to nurture the growth of a Christian. Knowing that salvation is unlikely to result if the seed is left to the wayside, stony places or among the thorns, I find that it must be possible to cultivate the soil. The soils represented throughout this lesson are hearts that still have the capacity to change. God has given the promise of salvation to every soul. No person is born with a sin or will develop sin that cannot be overcome. No heart is eternally lost this side of heaven. God is “longsuffering toward us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).” The “wayside” heart might need a little patience and teaching for him to overcome his obstacle of unwillingness

to understand the Word. The “stony ground” could be that new convert that needs us to help him grow from a child into spiritual maturity. The ones “among thorns” could be taught more about the glory of heaven and how this life is but a vapor that appears for a little time then vanishes away (James 4:14). Shall we add to the soil the depth of the Word, the nutrients of love and kindness, the strength of comfort and support? Indeed, it is the duty of every Christian to prepare the heart of every person encountered to receive the Word. By imitating Christ, we show the entire world the honesty, integrity and compassion gained by entering the body of Christ. As a farmer of truth, we must work hard to cultivate that soil. The cultivation complete, we sow the seed with love and await the increase. “Speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jason E. Ridgeway was born in Roanoke, Virginia and has lived all around the country including California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Michigan, Kentucky and Ohio. He now lives in Vinton, Ohio with his wife of eight years, Cynthia (Oiler) and two children, Hayden Brice (6 years old) and Ellie Grace (2 years old). He attended Michigan Christian

THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS by Jason E. Ridgeway

College (1989-90) and Freed-Hardeman University (1990-91) and is a 1996 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. Jason has worked with congregations in Tennessee, Ohio and West Virginia. He has preached in Gospel Meetings in Ohio and West Virginia. He has spoken on Youth Rallies in Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. Jason has also been very active in Bible Camps in Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Tennessee. He is presently the Preacher and Campus Minister for the church of Christ at Rio Grande, Ohio. In his free time, he enjoys golf and reading political books. Jason also very much enjoys spending time with his family at home and on trips.

BIRTH OF THE KING

Matthew 1:1, 18-2:15

By Emanuel Daugherty

The Scripture Narratives of Christ's Birth

In order to get the words of the Scriptures relating to the birth of Christ fixed in our minds for the purpose of our discussion of the virgin birth, we will read a few verses from the narratives of the three angelic appearances to Mary (Luke 1:26-31, 34-35, 38) and to Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25).

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The

Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden

him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Next to the death and resurrection of Christ, there is no event in human history that has had greater significance in this world than the virgin birth of Christ. It is truly one of the most momentous events, the focal point, the turning point. Everything before Christ looked forward to his birth and everything since then looks back at him. It was such a crucial event that now all the world numbers the years according to it. *B.C.* means “before Christ,” and *A.D.* means “anno domini,” “in the year of our Lord.”

James MacArthur, in his book, *God With Us*, makes the following observation:

Jesus made an impact on the world that has never been, and never will be, equaled by any mere man. In all the annals of the human race, no one is like Him. He never wrote a book. He never held political power. He was not wealthy or particularly influential in His lifetime. Yet He altered the world completely; in fact, no other human being has affected history remotely like He has. He has been opposed, hated, fought, censored, banned, and criticized in every generation since His birth. Yet His influence continues unabated. After nearly two thousand years, the impact of His life goes on so powerfully that it is safe to say not a day passes but that lives are revolutionized by His teaching. (63)

Some Old Testament Passages

Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of God's ultimate victory over evil which would be accomplished by the struggle of the **seed of the woman** with the seed of the serpent. The seed of the woman! The virgin birth was no afterthought in the mind of God. Over 100 times when we read of seed or seeds, Abraham, Isaac, etc., it is always the seed of the man. Only one time does Scripture ever speak of the seed of a woman, and that's an indication of something special. Here, then, is a unique concept whose only interpretation is that it foreshadows the virgin birth.

In **Genesis 12:1-3**, we see that **Abraham's** seed would become a chosen **nation**, **Judah** a special **tribe** and **David** a select **family**. **Mary** would be a distinct **woman** of that family, tribe and nation that would bring God's special **Son** into this world to be the blessing to all the nations.

In **Isaiah 7:14**, the prophet said to the unbelieving king Ahaz, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This is the Scripture quoted by Matthew and applied to the birth of Jesus. It will be very helpful to note some of the words used in this prophecy.

1. "**Behold!**" *Hinneh* - A word designed to get the attention of the hearer, i.e., something of great importance is to be announced (Young 284).
2. "**The Lord**" *Adonai* - Meaning Lord, Master (Jukes 110). The use of this very name is a rebuke to this stubborn and wicked king.
3. "**Sign**" (*Oth*) - sign, banner, mark, token, miracle. The virgin birth would be a "sign." The *Revised Standard Version* translated it as "a young woman." A young woman bearing a child would be a sign to no one; young women have been giving birth since the time of Eve!

4. **“Virgin”** (*almah*) is used seven times in the Old Testament. It is translated as “damsel” in Psalm 68:25; “maid” in Ex 2:8; “maiden” in Proverbs 30:19; and “virgin” in Genesis 24:43; Song of Solomon 1:3, 6:8; and Isaiah 7:14. *Almah* is not an old woman, a married woman, not a bride, not a young girl, not an immoral woman. ***Almah* means virgin!** It is a virgin damsel, a virgin maid, a virgin maiden! There is no passage in which *almah* might mean a non-virgin or a married woman. Matthew in quoting Isaiah 7:14, uses the Greek word for virgin which is *parthenos*. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek uses *parthenos*. Both *almah* and *parthenos* refer to sexual virginity. The use which the inspired Matthew makes of the prophecy is decisive for all who respect the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. Matthew and Luke, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, goes into great detail to show that the vital doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus is the **fulfillment** of Isaiah’s prophecy.
5. **“Immanuel”** *God with us* - is the same Immanuel of Isaiah 8:8, and child of 9:6-7. This can be none other than the Christ, the Messiah sent to redeem the world.

In Jeremiah 31:22 the “new thing” to be created by the Lord to draw reluctant Israel and Judah to him would be the Incarnation of Christ, where, literally, “a woman shall encompass a man.” Thus, a “new thing” was needed and would provide the manner of the Messiah’s entrance into the world.

Paul, in Galatians 4:4, writes, “But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman**, made under the law.”

Some Pertinent Questions

Sometimes it is argued that the “sign” pertained to a young woman of Isaiah’s time who was a virgin at the time the prophecy was made. But that does not honestly deal with what is said! It states that **the** virgin would conceive, not that she was a virgin at the time of the prophecy! The sign would be a particular virgin, not just any young woman. The definite article appears in both the Hebrew (*ha almah*; Isaiah 7:14) and in the Greek texts (*he parthenos*; Matthew 1:23).

If it is contended that this is a “dual prophecy” and that a virgin of the 8th century B.C. must have been a part of this prophecy some questions must be asked.

1. **Who was the virgin?** If there was a virgin that conceived a child in the 8th century before Christ, who was she? It has been suggested that it was Isaiah’s wife — but she already had a child (Isaiah 7:3). Some say that it must have been the wife of Ahaz and the son born to her was Hezekiah. But chronology shows that Hezekiah was already born by this time.
2. **Who was the child?** If this child was to be a “sign,” why is it not identified? The child’s name was special, “God with us.” Where is any child other than Jesus of Nazareth that can be described as “God with us?” The destiny of the special child is described further by Isaiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of

Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

3. **Who is the father?** The only person who could father a child without sexual intercourse would be God himself. Yet there is no mention of Deity come in the flesh during the time of Ahaz. Did the Holy Spirit forget to reveal this to his prophets and to the nation?

“Thus we have an eighth century B.C. ‘nameless virgin’ and an eighth century B.C. ‘faceless virgin-born son’ of which inspiration says ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! ...Moreover, if Isaiah had two virgins, two virgin-born-sons, and two Immanuel’s under consideration, why does the Bible place so much emphasis on the first century event while passing over an eighth century B.C. event in absolute silence?” (Bright 32-33).

As R.C. Foster points out, describing liberal critics, “They saw Isaiah 7:14 predicted a virgin birth for the child, and their imagination did the rest” (248).

The Genealogy in Matthew

“The purpose of a genealogy was not to account for every generation but to establish the fact of an undoubted succession, including especially the more important ancestors” (Thomas & Gundry 315). Following are several reasons for the importance of the genealogies in Matthew and Luke by Harold Fowler with some adaptation (13-15).

1. They provide absolute certification of Jesus – He is the son of David and the son of Abraham.
2. They emphasize the humanity of Jesus; as John said, “*the Word became flesh*” (John 1:14).
3. They proclaim the faithfulness of God in bringing into the world him whom he had promised in so many prophecies to send.
4. They give hint of the sinfulness of men which compares to his own sinlessness.
5. They show God’s purposes in his dealings with Israel – In God’s special and providential dealings with the Jews, there was purpose and design. Jewish history is shown to be proceeding to the goal to bring about God’s plan of salvation with the birth of the Savior (Acts 2:23; 3:1-26).
6. They declare that Jesus is no mere “creature of his environment.” That is, he was not a product of the “messianic expectation” of the first century. Jesus did not cleverly see the needs, wants and desires of the people of his generation and then make himself a self-appointed messiah. The genealogies show that the coming of Jesus was clearly planned and carefully prepared for.
7. The genealogies support and complement the virgin birth narrative.

From Abraham to Joseph, Matthew used the term “*begat*” no less than 39 times. But when he came to **Jesus**, the word *begat* is absent. Matthew simply says, “Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called the Christ” (Matthew 1:16). Luke notes that Jesus was the son “as was supposed” of Joseph (Luke 3:23). Matthew establishes Jesus as being the lineal son of David by Mary, and the legal heir to David by Joseph.

Reasons for Choosing Mary and Joseph

They were godly, righteous people, fit parents for the raising Son of God. Mary was a pure woman; Joseph a just man — both were without doubt devoutly religious. Though Jesus was deity (John 1:1, 14, Matthew 1:23), he was to be raised in a normal family, and in the normal way. By becoming flesh, he would know the temptations and trials of men and be able to effectively serve as our High Priest (Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:14-16).

But let us consider the facts: (1) Mary received the birth announcement first since she is the one most concerned. She would be more involved than any others and the need for her to have full assurance as to what and how such a birth could occur would be uppermost in her mind. (2) An angel by the name of Gabriel was sent from the presence of God to Galilee in the town of Nazareth to a virgin by the name of Mary of the house of David (Luke 1:26-27). She is in the right family line according to the prophecies (2 Samuel 7:13-14). Consider (1) **the sight she saw** “the angel came unto her” (Luke 1:28), (2) **the statement she heard** “Thou art highly favored...the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). This statement informed her that she would conceive and bear a son called Jesus (Luke 1:31), (3) **the son she would bear**. “Thou shalt call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:31). This is also what the angel told Joseph (Matthew 1:21). But among the Jews it was the father that usually gave the name to a son. Zechariah named John (Luke 1:59-63). Since Jesus is God’s Son, isn’t it the prerogative of God the Father, to name his Son?

Concerning Joseph, the Scripture says, “he being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example was minded to put her away privily” (Matthew 1:19). He had one plan in mind as to how to dispose of this difficulty, but God had another. When the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him that the child in Mary’s womb

was of the Holy Ghost and was the child of God, he was commanded to take her for his wife. The next day he obeyed the angel's command (Matthew 1:20,23-24). *He did not doubt the dream he had, nor did he question Mary's virginity.* Proof is given in the fact that they did not have sexual relations until after Jesus was born (Matthew 1:25). Later, they had four sons, James, Joses, Simon and Judas, and at least two daughters (Matthew 13:55-56). *Mary was not a perpetual virgin as claimed by tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.*

Jesus, Both God and Man

It is clearly stated that Jesus was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), but it is nowhere hinted that he was begotten of a man. John calls him "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). Children of God are described as "begotten" through the Word of the Gospel (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), but they are not begotten in the same manner as was Jesus. Jesus is the **unique, one-of-a-kind** Son. When he came to earth, he was the Son of God in a way that no other ever was or shall be.

It was his claim that he was the Son of God that brought on his crucifixion. "**My** Father (not our Father) worketh even until now, and I work. The Jews sought the more to kill him because he not only brake the sabbath, but also **called God his own Father**, making himself **equal with God**" (John 5:17-18, emphasis mine, ebd). The Jews got the message — Jesus was telling them he was the Son of God! It was this claim of "blasphemy" which they used to crucify him (Matthew 26:63-66). If Jesus was not born of a virgin, Mary must be viewed as a very cruel, hard-hearted woman indeed! She stood at the foot of the cross and watched the agony of her Son, who was suffering because he claimed to be the Son of God. Why didn't she stop that cruelty to Jesus by rushing forth and declaring his **true** father and save him from death. Obviously, she knew

the claim of Jesus was true, **He had no earthly father!** “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul, also” (Luke 2:35).

Doctrines of Men Concerning the Virgin Birth

There is no question but that the Scriptures make it clear that Jesus was born of a virgin and not a sexually immoral woman, but men who must be described as “*enemies of the cross*” (Philippians 3:18) have through the ages endeavored to blaspheme the birth of Jesus. We will note but a few of them:

1. In the second century AD the rabbis, in order to answer the doctrine of the virgin birth, concocted a story that Jesus had been conceived out of wedlock by a German soldier in the Roman army named Panthera, and after giving birth to him, Mary fled into Egypt to escape public embarrassment. In Egypt, Jesus supposedly learned magic from the Egyptians and later returned to Palestine to proclaim himself as the Son of God. Obviously, this is an effort to overcome the doctrine of the miraculous birth of Jesus. If there had been a question of the legitimacy of Jesus’ birth, it would have come out long before the second century. But none of the citizens of the infamous town of Nazareth stepped up to expose Mary’s immorality, nor was such brought up at his trial in Jerusalem by the rabbis when discussion arose about Jesus being King of the Jews. The reason being that there was no evidence of any wrongdoing on the part of Mary or Joseph. The birth accounts in Matthew and Luke are the only ones we have of Jesus. It is grossly unfair and blasphemous to enter into suppositions contrary to the Gospel records.

2. The various Gnostic heresies of the last 1st and 2nd centuries which said Jesus did not come in the flesh, or that he was a phantom spirit, or that he only became God's Son at his baptism when the dove descended upon him have been being refuted since the time they were introduced in the early church.
3. More recently, we have had rock music productions like *Jesus Christ Superstar* promoting modernism contrary to the virgin birth. One of the lines in this musical says, "He's a man, he's just a man."
4. Hugh Schonfield, writer of the notorious *Passover Plot* and a Jewish scholar, claimed that Jesus was the natural born son of Joseph and Mary. "Schonfield saw Jesus as a master conspirator, one who believed that he was living in messianic times, who thought that he could be the messiah, and who plotted to fulfill the messianic prophecies, even those concerning his death." He charged that the Bible believer applied to his eyes "the fairy dust of faith." But the apostle Paul said, faith comes by hearing the Word of God! (Rom 10:17); and that without faith we cannot please God! (Heb 11:6). (Gromacki 166)

The God of the liberal and modernist is not the God of the Bible. They don't believe in the virgin birth because they don't believe in miracles — period. Though most do not profess atheism, they are in reality, practicing atheism. (Much of the material in this section is from book is by J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, pp 10ff; and Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth*, pp 164ff).

One other blasphemous account that must be mentioned is the article that appeared in the magazine *Wineskins* (Nov. 1992), edited by Rubel Shelley, Mike

Cope and Philip Morrison, entitled, “*Christmas at Matthew’s House*,” written by an Abilene Christian University professor named Andre Resner. While not having the space to give a review of the article, an attempt will be made to briefly repeat a few of the things the professor had to say about the virgin birth of Christ.

Professor Resner says that Matthew begins his account of the birth of Christ by telling us of “sexual scandal” (referring to Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba in Jesus’ genealogy), and goes on to say that Matthew has “set us up” for the “most embarrassing scandal” about to be told — i.e., the account of Jesus birth. He refers to Mary as “another sexually questionable woman,” and Joseph, accepting her story of her pregnancy after a single dream. The professor has Joseph reasoning, “Could this have been a message from God? Or could this have been his own imagination?” “And there’s Joseph, crawling into bed with her every night the rest of his life, relying on a dream, believing in her word, that she really hasn’t slept with another man and used him to cover her shame. If we have paid attention to the women of Matthew’s genealogy we’re not entirely surprised by Mary’s (Joseph’s) predicament. **If God used those of the Messiah’s family tree thus, why wouldn’t the Messiah himself come from a similar situation?**” (Emphasis mine, ebd).

This is but a small sample of professor Resner’s blasphemous drivel. I am ashamed to call him “brother.” Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). This is by far the most scurrilous attack on our Lord by any person claiming to be one of ours (that I am aware of, ebd). He is to be **“marked and avoided!”** (Romans 16:17). Any doctrine that denies the Fatherhood of God in the birth of Jesus is to be aggressively refuted. John the apostle said, “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father

and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 3:22-23).

A Divine Explanation is the Only Explanation

A Divine explanation is the only one that makes sense and is in keeping with all that the Bible has to say on the matter. Attempts by men to explain away the virgin birth expose their lack of belief in God, in Christ and the Holy Spirit and in the genuineness and integrity of the Scriptures. Their dishonesty in fairly dealing with the evidence given is transparent.

We should not be surprised that Mary should have questions. She couldn't understand how she could conceive and bear a child since she had no relations with a man (Luke 1:34). Mary herself is the first to question the virgin birth! Her's was an honest question. She didn't deny that the birth would occur. She didn't deny that she would conceive. She just wanted to know how she could give birth to a son, without having any relations with a man. Luke 1:35 is the angelic answer. How did the Holy Spirit conceive a child in the womb of Mary a virgin?

Does the miraculous conception have to rest upon man being able to comprehend it? Must we comprehend the heavenly galaxies and the Milky Way before we accept their reality? Must we be able to “...bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose the band of Orion” before we accept their existence? (Coates 105).

Because we are not able to explain something does not mean that it can't happen. The explanation of the virgin birth must be left with what God has revealed, and not questioned further (Deuteronomy 29:29). After giving the explanation, the angel now gives an **illustration of God's ability to perform the incredible**. He points to Elizabeth (Luke 1:36). If God could do this for an old woman, he has

no limits. “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (1:37). If Mary could accept this explanation, why can’t all men today do the same? All the information we have is that which was given to Mary. We should not overlook the fact that this **record of the birth of Christ is written by a physician**. If it did not occur as he said, here is a doctor that would become a laughing stock in the eyes of the public. Consider also, that the angel making the announcement is said to be from God, and that he said she had found favor with God. If the virgin birth is a myth, then we have an angel and God in the position of encouraging fornication. Think, too, of the **death of Christ**. Mary stood at the foot of the cross and watched the agony of her Son, who was suffering because he claimed to be the Son of God (John 5:17-18). Why didn’t she stop that cruelty to Jesus by rushing forth and declaring his true father and save him from a shameful death. Obviously, she knew the claim of Jesus was true; he had no earthly father!

Value of the Accounts of the Virgin Birth

But someone says “Why a virgin birth? Why didn’t God just send Jesus like he sent angels in time past? Or why not just a natural birth like others?” But it needs to be asked, “Why not a virgin birth?” Some questions border on the fringe of disbelief. The virgin birth is no more incredible than his walking on the water, feeding the five thousand or his resurrection from the dead. As one said, “...it would have been unnatural if the birth of the Savior had been natural” (John McNaugher qtd. by Smith 89). Christ was preexistent; he was Deity, “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). No created being, angel or man, could be the father of one who is eternal. Thus, a natural birth was not possible.

1. The Virgin Birth is another item in the long line of biblical evidence proving the Deity of Christ. Prophecy and fulfillment, miracles, doctrine,

- sinless life, the vicarious death, burial and resurrection, etc. are designed to produce saving faith in men.
2. The Virgin Birth shows us the Bible is from God. A miracleless Bible would have a miracleless Christ, and Christianity would be just another manmade religion, empty and lifeless.
 3. The Virgin Birth shows us Christ is from God. The Jesus of the Bible is God come in the flesh.
 4. The Virgin Birth and the genealogies establish his claim to be King, having a legitimate right to sit on the throne of David.
 5. The Virgin Birth is important because it gives us the truth about Mary and Joseph and refutes many of the false doctrines of Catholicism that have arisen through the centuries about these godly people.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Emanuel Daugherty was born in Philippi, WV, 1939, and is married to the former Judith R. Null. They have four children and eight grandchildren. He has been preaching since 1966 and has served churches in Columbus, OH (Alkire Road), St Marys, WV (Dewey Ave). He has served as Director of the West Virginia School of Preaching (1994-2003) and is currently a teacher in the school while working with the Salem church of Christ at Glen Easton, Marshall Country, WV.

JOHN, THE HARBINGER OF THE KING

Matthew 3:1-12

By Dan Kessinger

It is from the very voice of our Lord and Savior that we learn of the greatness of John. From a text later in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 11:1-11), we read of the unique character and ministry of John the prophet. According to Jesus' statement (cloaked in a certain enigma), there had been none greater, but the least in the kingdom (which was soon to be established) would be greater. There is no hint of contradiction in these two concepts, for John lived and died under the auspices of the Old Covenant. If the least in the kingdom exceeded John, the contrast was neither one of character nor of service; it was a reflection of opportunity and privilege. Had John lived under the New Law, his Christian service would have been outstanding. As it was, it was John's lot, as a chosen man, to prepare the world for the kingdom of God. But he never lived one day as a member of it. When John died, he was still preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2)!

The career of John has definite and purposeful parallels to that of Jesus. However, in each instance there can be no doubt as to which cousin is superior. Like Jesus, there was an angelic announcement of the impending birth (Luke 1:5-25). And each birth is the direct result of divine intervention (Luke 1:7, 13). Of course, there is a major difference between a birth to a couple who had been unable to conceive, and a birth to a virgin. The former is unlikely, though not unheard of; the second is absolutely impossible without a miracle from on high. John's life is unrecorded until he begins to preach in the wilderness in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), evidently the late 20's AD

(Davis 422). Thus, like Jesus, John's life between birth and his ministry is virtually unknown. It is as though he appeared in the wilderness full of the Holy Spirit and preaching the Word of God. Concerning John's work, Dr. James Smith wrote in *The Promised Messiah*:

Messengers ran before dignitaries to alert villages along the travel route of their approach. Every obstacle — holes in the road, rocks, trees—had to be removed (cf. Isa. 40:3-5). Every care was exercised to see that the coming one was greeted with a reception befitting his station. The higher the position of the dignitary, the more illustrious the messenger who preceded him. (461-462)

John was a unique man called to a unique task at a unique point in history. Those of us in the kingdom owe much to the work by John in preparation for the kingdom. The service rendered by John helped to bring those blessings of being “greater” to those of us who are least in the kingdom. For one to ever exceed John in character or sacrifice is unlikely at best, but we are in a more blessed place than even he was. John's career was to be a special prophet at a special time.

Harbinger of the King' Call

“In those days John the Baptist came preaching...” (Matthew 3:1). With these words, Matthew begins his account of the preparation stages of the ministry of our Lord. It was through the preaching of John that men were to first hear that the King of kings was alive on earth, that men must prepare their hearts and minds through repentance, and that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The King of all the earth was to be a preacher of righteousness, and so it was that the straightening of the ways would be accomplished through proclamation.

John the Baptist walked a path that had been well worn by the sandals of prophets before him: a trail of tears. His fathers and brothers in prophecy had been dead for hundreds of years, but now the time was right. John was God's choice, even from birth. Those prophets of old were not generally known for their success ratio; in fact, their failures were much more easily documented. The grim determination that marked their ministries came from a fierce trust in God, not high earthly expectations. But for a time, John found an unlikely popularity: "...they counted him a prophet" (Matthew 14:5).

That line of prophecy had been filled by men who, as one voice, freely confessed that the message was not their own. Neither were they speaking of themselves at all, but were sent to deliver God's message of truth. They were proclaiming God. In a similar way, John's entire ministry was devoted to the coming of the Messiah; his career was spent in the glorification of another. In fact, it had been thus with all the prophets; it is just easier to see in the life of one who actually saw the partial fulfillment of his prophecy. John knew Jesus, baptized him and said to any who would listen, "He must increase, but I {must} decrease." (John 3:30). John's cousin Jesus, who was so much more than kin, was the reason John preached, just as he was the reason for all the prophecies.

For a brief moment, one could have concluded that John was the living epitome of all the prophets who had preceded him. Indeed, Jesus himself called him "a prophet...and more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9). He was the embodiment of the venerated Elijah, foretold in Scripture and identified as such by our Lord (Matthew 17:10-13). To human observers, he seemed to be the ultimate "throwback" to the ancient prophets of Israel, even more, the final and ultimate of that glorious line. But in truth, he was the penultimate, the shadow of a nearby substance.

John was once asked, “Are you the Prophet?” in reference to the predicted prophet of Deuteronomy 18. John replied that he was not. **The** prophet was Jesus himself. The line of prophets ending with John (Matthew 11:13) had continuity in preparation for the King’s Son. Their lives and ministries were themselves signs and types of the work of the savior. It is little wonder that the final preparation for the reign of Jesus would be accomplished through the work of John the prophet, for the Son was The Prophet.

Harbinger of the King’s Character

“Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey” (Matthew 3:4). Matthew’s introduction of John to the reader reveals him to be a strange and unusual character. John’s appearance and habits are sometimes passed off too lightly, since all Bible characters are far removed by time and distance to today’s reader of the text. Casual Bible students tend too often to think in monochromatic terms such as, “In Bible times” or “Holy/Bible Lands.” The four thousand years of Bible history cannot be accurately colored with a single drab gray, for great changes occurred in the span of Bible history. Likewise, the vastness of the Middle East, Far East and Europe is a far more diverse geography than the general term “Bible Lands.” And the dozens of cultures in which the Bible account is set teem with marked differences. One may read of the diet and dress of John, see such behavior as unusual, but assume it might have been typical in “Bible times.” It was not. In addition to these other factors, John was one of only three lifetime Nazirites in Scripture (along with Samuel and Samson). So, John’s hair had never been cut, and he drank neither wine nor any grape product. No doubt, he was a man who attracted a certain number of stares. He was almost as much of an enigma to the people of Judea as he is to modern readers.

In a manner known only to God, John finds his way back to the edges of civilization from a period of life in the wilderness. Not every prophet of old had been called into the wilderness, but it was a typical prophetic move, and it is not surprising that John lived there. As the man of God, his ways would be unconventional, and his priorities utterly spiritual. So, he seems to avoid every carnal convenience. Instead of seeking out population centers, the people found him in the wilderness. In his only recorded interchange with the upper crust of society, he managed to insult them with truth (Matthew 14:3-5).

Not all of the prophets had led such an austere existence, at least not all of the time. John's own strange life had probably served three distinct purposes. First, solitude may have served as a time of focus in preparation. The wilderness period has led some to label John as a possible member of the sequestered sect known as the Essenes (Brownrigg 222). Whether true or not, it cannot be argued that other prophets had been prepared for service through isolation. Moses, Elijah and Ezekiel come immediately to mind as typical examples of this kind of preparation. Geerhardus Vos reminds us that the prophets had cited the wilderness as a symbolic preparation for repentance (Isaiah 40:1-4; Hosea 2:14-15) (348).

Specific preparation from God is the second possible reason for the wilderness period. Given the extensive instructions given to his mother and father, we can safely assume that John understood his purpose in life (at least to some degree) from an early age. It is certainly possible that God was instructing him through direct revelation before sending him to preach to the people.

The third possible purpose of the wilderness period is the most clearly supported: rejection of worldliness. It could never be charged that John was influenced by the carnal over the spiritual. The extremes of his existence demonstrated that there was more to the coming kingdom

of God than food and drink (Romans 14:17). It was to be a spiritual kingdom, a fact repeatedly emphasized by Jesus to his disciples and preached to the masses. The concept of true spirituality was the least readily accepted doctrine of all by the disciples; it was the source of rejection by the Jews; it is perhaps our greatest challenge today. But John, who died before the kingdom was established, practiced and demonstrated a life in the world but not of the world. This matter of spirituality, so perfectly revealed in the life of Jesus, was also suggested by John.

The moral character of John was impeccable. As he faced his own death, he sent two disciples to ask a question. "And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Matthew 11:2-3). Jesus gave the evidence that he was in fact the Messiah (4-5), and went on to laud John's character. And there is no room for uncertainty or ambiguity in Jesus' eulogy. He was powerful and unbending (v 7), he rejected worldliness (v 8), he was "more than a prophet" (v 9), he was the fulfillment of prophecy (10). In v 11 we read, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The Divine choosing of such a man as John was a reflection of the moral character of the king himself. It was no accident and no coincidence that the harbinger of the king was truly the groom's "best man."

He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled (John 3:29).

Harbinger of the King's Meekness

“...but He who is coming is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry...” (Matthew 3:11). There never seems to be any doubt in John’s mind concerning his own role. John’s life was devoted to but one great task, summed up in, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). It was fitting that such a man as John was chosen to announce the coming of Christ.

The ministry of John was intended to be neither self-perpetuating nor self-fulfilling. His was never more than a supporting role, a life of sacrifice for the glory of another. Even before he was born, he leaped in joy at the presence of the newly pregnant Mary, and the unborn Jesus (Luke 1:41). It was more than a random kick that Elizabeth felt in her womb, as she was inspired by the Holy Spirit to affirm (Luke 1:41-44). This seemingly small incident in the life of an unborn child was a harbinger of the next thirty years. Everything that John did, his great success with the people in the wilderness, the reforms that came from his preaching, his fame as a prophet and even his influence over evil men who opposed him, were all done to prepare the world for Jesus. And it was fitting that it should be thus. Because unlike any other kingdom, the masterful ministry of Jesus was marked by rejection, humiliation and sacrifice.

John’s life and career was as focused as one could possibly be. His calling was to prepare the world for Jesus. Isaiah had prophesied of John saying:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight
in the desert a highway for our God. Every
valley shall be exalted, and every mountain
and hill shall be made low; the crooked
places shall be made straight, and the rough
places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be
revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together;

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken”
(Isaiah 40:3-5).

Malachi added his voice in 3:1 and a more cryptic prediction in chapter 4:5.

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts (Malachi 3:1).

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5).

John had an understanding of his humble role. He himself answered the question of any rivalry or jealousy that might have ensued between him and Jesus. With great clarity and conviction, he told his own disciples, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

The Lord had sent prophets to their doom over the centuries. He had done this to convict and convert; he had also done so to prepare. They were at the mercy of unbelievers who abused them (Hebrews 11:35-40). Those martyred prophets whom the Lord himself honored in his lament over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37) did not die in vain. Neither did John. They lived and died for the honor of God. They died in an unknown alliance with The Prophet who would also suffer humiliation at the hands of the unworthy. When Herod killed John, he only did the expected, for as the wicked laborers had abused the previous messengers, so would they treat John, and so would they also treat the Son (Matthew 21:33-40).

In a wonderful way, the humility, service and subjection of John was a faint picture of Jesus; John’s ministry was destined to give way to a greater. John

declared himself unworthy of Jesus (Matthew 3:11). And that greater one was sent to serve in meekness as well. At the baptism of Jesus, John declared the truth that Jesus surely knew: that their roles seemed reversed. But Jesus, though he had no sin, meekly submitted to baptism that he might “fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). And in the garden, the King of kings prayed, “...nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39).

Harbinger of the King’s Plan

“...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:3). “...and were baptized by him...” (Matthew 3:6). The most easily noted factor in John’s ministry was that he was “the Baptist.” The word “baptist” means “one who baptizes” and this action so typified his role that it serves as his surname. In John’s divinely appointed role as harbinger of the King, he prepared men for the commands of a new kingdom.

Through the preaching of John, the Jews who lived in the shadow of the coming kingdom received advance notice of the Gospel plan of salvation. Interestingly, though John is immortalized as “the immerser,” his message reflects hearing, believing, repentance and confession with equal clarity. Since John came preaching, hearing is key throughout scriptural references to him. With regard to faith, Jesus made multiple allusions to the need to have believed John. Jesus’ opponents refused to say John’s baptism was of heavenly authority because “He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’” (Matthew 21:25). Tax collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom before these critics because they believed (Matthew 21:31-32). John also preached, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life...” (John 3:36). And John’s preaching cannot be understood at all apart from repentance and its prominence. He came preaching, “...Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2). He

demanded the proof of repentance through reformation (Matthew 3:8). He gave examples of penitent living (Luke 3:10-14). And he died because of a couple who refused to repent (Matthew 14:4).

The baptism of John is an entire study of itself. Its purpose may be readily learned through an understanding of his life and ministry. Given John's unique position as the last of the Old Testament era prophets, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13), questions arise. Of John's baptism it may be asked, "How did his baptism fit into the Old Covenant?" The answer lies not so much in the Old Mosaic law, under which John lived, but in the kingdom which was at hand. Since John stood at the very cusp of the covenants, one must take both dispensations into account when he analyzes the prophet's work. His life's purpose was to prepare for the coming Messiah and his great kingdom, not just to reform the Jews.

John came as a Jewish prophet to those who had fallen away from God. There had been other reforms since Malachi, some ill-conceived but perhaps others that were sincere. Perhaps there even had been unrecorded but Spirit-led prophets in those days. But John's reformation was unique in two ways. First, it had a tremendous impact on the Jews. Second, it introduced immersion in water (baptism) as a symbol of repentance and turning to God. "Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5-6).

One must recognize that John's baptism is not New Testament baptism such as all Christians must experience today. It was not predicated on belief in Jesus as the Savior, the son of God. It did not include the teaching of the Gospel of a risen Lord (Acts 2:14-36). In two instances in the book of Acts, those who only knew the baptism of John had to be corrected. In the first case, Apollos taught the

baptism of John, and had to learn the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:25). In the second instance, the men of Ephesus had been baptized into John's baptism after it had ceased to be a valid baptism (Acts 19:1-5). These men had to be baptized again (vs. 5). It is interesting to note that one religious group today, which calls itself "Baptist," claims to have its beginnings with John in the wilderness. Consider this: even if that were true, such baptisms (that is originating with John) were considered invalid by the time of Acts! How could such a baptism be valid today?

What then was the purpose of John's baptism? It is stated succinctly in Mark 1:4, "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Though the Old Testament had no immersion in water for remission of sin, there were certainly types and principles there, with various cleansings and washings. But immersion in water for remission of sins was not known in the Old Testament. Therefore, it must be admitted that there is a clearer connection to the New Covenant. Indeed, we also are baptized with a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Over the years, some have stated that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, and not for the remission of sins. In fact, it is both, just as Christian baptism is both. Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). In Romans 6:3-4, Paul makes it clear that a baptism symbolizes the death of an old life and the beginnings of a new one. Our baptism is also a "baptism of repentance" in the same sense that it is a baptism of faith (Mark 16:16). Neither label is intended to affirm that one is saved before he is baptized, but rather it shows how these other factors (faith and repentance) motivate the desire to be baptized and washed from sin (Acts 22:16).

There is another answer to the question, “What was the purpose of John’s baptism?” Since John was a forerunner preparing for the kingdom, his baptism also introduced men to the baptism of the Great Commission. When Peter preached the first Gospel sermon in Acts 2, his command to be baptized was understood immediately by those who had learned of John. They knew that they must obey, or be in rebellion to God. Like in the first century, today, when the prophet of God commands that we be baptized, obedience is not optional!

Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:5-7).

Harbinger of the King’s Judgment

“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees...” (Matthew 3:10). A general study of prophets reveals that their lot was not a pleasant one. The vast majority of them seem to have been called in times of crisis, rather than having the more pleasant task of encouragement. This is not to say that they were negative-minded people, but that they were God’s last line of defense against infidelity. Their calling in times of crisis reflected the great mercy of God, but such a calling was heartrending for several of them. Jonah, Jeremiah and Elijah come immediately to mind as prophets who would have preferred not to prophesy.

Biblical prophets were extraordinary personalities. Unlike Greek oracles or Mesopotamian astrologers, the prophets

addressed the concerns and needs (spiritual, political, social, and economic) of the common people. They lashed out at immorality and greed wherever they occurred. They challenged the sovereignty of the mighty who used their power for greed or self-aggrandizement. They chastised the populace for unfaithfulness to God as well as for their deviation from the Law. They pleaded. They begged. They warned. They demanded change, always assuring their listeners of the wanton devastation that would follow if they refused to heed the warnings of the Almighty. (Barfield 9-10)

Since they were commonly called at such pivotal times, they frequently predicted the wrath of God's judgment. The rhetoric of John seems to have been particularly forceful against those who refused to repent. He called the Pharisees and Saducees a "Brood of vipers!..." (Matthew 3:7). Indeed, the words of Jesus ring true as he made it clear that John was no reed shaken in the wind (Matthew 11:7).

John's preaching of judgments was more than labeling those who disdained his ministry and his baptism. He taught the principles of judgment which would be in force throughout the kingdom era. He first indicated that fellowship with God would not be a matter of earthly heritage. The physical descendants of Abraham would not be blessed by that relationship unless it was also a spiritual heritage of faith (Matthew 3:9).

John also gave the great principle of judgment according to what one's life produces, or fruit (Matthew 3:10). This great principle of judgment was further clarified by Jesus in John 15. In each case, the barren trees or vines are to be destroyed. The principle is that judgment in the

kingdom is individual and based on obedience. John's preaching connected the elements of command and consequence; one cannot fully comprehend the urgency of repentance without the reality of judgment.

If we distinguish the two elements of law and prophecy, both were plainly summed up in the message: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." But the connection between the two is not that of the mere addition of two unrelated things; the conjunction "for" indicates that the motive for repentance lies in the near approach of the Kingdom, because the latter means to John, first of all, judgment. Compare the fan in the hand, the ax at the root. (Vos 315)

The third great principle of judgment was that there would be separation. John only identifies two groups of men in judgment, the wheat and the chaff. And whether the picture is of separation of these two groups, or the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:32) or the rock and the sand (Matthew 7:24-27), the lesson is always the same. There are but two kinds of people: the saved and the lost. To some, that may seem simplistic. But John was quite certain that judgment and separation of these two groups was inevitable. And Jesus, the King for whom John prepared, is that Judge.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dan was born in Riverview Michigan, the son of Bob and Doris Kessinger. After brief boyhood stints in Kentucky, West Virginia and Georgia, his family returned to West Virginia to stay in 1973. He and his wife, the former Mary Amy West, have two boys, D.J. and Thomas.

Dan graduated from Walton High School in Roane County, WV and attended Ohio Valley College where he earned associate and bachelor degrees in Biblical Science.

Dan preached his first sermon in the Spring of 1982 at the Matthew Zion church of Christ in Walker, WV. He has served congregations in Belle, Long Valley, Gandeeville, Proctor, and since February of 1994, the Dewey Ave. church of Christ in St. Marys.

In addition to his local work (including a weekly radio program), Dan conducts Gospel meetings and appears on lecture programs each year. He is a frequent contributor to religious journals, and is the author of "A Cloak of Malice." He has worked with WV Christian Youth Camp since 1984, and West Virginia School of Preaching since 1995.

WORSHIP ETHICS

By Steve Higginbotham

Never has there been a time in the history of the world that man's worship to God has been unregulated. From the time of the patriarchs, through the time in which the Law was given to Moses, and even now as we serve God in his church, man has not been allowed to rely upon his own devices to worship God as he pleases.

A casual reading of the Bible demonstrates that not all worship is acceptable and pleasing to God. Jesus spoke of "true worshipers" (John 4:23), which implies the existence of "false worshipers." Jesus also spoke of vain worship (Matthew 15:8-9), and the Old Testament is replete with examples of God's disapproval of man's attempts at worship (Genesis 4:4-5; Leviticus 10:1-2; 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11-15).

Consequently, there must be some "ethics" or principles of conduct involved in worship. What are those principles of conduct that determine whether one's worship is acceptable or unacceptable? Where are those principles set forth? Of course, the answer to that question is God's Word. Therein is contained everything needed to thoroughly furnish us unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Let's see if we can identify from God's Word, the ethics of worship.

We Must Worship The Right Object. In his debate with the Devil, Jesus affirmed that God alone was worthy of worship (Matthew 4:10). To say that the object of our worship should be God may seem rather axiomatic, but such is not the case. Throughout history and even today, people need to be reminded that God, and God alone, is the proper object of our worship. The Gnostics of the first century worshiped angels (Colossians 2:18). Many tribal

and Eastern Religions engage in ancestor worship, and countless people worship departed saints of the past, especially Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Such overt attempts at replacing God as the only object of worship may be easily identified in the above examples, but there is a more subtle practice taking place today that, in effect, removes God from his throne and bows down to another object. Who is it that has supplanted God? I'm talking about non-Christians, the man in the world, or as church growth people refer to him, "unchurched Harry."

Consider: When we care more about how the world views our worship service than how God views it, we have dethroned God. When we introduce activities into worship that are pleasing to the world, but fail to consider if those actions are pleasing to God, we have dethroned God. When we survey our neighborhoods to discover what they want in an effort to get them to come to church, but fail to survey God's Word to discover what he wants, we have dethroned God.

As much as we should love the world and desire the salvation of all who are lost, we must remember that worship is not about "unchurched Harry." It's not directed toward "unchurched Harry." And it doesn't necessarily have to please "unchurched Harry."

God is the only being deserving of our worship. He, and he alone, is sovereign. Now, let's be sure and act like it, and not allow the intended object of our worship to drift away from God.

We Must Worship With the Right Attitude. Jesus stated in John 4:24 that we must worship God in spirit and in truth. This passage is very similar to what Joshua said in Joshua 24:14, "Now therefore, fear God and serve him in sincerity and in truth." At least one observation that can be made from these passages is that a certain attitude must accompany the worship we offer to God.

John 6 demonstrates that good actions, if not accompanied with proper attitudes, are worthless. Charitable deeds, prayers and fasting are all noble practices, but when accompanied with an improper attitude (e.g. to be seen of men), they are vain.

In other words, God is not interested in empty ritualism. He desires that one's attitude, one's spirit, be engaged in the worship. Worship is more than simply a roll call of the redeemed, but should be an event when men humbly approach God with reverence and awe, and genuinely pay homage to him as their Creator and Savior.

Some of the most scathing rebukes God ever directed toward his children involved worship that was offered without the spirit (Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; etc.).

I dare say that many Christians will arise early on Sunday, put forth a diligent effort to get the children out of bed and ready, drive to the church building, go to Bible class, sing songs, bow their heads in prayer, partake of the Lord's Supper and respectfully sit while the lesson is being presented, then depart for their homes having never accomplished what they intended to accomplish! In fact, instead of pleasing God, they have angered God by their rote actions devoid of spirit.

Historically, as well as experientially, we know how easily worship can be offered without the proper spirit. Therefore, it would probably serve us well to make preparation for this event. After all, we're not going to attend a trivial event as spectators, but rather are entering the presence of Almighty God, not as spectators, but as participants.

We Must Worship as Truth Dictates. According to John 4:24, we must also worship God according to truth. Jesus also tells us that God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Consequently, if our worship is to be acceptable to God, we must worship him according to the directives of God's Word.

The acts of worship that we employ must be authorized by God if they are to be acceptable (Colossians 3:17). The standard of what we offer to God as worship is not regulated by our likes and dislikes, by our talents or by our imagination, but by the revelation of God's will. In this same epistle in which God demands divine authority for all our beliefs and practices, he also condemns "will worship" (Colossians 2:22-23), or worship that one devises and prescribes from himself.

I have been amazed recently as I have read the writings of some who have totally abandoned the notion that there are regulations regarding what we offer up to God as worship. In times past, when debating with those who use mechanical instruments of music in worship, an argument that we often made and effectively used to demonstrate their inconsistency was as follows: "If mechanical instruments of music are permissible because there is no passage forbidding their use, then using the same reasoning, wouldn't mashed potatoes and gravy or peanut butter and jelly be acceptable for the Lord's Supper? This argument demonstrated the inconsistency of their position. It demonstrated that there are actions that are wholly inappropriate for worship. Who would have thought that the time would come when people would come to embrace the actions proposed in that dilemma? But that time has come! Less than two months ago, I received an article from a "Gospel preacher" who was arguing that there are no regulated acts of worship. Someone had then asked him if it would then be wrong to offer a lamb as a sacrifice. His reply? "Only from the sheep's point of view...No, seriously...if you were honestly, from your hearts, engaging in this act of worship to express genuine thanksgiving to your God...then I would find no reason to condemn your worshipful expression." Who can believe it!

There is a set of ethics involved in true worship. True worship involves (1) the proper object; (2) the proper

attitude, and (3) the proper actions. When all three of these matters are carefully observed, “true worship” will result. As we worship God, let us do so with the utmost awe and reverence. Let us confine ourselves to those actions that God authorizes in his Word, and let us worship him with passion. Our worship should not be a weariness, but a time of spiritual renewal.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Steve was born in Weirton, WV

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TEMPTATIONS OF THE KING

Matthew 4:1-11

By Eddie Cooper

Introduction

There are three schools in which every person must enroll if he lives long on this earth. They are work, temptation and suffering. William James, the noted psychologist, once said: “No man has matriculated in the university of life until he has been well tempted.”

Temptation is not the same as sin. It was and is no sin to be tempted. Yielding to temptation to do evil is sin. A song familiar to all has this idea: “Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin.”

A definition of temptation is: “to induce or entice, as to something immoral; to be inviting to; attract” (*Webster’s* 608).

Matthew’s inclusion of the temptations is remarkable. It shows that the sinless Lord of the universe was tempted, just as we are (Hebrews 4:15-16). If we want to be like Jesus, we must accept temptation as real — as is the possibility of overcoming temptation. But we need to be open about our struggles. In doing so we: (1) honor God, (2) recognize the power of sin, and (3) encourage others to do likewise.

How often do we hear someone dismiss the implications of faith for day-to-day life with the retort, **“You don’t understand! I live in the real world, where things are tough. They play by a different set of rules. Christianity is all well and good, but isn’t it a bit simplistic when it comes to real life?”**

The account of the temptation in Matthew 4:1-11 offers a response to that sort of thinking. It shows that Jesus

does understand real life. He faced real temptations — the same temptations that show up every day in the “**real world.**”

Some people think that because he did not give in to what was offered, he must not have been “really” tempted; therefore, he can’t “really” understand our situation. But, that won’t do. Scripture affirms that Satan’s devices were real temptations that really tempted him. And, because he was able to resist them, he is able to help us do the same (Hebrews 2:17-18). He completely understands our feelings — and how to do what is right in spite of them.

Temptation involves a conflict with: (1) Satan (Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Ephesians 4:27; James 4:7), (2) Self (James 1:14-15), and (3) Evil spirits (Ephesians 6:12).

The temptations were an assault on his authority by the provocation to submit to the devil. In all this he showed his power over the avenues of temptation: (1) Lust of the eyes, (2) Lust of the flesh, and (3) Pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). He demonstrated his superiority over Satan. He conquered Satan in his attempts to thwart and subvert the plan of God for the salvation of man even before it was announced.

Temptations Are Universal to Mankind

To be mortal is to endure trial; to be human is to suffer temptation. In a world of moral and ethical values in which “wrong” contests “right,” temptation is inevitable. Young and old alike have to deal with decisions that have to do with wrong or right conduct. If there is a “**right**,” there must be a “**wrong**.” It is the part of man to weigh the difference and make his choice. It’s the “weighing of the difference” that produces the moral struggle, creates the inner tensions and leads to the eventual outward commitment to one or the other. The devil pulls one way; God pulls the other. We are also aware, that the devil will pull us as far away from God as he possibly can.

There are some things we learn about temptation. (1) There is the **CERTAINTY** of it. It is an experience that is common to all mankind. No person is immune to dealing with temptation. Whether young or old, weak or strong, there is the facing of temptations in life. We also need to remember that some temptations that we deal with are not difficult for others to handle. (2) Along with the **certainty** of it, there is also a **WARNING**. First Corinthians 10:12 reads: "Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." I've had individuals see someone commit a sin, and that person says, "I would never ever do that, they must really be weak." There is the danger of thinking that we are stronger than we are. Also, there is the danger of thinking that we are better than others. It might be that certain temptations do not affect us as they do others, but, there is still the need to be warned about the dangers of temptations. We may become an easy victim for the devil because we presume that we can overcome what others are not able. (3) There are also two facts that add to the danger of temptations. The **SUDDENNESS** of them. The "tempter" often strikes unexpectedly and unannounced, finding us unaware and unarmed. The devil does not come with a warning sign saying to us, "here I am and here is what you are to face." There is also the **UNLIKELINESS** of them. We may fail in those points where we seem strongest. At the same time, we are reminded in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "that no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man." Others have gone through what you feel is an unlikely situation. Others have dealt with them, and so can you.

As is true with all the difficulties that we go through in life, the Bible gives us words of **ENCOURAGEMENT**. First Corinthians 10:13 reads: "...but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." First, notice that God is

faithful. That is, he can be trusted, relied upon and is dependable. Since he is faithful and we are warned against presumption, we should also be fortified against despondency and despair. *No temptation exceeds our power of resistance* (1 Corinthians 10:13). If the foe is strong, our Father comes to the rescue. Hebrews 4:14-16 has a great lesson for us. Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because he was tempted in “all points like we, yet without sin.” Because Jesus was able to overcome, so can we. There is a way of escape. The problem is that usually we do not look for it. It may not always be visible, but it is always provided.

Jesus Faces Temptations

Just think for a while about the situation in which Jesus found himself. Jesus had just been baptized by John in the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit descended upon him and God had said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). It was a high point in Jesus’ life — the beginning of his public ministry and the promise of a bright career ahead. But, first, there would be some exams (temptations). Jesus went from the glory of his baptism to the barren wastes of the Judean desert. He was tempted by the devil himself. “He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1).

The specific temptations of Christ’s early years were by no means all of his temptations. His life was a series of temptations. He continually faced the cunning of the Pharisees, the traps set by lawyers, the weaknesses of his disciples, the fickleness of the crowd and the realization that many were apathetic. The last one would be enough for most of us when we see the attitude of many today being apathetic, we might feel “what is the use.” A temptation to give up on someone or people in general. But, thanks be to God, that it didn’t end there. The “great” temptation was

involved in the pain and shame of the whip, the thorns, the nails, the nakedness and the death on the cross.

Just as temptation was necessary to qualify Jesus for leadership, it is necessary to prove and develop every Christian. Pediatricians tell us that an infant must be exposed to germs, with the consequent illness, fever and pain in order to develop an inner immunity system against disease. Similarly, Christians have to be exposed to error, problems, hard times — all kinds of temptations — in order to develop spiritual defenses.

In the first place, Jesus had to deal with the “**LUST OF THE FLESH.**” Matthew 4:3 reads: “Now when the tempter came to Him he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’” “The significance of a forty days’ fast can only be measured in terms of human experience. Physical appetites are very strong. Hunger can reduce the rational balance of a person to mere emotional wreckage” (Whitten 168).

Do you think for a moment that Satan did not know who Jesus was? Satan wanted Jesus to show his power. Jesus trusted that his Father would provide for him (Psalm 119:105).

Countless lives have been changed by the mere reading of the Bible. The Bible is able to instruct us as to the proper course of action. There is a way of escape. The power that we have to improve situations is found in the study of God’s Word (2 Peter 3:18).

Secondly, Jesus had to deal with the “**PRIDE OF LIFE.**” Matthew 4:5,6 reads: “Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw yourself down.’” This may refer to Herod’s royal portico which overhung the Kedron Valley and looked down some four hundred and fifty feet, a dizzy height (Josephus, Ant. XV, Xi.5). Satan even quotes Scripture. This text is used to encourage men to have faith in God, and not to tempt God.

A good paraphrase: “*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test*” (Crain). Satan is always relentless, and desirous of destroying us (1 Peter 5:8).

Thirdly, Jesus deals with the “*LUST OF THE EYES.*” Matthew 4:8,9 reads: “Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.’”

My father and I, a number of years ago, went to Spruce Knob. While there, at one of the lookout towers, we were able to view the tops of the trees and the beauty of the surrounding area. What a sight! The devil offered to give Jesus all of the “things” of this world’s kingdoms. Why did Satan think he could offer what was not his to offer? Just as he did with Jesus, the devil will do all in his power to get us to “*serve*” him. Why is it that with many, they would much rather “*serve* the devil than God?” Might it be that they have given in to that temptation?

Jesus knew how to meet temptations and did so in the following ways:

1. *He lived close to his Father through prayer and trust.*
2. *He handled Satan with a firm refusal.*
3. *He knew his Father’s will.* Jesus’ desire was always to “do his Father’s will.”
4. *There was no doubt in his heart about who he was, why he was here, nor where he was going.*
5. *He knew who Satan was and why he came to him.* We need to be aware of our enemy and his devices, “lest he get advantage of us” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

What Can We Do with Temptations?

We need to pay attention to temptation. Opportunities for temptation are almost endless. There are many alternatives that the Scriptures offer for dealing with temptations. Here are a few:

(1) ***We should avoid temptation.*** Proverbs 4:14-15 reads: “Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel it; Turn away from it and pass on.” Often we know beforehand whether a certain set of circumstances is likely to lead to sin. Therefore, the obvious way to avoid sin is to avoid these circumstances (1 Corinthians 10:13). Often, the escape is to stay away from the place or the people where temptation lurks (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:33).

(2) ***We should flee from powerful temptations*** (1 Corinthians 6:18). The message is clear: “Don’t toy with temptation. Flee from it” (2 Timothy 2:22).

(3) ***Chronic temptation is something we need to confess and offer to Christ and ask for his cleansing work.*** Some temptations are powerful struggles, with thoughts and attitudes that graphically remind us of how fallen we are. What should we do with that kind of temptation? Rather than deny it and try to repress it, we should bring it to Christ. He alone is capable of cleaning up the inside of our minds.

(4) ***We must resist temptation until it leaves us.*** When Christ was tempted by the devil, he resisted until the devil went away. James encouraged us to do the same (James 4:7). Resistance begins with saturating our minds with the Word of God and standing our ground. We have the promise, after all, that the temptations we experience will never go beyond the common experiences of others, or beyond our ability to deal with them (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In every temptation, there is a twofold responsibility. A curse, if we yield; a blessing, if we overcome. Let us think of the blessedness of overcoming: (1) ***STRENGTH.*** Certain people have the idea that when they conquer a foe that the strength of that foe passes into themselves. So, the strength of a temptation, when conquered, passes into the conqueror. Every trial overcome fortifies us for the next. (2) ***EXALTATION.*** Joseph was exalted after he overcame

(Genesis 39:9-13; 41:37ff). Christ was exalted after conquering the world (James 1:12; Revelation 3:21).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Eddie Cooper is a graduate of St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV., and received an Associate of Science Degree from Ohio Valley College in 1966 and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Bible from Abilene Christian University in 1969.

He has worked for churches in Ohio, Texas and West Virginia. He has conducted radio programs in previous churches and directed a television program for the Columbus and Chillicothe, Ohio churches of Christ.

He has written articles for *Teenage Christian*, *Christian Bible Teacher*, *Bible Herald*, *Gospel Truths*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Therefore Stand*, *West Virginia Christian* and *Upon The Rock*. He also writes articles for the "Religion" section of the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*.

He has been preaching since he was sixteen and has been with the North End Church of Christ since the fall of 1995. He and his wife, Barbara, have two sons, Jason and Scott. Jason is a Psychologist and Captain in the Air Force, living in Omaha, Nebraska with his wife, Martha, who is a Second Lieutenant in the Air Force. Scott is a manager for Tennessee Farmers Co-Op in Nashville, Tennessee and his wife, Leah, is a third-grade school teacher.

JESUS' TRIALS

By Roy H. Lanier, Jr.

Jesus evidently had six appearances before the tribunals. Three were before the Jews and three were before the Roman authorities. Most of this material is taken from John James Maclaren in "Jesus Christ, Arrest and Trial of:," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1668-1673), R.P. Martin "Trial of Jesus," *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1593-1594) and also from R.R. France in "Jesus Christ, Life and Teaching Of" (761-771).

There Were Six Trials

1. Jesus was tried before Annas (John 18:13, 19-27). Annas was the father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas, and a former high priest himself. Just why the Jews took Jesus to him first is not known; perhaps it was simply that they honored him even after he was put out of office. He asked Jesus about himself and his teaching. Jesus replied that he had spoken openly and he could ask the Jews of his teachings.

2. He was then sent to appear before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-68). The chief priests, scribes, elders and some of the council held evidently an informal hearing. The Sanhedrin could not have a formal meeting during the night, so they would meet later when it was day. Many false witnesses came but they found no fault. Then Caiaphas asked if he were the Son of God, and Jesus acceded. Upon this, the charge of blasphemy was hurled and Jesus immediately began to suffer many indignities and physical punishments.

3. He went before the Sanhedrin when it was day (Luke 22:66-71). This evidently was a formal meeting of the council. Jesus was asked again about whether he was the Christ. He agreed, but at the same time said they would

not believe him. The Jews then believed they had cause to take him before a Roman tribunal, so they took him to Pilate. All along the decision of the Jews was a foregone conclusion.

4. False claims were lodged against him before Pilate that he refused to pay taxes to Caesar and that he wanted to be an earthly king of the Jews (Luke 23:1-3). Pilate asked Jesus if he were the “King of the Jews,” and Jesus replied, “Thou sayest.” This was Jesus’ agreement that he was a king, but Pilate evidently understood that this was not any threat to the Roman rule. He declared him to be innocent, but upon further malicious charges, he found that Jesus was a Galilean. So, he avoided the decision by sending him to Herod.

5. Jesus next appeared before Herod for trial (Luke 23:7-11). Herod was glad to see Jesus for he had heard of him a long time. Herod was very knowledgeable of the Jews and their laws, and he was curious about Jesus. He also wanted to see a miracle since he had heard many things about Jesus and his miracles. Jesus simply held his peace. Herod and Pilate were not ignorant of the glorious reception this man had received upon entering Jerusalem just five days previously.

6. Last, he was put on trial again before Pilate (Matthew 27:11-26). At this time, Pilate, further perturbed by a message from his wife about her dream, made one more offer to turn Jesus loose since he found no fault in him. Even Herod had found nothing worthy of death in him, so Pilate suggested chastising him and turning him loose. The people would have none of that so Pilate turned Barabbas loose and gave Jesus over to the Jews and the soldiers to be crucified. As a symbol of his own innocence in the matter, supposed as it was, Pilate washed his hands in water (Matthew 27:24), declaring, “I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man.” The Jews, taunted by Pilate

that Jesus was their king, gave him grim satisfaction by proclaiming their allegiance to Caesar.

Many Charges Were Brought Against Jesus

Charges that were brought against him included:

1. Evil-doer (John 19:30).
2. Two false witnesses claimed Jesus had said he was able to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, the literal temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 26:60).
3. Some false witnesses claimed Jesus said he would actually destroy the temple and rebuild it (Mark 14:58).
4. Blasphemy (Matthew 26:65; Mark 16:64).
5. Jesus was to supplant Pilate and be a literal king (Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:2).
6. Many other things (Mark 15:3)
7. Perverting the nation (Luke 23:2, 14).
8. Forbidding Jews to give tribute to Caesar (Luke 23:2).
9. Stirs the people to insurrection (Luke 23:5).
10. Vehement accusations (Luke 23:10).

Many Jewish and Roman Laws Were Violated

Violations of Jewish and Roman Laws that were involved:

1. Jesus was arrested as a result of a bribe, namely the blood-money that Judas received.
2. Some of the priests who were to be his judges before the Sanhedrin took part in his arrest.

3. This trial was at night, a violation of Jewish law.
4. He was brought before the wrong court for a death sentence, as the charge of blasphemy was only religious; the Sanhedrin had no jurisdiction for a capital offense.
5. Jesus was asked to incriminate himself.
6. The priests and council used false witnesses.
7. They suborned men to testify.
8. They adjured and badgered the accused in order to extort a confession.
9. The High Priest, under the most solemn oath involved himself in seeking false witnesses.
10. The Council failed to have two or three witnesses for the prosecution.
11. The High Priest, who was one of the judges, became the interrogator.
12. The witnesses disagreed but their testimony was accepted by the High Priest.
13. The High Priest never pronounced a sentence.
14. The Sanhedrin Council had no power to sentence to death.
15. The Council pronounced Jesus guilty without allowing a day to intervene.
16. They held the morning session on a feast day.
17. A verdict was rendered without any legal evidence.
18. Three days were required for a capital offence judgment.

19. They buffeted and spit on Jesus during a trial.
20. They scourged an un-condemned man.
21. They refused Pilate's acquittal, who would have released Jesus.
22. Pilate failed to release Jesus immediately upon declaring him innocent.
23. The retrial by Herod was illegal after an acquittal by Pilate.
24. Mocking and arraying in a gorgeous robe by Herod and his soldiers during a trial was clearly illegal.
25. Pilate allowed the mockery of a crown of thorns and royal robe during the last trial.
26. The Romans scourged again a man already acquitted.

To sum up: The Jewish trial of Our Lord was absolutely illegal, the court which condemned Him being without jurisdiction to try a capital offence, which blasphemy was under the Jewish law. Even if there had been jurisdiction, it would have been irregular, as the judges had rendered themselves incompetent to try the case, having been guilty of the violation of the spirit of the law that required judges to be unprejudiced and impartial and carefully to guard the interests of the accused. Even the letter of the law had been violated in a number of important respects. Among these may be mentioned: (1) some of the judges taking part in and directing the arrest, (2) the examination before the trial and the attempt to obtain admissions; (3) endeavors of the judges to procure the testimony of false witnesses; (4) commencing and continuing the trial at night; (5) examining and adjuring the accused in order to extort admissions from him; (5) rendering a verdict of guilty at the close of the night session, without allowing a day to intervene; (7) holding

the morning session on a feast day, and rendering a verdict at its close; and (8) rendering both verdicts without any legal evidence. (*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, CD-ROM)

Now, how far were these proceedings in accordance with the Roman law under which they purported to have been taken and conducted? In the first place, Pilate, as procurator, was the proper officer to try the charges brought against Jesus...In the next place he acted quite properly in declining to entertain a charge which disclosed no offence known to the Roman law, or to pass a sentence based on the verdict of the Sanhedrin for an alleged violation of the Jewish law. He appears to have acted in accordance with the law, and indeed in a judicial and praiseworthy manner in the trial and disposition of the threefold indictment for treason (unless it be a fact that Jesus was not present when these accusations were brought against Him outside the Praetorium, which would be merely an irregularity, as they were made known to him later inside). Pilate's initial mistake, which led to all the others, was in not discharging Jesus at once, when he had pronounced the verdict of acquittal.

All the subsequent proceedings were contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the law. Although Pilate took his place upon the judgment seat, his acts, properly speaking, were not those of a judge, and had no legal force or value; but were rather the futile attempts of a weak and vacillating politician to appease an angry mob thirsting for the blood of an innocent countryman. The carrying out of a sentence imposed in such circumstances, and under such conditions, may not inaptly be described as a judicial murder. (Maclaren, *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, CD-ROM)

Conclusion

This series of trials all along were a farce. These were mistrials for Jesus was not afforded any fairness or any chance for vindication. The death of Jesus was a foregone conclusion. The Jews had decided long ago that Jesus must die, and now they were afforded the time and place to make it happen (John 11:47-53). There was no fair hearing before the Jews by their laws, and when Herod and Pilate wanted to stay within Roman law, the Jews would not hear of it.

For the sinless One to be subjected to a trial conducted by sinful men was in itself a deep humiliation. To be tried by *such* men, under *such* circumstances made it infinitely worse. Greedy, serpent-like, vindictive Annas (see on 18:13), rude, sly, hypocritical Caiaphas (see on 11:49, 50), crafty superstitious, self-seeking Pilate (see 18:29); and immoral, ambitious, superficial Herod Antipas; these were his judges (Hendricksen 395)!

These truly were not fair trials; they were simply hearings that were the result of a plot. The Jews devised it, they carried all of the hearings out, they took him to hearing after hearing looking for some justification, they intimidated Pilate, and thinking that they had won a victory, even while Jesus was suffering on the cross, they shouted, "He saved others, himself he cannot save" (Mark 15:31).

This then was not really a judicial trial, it was a plot that resulted in murder.

The Great Day, the Day of Judgment will reveal all the sins and travesties of history. There will never be one that even begins to compare with the travesties of the trials of Jesus, the Son of God.

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MIRACLES IN Matthew 8-9

By W. Terry Varner

Job acknowledged God's omnipotence when he wrote, "I know that thou canst do everything" (Job 42:2). Jesus said, "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

Jesus is God or Deity (John 1:1-4, 14). In the Gospels, we find many proofs of his Deity, both in his teaching and his miracles. He possessed supernatural power that no man could have possessed. Jesus said his miracles were performed "with the finger of God" (Luke 11:20; cf. Exodus 8:19).

A study of his miracles reveals his many Divine attributes and serves an important role in vindicating and sustaining the faith of a believer. The study of the miracles of Jesus strengthens the fact that they "were not so much evidences as parts of His Revelation" (Lang 18). There can be no authentic revelation without a miracle.

The validity of the miracles of Jesus is constantly challenged, as are other biblical miracles. However, "So long as the miracles of Jesus remain, the question as to the reality of the miracles of Moses and Elisha, though important, is only of secondary moment" (Bruce 11).

Consider the following two quotations which challenge our faith in the miracles of Jesus. The *Time* magazine summarized some of the scholarly views about Jesus as: "He never cured any diseases. As for the other miracles? No loaves and fishes, no water into wine, no raising of Lazarus. And certainly no resurrection. What happened to his body then? Most likely it was consumed by wild dogs" (January 10, 1994).

The following year the *Time* magazine cover carried the headline: "The Message of the Miracles." In the article by Nancy Gibbs, she writes: "As the faithful hunger for

them, scholars rush to debunk and to doubt” (April 10, 1995).

Our study involves some general matters on miracles and then a brief study of the miracles listed in Matthew 8-9. We accept the miracles as *fact* or Divine Revelation. Our study is designed to be practical and to help the believer in his faith and life.

The Miracles *Listed*

The miracles of Jesus in Matthew 8-9 are twelve in number. Of this number, ten are specific miracles: (1) the healing of the leper (8:1-4), (2) the healing of the centurion’s servant (8:5-13), (3) the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (8:14-15), (4) The quieting of the storm on the Sea of Galilee (8:23-27), (5) casting out the demons in Gadara (8:28-34), (6) the healing of the palsied man (9:1-8), (7) the raising of the ruler’s daughter (9:18-26), (8) the healing of the woman with an issue of blood (9:20-22), (9) the healing of the two blind men (9:27-31), and (10) the healing of the dumb and demon possessed man (9:32-34). There are two general listings of miracles without information other than he healed their sickness and disease (8:16-17; 9:35) and cast out demons (8:16-17). Of the specific miracles mentioned in Matthew, there are seven miracles with parallels, in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. Mark and Luke are important as they give additional information on each of the miracles.

One miracle is unique to both Matthew and Luke, the healing of the centurion’s servant (8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). One miracle is unique to Matthew, the healing of the two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31). The general listing of miracles in Matthew 8:16-17 and 9:35, there is paralleled in Mark 1:32 and Luke 4:40-41, and Matthew 9:35 has no parallel in Mark or Luke.

Where Did the Miracles?

The miracles found in Matthew 8-9 occurred in various locations during his great Galilean ministry: (1) in unspecified cities of Galilee, (2) in the specific Galilean cities of Capernaum and Nazareth, (3) on the Sea of Galilee, and (4) in Gadara in the Decapolis.

What Miracles Are Recorded?

A careful examination of Matthew 8-9 indicates that there is nothing in which Jesus, when confronted, is powerless. There are eight miracles listed, seven of which, miracles involve specific individuals: (1) Leprosy (8:2-4), (2) Palsy (8:5-13; 9:1-8), (3) “Great fever” (8:14-15; Luke 4:38-41), (4) Demonic possession (8:16, 28-34; 9:32-34), (5) Raising the dead to life (9:18-26), (6) Restoring sight to the blind (9:27-31) and (7) Cleansing the woman with an issue of blood (9:20-22). The quieting the storm on the Sea of Galilee (8:23-27) involves his power over nature. General references to his miraculous powers extend to (1) “every” and “all that were sick” (8:16-17; 9:35) and (2) “every disease” (9:35).

The Definition of Miracle

The word *definition* literally means “laying down a boundary...so as to *separate* it from every thing else, as a boundary separates fields” (Whately 137). Therefore, the biblical definition of the word *miracle* is not an elusive term having different meanings in different settings to different people. A miracle is “*an extraordinary act of God, observable to man, which is performed by the will of God and is at once a mighty work, a sign, and a wonder, designed to prepare man for the deliverance and reception of the message of God and confirm the authenticity of both the message and the messenger*” (McCaslin 23-24).

The Bible uses four words in discussing the miraculous: (1) *miracles*, (2) *signs*, (3) *wonders* and (4) *works*. Their definitions are important because each word sets forth a distinctive shade of meaning, by giving dimension to the overall understanding of the miraculous.

(1) *Miracles*. The word miracle is translated from *dunamis* nine times and is translated both as “miracle” and “power.” The word *semieion* occurs twenty-three times and is translated as “miracle” and is also translated as “power” seventy-seven times and “mighty works” eleven times. The word miracle directs attention to its source of power. “Miraculous events in the New Testament do not just happen. They have to be caused by power” (Jividen 4).

(2) *Signs*. The word signs is translated from *semieion* and occurs fifty times. It directs attention to the one from whose hands the miracle comes, indicating that God approved both the man and the messenger.

(3) *Wonders*. The word *teras* is translated as “wonders” sixteen times. The focus is upon creating the response of amazement, astonishment, awe and fear in the audience.

(4) *Works*. “Works” is translated from *ergon*. It is used in connection with the miraculous eighteen times in the New Testament, all in the Gospels of Matthew and John, in connection with the miraculous. The attention is upon the event itself.

These four words are used in eleven different combinations relating to some aspect of miracles and the miraculous. The word *miracle* is used alone twenty-six times. *Miracles*, *wonders* and *signs* occur twice. *Miracles*, *powers*, and *wonders* occur once. *Miracles* and *signs* occur once. *Miracles* and *wonders* occur once. *Signs*, *wonders*, and *mighty deeds* occur once. *Signs*, *powers*, and *wonders* occur once. *Wonders* and *amazement* occur once. The word *sign(s)* occurs nineteen times. *Signs* and *wonders* occur ten times. The word *power(s)* occurs eighteen times.

Lessons from the Miracles of Matthew 8-9

Lessons from the miracles in Matthew 8-9 are abundant and should strengthen the faith of any and all Christians who study them. Our brief study divides the miracles into three classes: (1) *The Nature Miracles*, (2) *The Healing Miracles*, and (3) *The Resurrection Miracles*.

The Nature Miracles. The nature miracles in the New Testament number nine; however, “*The Stilling of the Storm*” (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25) is the only one listed in Matthew 8-9. This is a fascinating event. This event shows the weak faith of the disciples who had left all to follow Christ. Their faith was tested and shown to have some frailty, just as the most of us have times when our faith is weak. However, we also learn *why* and *where* the power to live faithfully may be found.

Fear Overcoming Faith. Even though among the disciples — Peter, James and John — were experienced fishermen who knew the treacherousness of a storm, they also knew there was little hope surviving the “great tempest” (Matthew 8:24). They feared for their lives (Matthew 8:25). Men, who had given themselves to Christ, were now troubled by the fierce storm. Their fear of the storm paralyzed their faith. Thus, the question of Jesus, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26).

The New Testament is stern about the Christian giving way to fear. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Paul states, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7), and he warns that we are not to fall back “again to fear” (Romans 8:15). John writes, “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). A strong faith enables us to overcome the fear that otherwise would paralyze faith.

Faith Overcoming Fear. Jesus had lain down and slept in the fierce storm. When the disciples were no longer able to stand the storm, they cried, “Lord, save us, we perish” (Matthew 8:25). The contrast between the sleeping Jesus

and the fearful disciples raises the question — what *made* the difference? The answer is found in the words of Jesus, “The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). He rested his soul in the Father, as his Father knew and cared about him. Jesus makes clear his security, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love” (John 15:9). Earlier Jesus taught that in building life one must *do* God’s will in order to handle the storms of life (Matthew 7:24-27). Strong biblical faith overcomes fear and produces inner peace, as is apparent in the later life of Peter. When Peter was arrested, placed in prison, and probably facing death, “Peter was *sleeping* between two soldiers, bound with chains” (Acts 12:6). Peter had learned that strong faith can overcome fear.

The Word of God is Powerful. Jesus arose from his sleep and spoke, “Peace, be still” (Mark 4:39). The power of his rebuke is described simply: “There was a great calm” (Matthew 8:26). His word was so powerful that the winds and waves settled immediately. He showed his power and authority over the unruly forces of nature. After creating peace on the sea, he rebuked the terror of fear in their hearts, “Why are ye fearful, O ye men of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26). His word controlled their fear and stabilized their faith.

One of the greatest blessings of life is the Bible. It must be read, studied and obeyed in our private worship. It must be read and preached in our public worship (1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 21-24). Both help in the midst of our daily struggles and problems. Faith comes through his Word (Romans 10:17). In the Word of God, we find the secret to peaceful lives (Acts 20:32).

The Majesty and Sovereignty of God. The faith of the disciples was reaffirmed in that they realized no ordinary man was with them — but God was with them. The disciples “marveled” (Matthew 8:27) and “feared

exceedingly” (Mark 4:40) at Christ, saying, “What manner of man is this! For he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him” (Luke 8:25). Their fear changed from the fear of perishing, to godly, reverential fear and trust. Their strengthened faith made them fearful of nothing else (Matthew 10:28-31).

The Healing Miracles. Several of the healing miracles were upon diseases common in the Orient at the time. The healing miracles evidence that Jesus is the friend of man and the Savior of sinners. They confirm that he went “about doing good...for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). While healing their diseases, he was also the Great Physician for their souls (Luke 5:31). We classify the healing miracles by disease: (1) Leprosy, (2) Palsy, (3) Fever, (4) Demon Possession, (5) Blindness and (6) Blood Issue.

1. **Leprosy.** The healing of the leper (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16) was a healing of the most cruel and terrible health problems man could encounter. Leprosy affected a man domestically, socially and religiously, and isolated him with those of like fate. Their loneliness under this cruel disease was a terrible burden. Wherever a leper went, he had to cry, “Unclean, unclean.” Most other diseases were called sickness, but leprosy was called uncleanness by the decree of God (Leviticus 13-14).

The Power of Faith. The leper sought out Jesus, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Matthew 8:2). To approach Jesus, the leper violated the law of leprosy. Since Jesus had already healed many people with “all manner of sickness...and disease in Galilee” (Matthew 4:23-25), the leper must have reasoned that Jesus was God, and if God, then Jesus could cleanse him.

“If thou wilt, make me clean” is an expression of faith in One who can deal with all the problems revolving around leprosy. Jesus is the One who brings salvation (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 5:8-9; Acts 4:12). Jesus is the One who, as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), gives inner peace

that is different from the peace of the world (John 14:27; Philippians 4:7). Jesus is the One who gives rest to the weary and burden-laden lives (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus is the One who gives us fellowship with God and those of like precious faith (1 John 1:3). Jesus is the One who gives us a “love that passeth all understanding” (Ephesians 3:17-21). We must anchor our souls more deeply in our faith because (1) all blessings are in him (Ephesians 1:3) and (2) of his “great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4).

The Power of Reverence. Matthew states that the leper “worshipped” Jesus (Matthew 8:2). The word “worship” (*proskunein*) is never used of anything but worship of Deity! It describes the feeling and action of the leper in the presence of Jesus. To confront Jesus, in the leper’s mind, was to confront God Almighty.

As with the leper, we must realize that God alone is worthy of worship. Our chief responsibility in worship and in life is to honor God above all others and all things (Matthew 6:33; Revelation 4:11). In worship, we express our gratitude for a loving, merciful and omni-benevolent God. In worship, we express the deepest feelings of our soul — joy, awe, affection and sadness. As we praise and extol God, we find such praise is often beyond our power of expression and comprehension because of our awe and reverence. God is more than able and willing to receive our praise, adoration and worship, but he grants us blessings in return (cf. Psalms 91; 100; 103; 117; 136).

The Power of Love. Mark relates that, “Jesus, moved with compassion”(1:41) toward the leper. Where men were not permitted to touch lepers, Jesus “touched him” (Matthew 8:3). This shows the power and authority of Jesus above and beyond the Law that forbade such action (Leviticus 13:44-46). All that touched lepers were considered unclean, but not Jesus, for the Law came from him. He touched the leper, pronounced him clean and the healing was immediate (Matthew 8:3).

God loves us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-9). God loves us with *agape* love. *Agape* love seeks nothing but men's highest good. In return, we are to love (*agape*) God. *Agape* love involves "the mind...it is the principle by which we deliberately live...has supremely to do with the will" (Barclay 15) of man. Our redemption results from our obedience to God's mercy [grace] and enables us to receive God's love and to love God.

2. **Palsy.** There are two miracles healing palsy in Matthew 8-9: (1) The Centurion's servant and (2) The Man with Palsy. Both were men. The first a Gentile's servant. The second was a Jew. The first came asking Jesus to come to his home to heal his servant. Jesus healed him without going to the palsied man. The second man was brought to Jesus by his friends.

First, Extra-ordinary Faith. The extra-ordinary faith of the centurion caused Jesus to "marvel" and declare to his disciples that he "had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:10). The centurion had been influenced by the monotheism of the Jews and had helped them build a synagogue (Luke 7:5). The wisdom and extra-ordinary faith of the centurion was apparent, in that rather than have Jesus, a Jew, to break Jewish tradition by entering a Gentile's house, he said: "Lord, trouble not thyself...but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Luke 7:5; Matthew 8:8). Jesus told him to go home, and, as he had "believed," it would be done (Matthew 8:13).

The extra-ordinary faith in Jesus is seen in the four men who brought their palsied friend to be healed (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26). Unable to reach Jesus because of the crowd, they climbed to the roof, removed the tile, and lowered the man before Jesus (Luke 5:19). Jesus both healed the man so that he could take up his bed and walk (Matthew 9:6-7), and more importantly, he forgave him his sins (Matthew 9:5). Let our faith be *persistent* by overcoming difficulties, large or small

(Matthew 7:24-25). Let our faith be *patient*, the twin of persistence, by being “steadfast...in Christ” (Colossians 2:5; James 5:5-10).

Second, Extra-ordinary Attitude. The attitude of the centurion was extra-ordinary as is demonstrated by his great love, concern, compassion and humility. He believed he was “unworthy” (Matthew 8:8) to invite Jesus into his house. His servant was a slave. He grieved that his servant was ill. He was determined to do everything to save him, as the servant was “ready to die” (Luke 7:7). Normally, these attitudes were reversed in a master and slave relationship. The extra-ordinary attitude of the four men is seen bringing the palsied man to be healed. Let us always have extra-ordinary attitudes of faithfulness, love and commitment toward God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the church and our brethren.

Third, Extra-ordinary Power. The centurion, a commander in the Roman army, had the power to command others to go, come and do (Matthew 8:9). However, he recognized in Jesus an extra-ordinary power to heal his servant by a “word only” (Matthew 8:8). He saw and believed that God was in Jesus. Jesus demonstrated his power by speaking and the servant was healed. In the second healing, he showed extra-ordinary power in healing the palsied man brought by his four friends. He showed his divine nature by forgiving him of his sins (Matthew 9:5). Jesus has all power in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18) and forgives men their sins as they obey him (Acts 2:38). In the Christian life, we are empowered to do all things through Jesus who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). This suggests that with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

3. **Fever.** Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law of her “great fever” (Luke 4:38-41; Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34). The healing occurred on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21, 29),

not far from where the centurion's servant was healed in Capernaum.

First, disease is no respecter of persons. Peter was a follower of Jesus. It is not too much to assume that Peter's household followed Jesus. Being a follower of Jesus does not keep us free from disease. With the miraculous age over, we have the strength to serve Christ with our afflictions. We are commanded to be "faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10) by "keeping his works unto the end" (Revelation 2:27).

Second, the power of Jesus. Jesus touched the woman who was prostrate with a great fever. She had immediate relief and received strength to "minister to them" (Matthew 8:15). This empowering is the doing of One who is Almighty. One cannot escape the conclusion that the miracle is by "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).

Third, the mercy and compassion of Jesus. Jesus "saw" Peter's mother-in-law was ill. They asked him to help her (Luke 4:38). The picture of Jesus' heart is one of compassion and sympathy. He always went about doing good (Acts 10:38). He knows our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15) and is able to help in our trials of life (Hebrews 2:18). Elihu was right: "Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and power" (Job 36:5). None can be as interested in us as the Godhead. When man had no acceptable sacrifice, God loved us (John 3:16) and was "rich in mercy toward us" (Ephesians 2:4). Christ died for us (Romans 5:8-9) "that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). The Holy Spirit strengthens our inner man (Ephesians 3:16) and makes intercessions for us (Romans 8:26).

Fourth, a disciple serves. Peter's mother-in-law arose from her sick bed to minister to the Healer and others (Matthew 8:15). Once cleansed of our sins by the blood of Jesus, we must serve our Master and others (Matthew 20:25-28). We are to meet the physical needs of others

(Galatians 6:10; James 1:27; Romans 12:6-7). More importantly, we are to serve the spiritual needs of others by teaching them the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

4. **Demon Possession.** In Matthew 8-9, there are two cases of demon possession. The first involves two men in Gadara (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-21; Luke 8:26-36). In the second, Jesus heals a dumb and demon possessed man (Matthew 9:32-34). There is no parallel to the latter miracle in the other Gospels.

First, Jesus reigns over the demonic world. Demon possession is “a condition in which a distinct and evil personality, foreign to the person possessed, has taken control of an individual. This evil personality or demon is able to speak through the mouth of the possessed individual, and to answer when addressed (Mark 5:7-10; Luke 4:41; Acts 16:18; 19:13-15)” (Hendriksen 436). Demons, who are allied with Satan, had power over men in the first century. Jesus won his personal battle with Satan (Matthew 4; Luke 4). He won the conflict with demons. The story of the Gadara demons gives the “most extensive exorcism narrative in the New Testament” (Page 145). The biblical narratives concerning demons relate their impotence with regard to dealing with Deity. Jesus was able to “command” (Luke 8:29) the demons to leave men. In Gadara, they were cast into a herd of swine. At once, the unhappy, miserable men were healed. As mighty as the demons were, they acknowledged the presence of One mightier than themselves. Jesus, as a friend of sinners (Matthew 11:9), has a Gospel that is an all-powerful message to save (Romans 1:16-17). Jesus is able to deliver man from Satan and sin (Matthew 6:13; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Luke 4:18). In doing so, his power makes us “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37).

Second, the marvelous change that Christ brings in one’s life. The effect of the miracle on the two men is

stated with clarity. The people of Gadara found the men, no longer violent and fierce, but “sitting, clothed, and in their right mind” (Mark 5:15). This strange and astonishing sight created fear within them. The change in the two men is like the change that is to be in the Christian’s life, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The divine power of the gospel enables a man to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). When Jesus was ready to return to Capernaum, the man requested to join him. Jesus forbade him and instructed him to tell others “how great things the Lord hath done” (Mark 5:19). We are to tell others what great things Jesus has done for us as Christians.

Third, some want nothing to do with Jesus. When the people saw what had happened to the men and to their swine, they requested “that he would depart out of their coasts” (Matthew 8:34). Oftentimes, people want nothing to do with Jesus. While the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and the Gospel of peace (Romans 10:15) bring a “peace...which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), this is not true for some. Jesus said he did not come to bring “peace on earth” but “division” (Luke 12:51-53) and “a sword” (Matthew 10:34-38).

5. **Blind.** In Matthew 9:27-30, Jesus gave sight to two blind men who asked for mercy. When they expressed their faith in Jesus’ ability to give them sight, he touched them and “their eyes were opened” (Matthew 9:30). There is no parallel to this miracle in the other Gospels, but this is the first of many healings of the blind (Matthew 12:22; 20:30; 21:4; John 9). A similar miracle near Jerusalem is recorded in Matthew 20:30-34.

First, physical blindness a type of moral blindness. Trench points out that “commonly sin is contemplated in Scripture as moral blindness (Deut. xxviii.29; Isai. lix.10; Job xii.25; Zeph. i:17), and deliverance from sin as a

removal of this blindness (Isai xvi.18; xlii.18; xliii.8; Ephes. 1.8; Matt. xv.14); and we shall at once perceive how fit it was that he who was ‘the Light of the World’ should often accomplish works which symbolized so well that higher work which He came into the world to accomplish” (152).

Sin causes blindness in keeping men from obeying God. Sin is defined as (1) “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4), (2) “all unrighteousness” (1 John 5:17) and (3) knowing to do right and failing to do it (James 4:17). Sin brings men under its control (Romans 3:9), rules in men’s lives (Romans 5:21), lords over men (Romans 6:14), takes men captive (Romans 7:23), dwells in men (Romans 7:17, 20) and enslaves men (Romans 6:17, 20). Sin is universal (Romans 3:10, 23) and has lethal “wages,” namely death (Romans 6:23).

Second, man needs God’s mercy. The two blind men cried out, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on us” (Matthew 9:27). The men were asked if they believed Jesus was able to restore their sight and they replied, “Yea, Lord” (Matthew 9:28). In like manner, man lost in sin is in need of the “mercy” of God and must believe that Jesus is able to forgive his sins. Man is dead in sin, but made alive in Jesus (Ephesians 2:1-5). It is Jesus that has “the words of eternal life” (John 6:68; 1:4; Psalm 36:9). Just as the men’s plea for mercy carried with it a request for restoration of sight, so our accepting the mercy of Jesus carries with it a promise of restored life!

6. **Blood.** The Gospels relate the miracle of Jesus healing a woman very ill with a blood disease (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-33; Luke 8:43-48). While on his way to raise Jairus’ daughter (Matthew 9:18-26), the woman approached him. She had had her disease for twelve years. Dr. Luke (Colossians 4:10) informs us that her doctors could not heal her (Luke 8:42). Where physicians failed to heal, the Great Physician healed her.

First, the greatness of her faith. The woman had spent her fortune on doctors who could do nothing for her disease (Luke 8:43), but the Great Physician provided *free cure* based on her faith in him. She believed that if she simply touched his garment, he would not notice and she would be healed. She did not escape his notice when she touched his garment. His power healed her. Jesus said her faith was *great*: “Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole” (Matthew 9:22). A three-fold purpose is found in his words to her: “*a.* to reward her for her conviction that he would cure her instantly and completely; *b.* to stress that it was his *personal* response to her *personal faith* in him that cured her, thereby removing from her mind any remnant, however small, of superstition, as if the garment as such had contributed in any way to the cure; and *c.* to open the way for her complete reinstatement in the social and religious life and fellowship of her people” (Hendriksen 432). Our faith in Jesus must be *great*, for in Him “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Second, the greatness of the character of Jesus. In his Divine omniscience, he demonstrated wisdom, love, and compassion to the woman. Mark 5:30 states, “And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him....” The word “virtue” is from *dunamin* meaning “*power, might, strength; relatively, ability, power to perform*” (Abbott-Smith 123). Jesus, conscious of the woman’s illness, spent funds, failed treatment and great faith, and his own Divine power that flowed forth, healed her. The woman knew “what was done in her” (Mark 5:33) which is indicative that she knew she was healed. Stier makes the following interesting comments: “The physical virtue which passes over does not go from Him without His *will*: that will is *always disposed*; stands, as it were, always open and prepared for approaching faith, and *this* is the

reason why that which occurred could take place. Further, not without His *knowledge*, as is immediately shown; the touch which derived the virtue from Him was assuredly unexpected, but He *marks it* immediately, knowing it within Himself, rejoicing over the *faith*, by which He is well-pleased to allow Himself even to be thus *touched*" (392-393).

7. The Resurrection Miracle. While there are three resurrection miracles in the ministry of Jesus, only one is found in Matthew 8-9, the raising of Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 5:40-56). The other two resurrection miracles are (1) the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-28) and (2) Lazarus of Bethany (John 11).

First, the character of Jairus. Since Jesus did many of his miracles in Capernaum (Matthew 11:20-24), it is apparent Jairus had known of Jesus and perhaps witnessed some of his miracles. With his daughter's impending death, we see a picture of the beautiful character of Jairus. (1) Jairus' great respect for Jesus is seen by falling at his feet (Mark 5:22) and worshipping him (Matthew 9:18). (2) His great concern for his daughter is seen in his request for Jesus to go to his house (Matthew 9:18). (3) His great faith is seen in his words, "lay thy hands upon her, that she may be healed; and she shall live" (Mark 5:23).

Second, the determined Jesus. Jesus showed determination in helping Jairus with his daughter's illness. As he arose to go to Jairus' home, he took the time to heal the woman with an issue of blood. When word was received that the girl had died, Jesus reassured Jairus to "be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). When the funeral minstrels laughed him to scorn for saying the girl was only asleep, he "put them all out" of the house (Mark 5:40). Taking her parents (Mark 5:40), and Peter, James and John (Luke 8:51), Jesus entered the girl's room. As they all wept, Jesus reassured them, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52). He raised the girl from the dead.

Luke, with his medical training and by inspiration, writes, “and her spirit came again” (Luke 8:55). Jesus’ character is seen in his constant reassurance, love and determination to do right to and for others.

Third, death is sleep. Jesus told Jairus that his daughter was not dead but “asleep” (Matthew 9:24). The term “sleep” is used to describe the state of the body in death. *Only* the body sleeps in death. Daniel wrote, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth...” (Daniel 12:2). It is obvious that part of man placed in the earth, the body, sleeps. Solomon wrote, “the spirit returns to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). In Greek literature, the word “sleep” described a place where travelers could stop, rest and sleep. From the word “sleep,” we derive our word “cemetery,” a place where one’s body rests or sleeps. “Death as sleep is a simile, common to all nations and was ‘the beautiful and prophetic color that Christ spread over the features of the dead, and was designed to intimate, that as sure as a morning comes to the sleeper on his couch, so sure an everlasting morning shall break upon the tenants of the tomb’” (Lockyer 192).

Fourth, the power of his resurrection. Jesus honored Jairus’ faith and hope by raising the girl. Jesus would not promise what he is unable to deliver, and thereby disappoint Jairus. Death holds a universal dominion over man (Hebrews 9:27) that *only* Jesus can conquer (Revelation 1:18). We can take comfort in the fact that there is a limit to the power of death. Jesus promised all will rise from the grave (John 5:28-29). Inspiration states that *both* the just and unjust will be raised (Acts 24:15). Hosea writes of the resurrection of *all* the dead, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes” (Hosea 13:14). While the primary fulfillment of this passage is Israel’s return from Babylon, it is a Messianic

prophecy fulfilled when Christ conquered death and *hades*, by being raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:55). The great resurrection chapter sets forth *the power of his resurrection!* If Christ does not have the power of the resurrection, then (1) our preaching is vain or without substance (1 Corinthians 15:14), (2) Our faith is vain (1 Corinthians 15:14), (3) We are found false witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:15), (4) We remain in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17), (5) Our dear dead ones in Christ have perished (1 Corinthians 15:18) and (6) The Christian life is miserable by giving us a false hope (1 Corinthians 15:19). Paul writes, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:27). Thanks be to God that there is One stronger than death and the grave. Those in Jesus have forever the promise to be resurrected at his coming and possess eternal life (John 11:25-26).

Conclusion

Our study of the miracles in Matthew 8-9 has provided us with a special exhibition of super-natural power. We have seen how eloquently these few miracles speak of Divine sovereignty in every realm! His miracles prove he has supreme command over nature, the spirit world, disease and man. He is Lord *in* and *of* all!

The miracles provided God with a way to authenticate the Divine mission of Jesus. Jesus regarded his miracles as evidence that he was from God — and is God (John 1:1-4: 4:24). His miracles give men confidence in his Divine mission and message as they were the natural expression of his sympathy for suffering humanity and confirmation of the way of life He offers to all.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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THE MUSTARD SEED & LEAVEN

By Justin R. Odom

Introduction

I appreciate so very much the invitation to speak at the 2003 West Virginia School of Preaching Lectureship. I would like to thank the elders of this strong congregation for their effort in overseeing the work of this school. I am pleased to speak to you on the subject of the Mustard Seed and Leaven Parables from Matthew 13:31-33. The theme of this lectureship is of great importance. In this world, the parables of the Master Teacher should impress upon all the magnificent nature of his church. The parables of Jesus conjure in the mind's eye pictures of life in Palestine. They teach people extraordinary lessons about extraordinary subjects. All students of the Bible look upon these precious lessons for the ability to understand great truths revealed through stories about every day life. The disciples asked Jesus in Matthew 13:10 why he spoke in parables. The disciples didn't understand this type of teaching. They were chosen to understand the fullness of the kingdom — mysteries to others, plain truth to them. The parables veil the truth from those who do not want to understand the kingdom but unveil the truth to those who are ready for it and will receive it. The kingdom is not given to those that will not receive it. The one that has and uses his knowledge wisely will be given more. What is the difference in salvation? The people! God gives light but if man blinds himself, God does not force that person to see. As disciples, they and we must look beyond the outer shell of a good story and see what is inside.

The parables of Jesus serve several purposes: (1) An universal appeal for the ordinary man with the ordinary mind. (2) As humans, we tend to think in pictures. (3) The

parables show Jesus was fully acquainted with human life. (4) Teach a great truth of heaven without offending some. If we are to understand any parable Jesus gave, we must heed his instruction to open our eyes and ears (Matthew 13:16-17).

Background

“And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?” (Mark 4:30). The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven are better understood if we understand the ones that precede them. The disciples might have been discouraged having heard the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and tares. In these two parables, Jesus tells his disciples they are going into a world that will not be openly receptive to what they are teaching. Only one-fourth of the people in the parable of the sower would actually produce fruit. How depressing to labor and work, spreading the news that can save a person’s soul from eternal damnation and many will reject it! In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus taught the disciples that Satan would be doing his best to undermine the efforts of the sower and the only way to deal with it is to wait and see which is wheat and which is a tare! This has caused many to stop the proclamation of the Gospel, seeing little or no progress, calling it quits. We can only imagine how these disciples felt having not yet gone into the world that would reject them. The two parables under our consideration this morning are given to encourage the disciples not to lose heart. In the face of opposition and disappointment, the kingdom will grow! The blood bought institution that will cause many of these men to lose their lives will not fade away as did other movements by so-called messiahs. The King that they serve will see his kingdom grow to a tremendous size, involving all people from all parts of the world! These parables will serve for us the same kind of

encouragement. We must continue the spreading of the good news lest we ourselves loose heart and become lost for eternity.

The Mustard Seed

The mustard seed and the use of it by Jesus in this parable are well understood by anyone that is familiar with the seed and its growth. The seed itself is generally the smallest of most seeds but the plant itself can grow from ten to fifteen feet tall. The branches are rigid and serve as shelter for birds. Small things should not be overlooked, “For who hath despised the day of small things?...” (Zechariah 4:10). The use of the mustard seed is not uncommon as it is used to describe anything with a small beginning. Jesus used this illustration to describe a persons faith in Matthew 17:14-21, “And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”

Jesus came preaching the kingdom was at hand. Two of John’s disciples heard John proclaim Jesus to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. One of these disciples brought his brother and a third who had

been called brought one of his friends, who then enlisted his fellow townsmen and so it went until Pentecost and the establishment of the kingdom. The band of disciples grew to over 3,000 with the church's beginning (Acts 2:41-42). It was soon about 5,000 (Acts 4:4). The number of the disciples continued to multiply in Jerusalem (Acts 5:5) and throughout Judea, Samaria and the rest of the world (Acts 9:31). Years later, there would be tremendous numbers of believers in Jerusalem alone (Acts 21:20). The coming of the kingdom and the beginning of it was spoken by the prophets of old. Daniel is the perfect illustration of this growth. In Daniel 2, Daniel is called upon by King Nebuchadnezzar to interpret the dream that vexed his thoughts. The image and dream concluded with a small stone becoming a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

We understand the power that a seed has (Isaiah 55:10-11). It will produce what God intends. He intended for the kingdom to grow and not stay in its first stage. He has given us a seed that is incorruptible, it lives and abides forever, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:23-25).

With this parable, Jesus offers encouragement to the band of disciples that would follow him over the hills of Palestine. They would be that mustard seed, the small beginning, that would grow and bless the world! In its origin, it was all but unnoticed by the great ones on the earth. No great secular historian alludes to it and those that do, speak of it as a superstitious cult of the Jews. Just as the small seed becomes the mighty oak tree, the twelve disciples have become millions and millions of faithful servants to God and his kingdom. We also learn that the

kingdom would be beneficial to the world by the statement about the birds taking refuge in its branches. All people can come to the kingdom of God and find safety from the snares of Satan today. Those seeking rest for the weary soul can accept the tender invitation to come to the King and enter this kingdom of rest, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-20).

The Leaven

If the parable of the mustard seed illustrates a visible growth of the kingdom, the parable of the leaven illustrates the growth that is not seen. Everyone knew how bread was made, Jesus had probably seen his mother make bread growing up, and now he uses the leaven as a description of the kingdom. Some commentators allude to the three measures of meal as the sons of Noah or the body, soul and spirit of man. There is no reason to understand it other than what it was, the way they made bread. Focusing on this part of the parable may cause some to miss the point Jesus is trying to make.

Leaven, as generally used in the New Testament, is often spoken of as a corrupting influence. Jesus warned of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which included their teaching and hypocrisy.

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little

faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees (Matthew 15:5-12).

Paul wrote of the danger of leaven, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). This has led many to believe that Jesus is talking about something evil in the kingdom. There is no reason that leaven’s use elsewhere has to mean the same thing here. A proper exegesis is called for here, to read out of a passage what is actually there. So what did Jesus mean?

The kingdom’s growth would be pervasive. The kingdom would have the quality to permeate through the world. The Gospel was to be proclaimed to all creation (Mark 16:15-16) and the church would spread as people accept the Gospel. This would be a true influence that changes men within their hearts. A man is not converted unless he is converted within. Christianity is like leaven, it is not the outside trying to get in, it is on the inside trying to get out.

Jesus also stated the kingdom’s influence would be complete. No part of the “loaf” (world) will be untouched by the kingdom. The Gospel did spread this way, “So then

faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” (Romans 10:17-18). “Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth” (Colossians 1:6).

Jesus tells us not to loose heart. Don’t measure the growth or success of the kingdom by visible standards. Notice what Jesus said to the Pharisees, “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21). The spread of the kingdom is taking place wherever the “seed” is being sown. Remain confident! What began as a mustard seed will become a great tree and what started in one small portion of the loaf will eventually spread through the whole loaf!

Conclusion

With an understanding of these two parables, we can take heart in knowing that the work of Christ in regards to his kingdom will not be for naught. The potential for the kingdom’s amazing growth rests in the Person who reigns as its King. Those who will abide in Christ can be used by him to produce the remarkable growth in the kingdom. With the unnoticed beginning of Christianity, the hope of the world lies in its growth. It should thrill our hearts that we see the fulfillment of this prophecy taking place in our day. The mission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ that began with a handful of followers continues with us. We must never loose heart! We must continue! The kingdom will grow! “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,

saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 13:34-35).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Justin Odom grew up in Reader, WV and was baptized into Christ in 1991. He is married to the former Kristina Deagel of Moundsville, WV. They have a future preacher and two future preacher’s wives – Ben (age 5), Jenny (age 4) and Hannah (age 2). He graduated from West Virginia School of Preaching in 1997 and worked with the Pennsville Church of Christ in Pennsville, Ohio from 1997 to 1999 at which time he began his work with the Rt. 38 Church of Christ in Washington Court House, Ohio. Justin has held Gospel meetings in Ohio and West Virginia and has spoken on Inspiration Days and Lectureships.

NAMES OF THE KING IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

By Charles C. Pugh III

Introduction

Shakespeare wrote, “*THE KING’S NAME IS A TOWER OF STRENGTH*” (qtd. in Bartlett 128, emp. added). The Gospel according to Matthew presents Jesus Christ as God’s King, and one of the ways it identifies the glorious nature of his Person and Work as King is through the various names, titles and designations given to him.

A study of the names, titles and designations of the King of Heaven and Earth has an overwhelming element to it. The *subject* is overwhelming. It is a subject that is full of wonder. Eight centuries before he was born of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-2:1), and cradled in Bethlehem’s manger (Luke 2:1-7), it was prophesied that his name would be “*WONDERFUL*” (Isaiah 9:6, emp. added). Alexander Campbell once wrote:

The Savior’s inspired names have all a meaning. Each one of them designates some peculiar characteristic or office, or work of the Messiah. Since this is the case, we may expect that some great truth underlies the names, which the evangelical prophet gives to the Redeemer.

“His name shall be called Wonderful.” There are many obvious reasons for this name. Passing by all others, there is one which seems to have especial weight. Jesus is called Wonderful, on account of the strange contrasts and wide extremes seen in him and in his history — contrasts and

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extremes which appear to be direct contradictions.

There are extremes in the Savior's names. On one page of inspiration he is called the "man Christ Jesus;" on the next he is called "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." At one time he calls himself "the Son of Man;" at another time, "the Son of God." We are told he is "the child born, the son given;" and yet with the same breath we are told that he is "the Mighty God, the Everlasting (sic). Father, the Prince of Peace." He is Jehovah, God over all, and blessed forever, and yet he is a servant of servants. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, the ever living and ever unchanging one, and yet he is the crucified and buried Redeemer. If Jesus is appropriately called by all these diverse names, he must be Wonderful. (25)

The *scope* of a study of the names and titles of the King is also overwhelming. Such manifests the inexhaustibility of the Sacred Scriptures and the deity of Jesus Christ. In his classic volume, *The Lord of Glory — A Study Of The Designations Of Our Lord In The New Testament With Especial Reference To His Deity*, Benjamin B. Warfield published an index of 168 biblical designations in reference to Jesus (307-311). Horton and Hurlburt in the book, *The Wonderful Names of Our Wonderful Lord*, briefly discussed 365 such names and titles. In the work titled *The Names of Jesus*, Towns list 675 names and titles of Jesus Christ with the accompanying Scripture reference for each (146-167). *What The Bible Teaches About The Promised Messiah* is an in-depth study of 73 key Old Testament Messianic prophecies. It contains an Appendix of no less than 100 Old Testament names, titles and

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epithets for the Messiah and the corresponding Old Testament Scripture citation that documents each designation (Smith 479-480).

In this particular study, we are concerned with only one of the sixty-six books in the Sacred Scriptures (i.e., Matthew). Although limited to only one book of the Bible, the magnitude of such a study is seen in the fact that one source lists 41 names and titles of our Lord in Matthew (Derk 137-138). However, some of these are so closely related that they could be considered the same name or title (i.e., Jesus Christ and Jesus the Christ). Some are used by Matthew as adjectives [i.e., *firstborn* (1:25)], and thus are not really names or titles in the context of their usage. Others seem to be used more as descriptions of Jesus' character rather than a name or title [i.e., *just person* (27:24)]. With these qualifications in mind, I have composed a list of the names and titles of the Messiah in Matthew to include 35 designations with corresponding chapter and verse location. [Note: The chapter and verse I have given provides the first instance of usage by Matthew. In some cases, the designation occurs often throughout Matthew. However, others appear only once.] The names, titles, and designations and their first occurrence in Matthew are as follows:

- 1.Jesus Christ (1:1).
- 2.Son of David (1:1).
- 3.Son of Abraham (1:1).
- 4.Christ (1:16).
- 5.Son (1:21).
- 6.Jesus (1:21).
- 7.Immanuel (1:23).
8. King of the Jews (2:2).
- 9.Ruler (2:6).
- 10.Child (2:8).
- 11.Nazarene (2:23).
- 12.Lord (3:3).

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13. My Beloved Son (3:17).
14. Son of God (4:6).
15. Light (4:16).
16. Teacher (8:19).
17. Son of Man (8:20).
18. Bridegroom (8:20).
19. House-master (10:25).
20. Coming One (11:3). “[H]e that should come” (KJV). “[H]e that cometh” (ASV).
21. Lord of the Sabbath (12:8).
22. Servant (12:18).
23. My Beloved (12:18).
24. The carpenter’s son (13:55).
25. King (21:5).
26. Prophet (21:11).
27. Jesus from Nazareth (21:11). Jesus of Nazareth (26:71).
28. Stone (21:42).
29. Chief cornerstone (21:42).
30. Lord of David (22:43, 45).
31. Guide/Leader (23:8, 10). Teacher (NKJ); Master (KJV; ASV).
32. Rabbi (26:25, 49).
33. Shepherd (26:31).
34. Jesus of Galilee (26:69).
35. King of Israel (27:42).

The method to be employed in this particular study will be to consider Matthew’s designations of the Messiah in view of five areas to which these designations relate. These areas are designations of (1) *salvation*, (2) *deification*, (3) *coronation*, (4) *anticipation* and (5) *instruction*. In one sense, every designation relates to all five of these areas. However, due to the basic meaning of each name/title/designation, there is another sense in which each can be classified as being connected more closely to one area above the others.

Designations of *Salvation*

The most repeated name of the Messiah in Matthew's Gospel record is *Jesus*. The name *Jesus* occurs 172 times in Matthew and is used by itself 162 times. On ten occasions, it is used in combination with additional designations: *Jesus Christ* (1:1, 18); *Jesus the Christ* (16:20); *Jesus. . .called Christ* (1:16; 27:17, 22); *Jesus of Nazareth* (26:71); *Jesus of Galilee* (26:69); *Jesus the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee* (21:11); and *Jesus the King of the Jews* (27:37). The Greek word from which the English word *Jesus* is derived is *Iesous*, and it is equivalent to the Hebrew (*Yesua*) from which we get *Joshua*. Rogers states: "Jesus, the Greek form of 'Joshua,' meaning 'Yahweh saves'" (2). The name *Jesus* was once a common and popular name among the Jews in the Greek world, but its usage became rare near the end of the first century (Stevenson 111-112). The name became unique to One Person (i.e., *Jesus* from Nazareth of Galilee).

Matthew reports that the name *Jesus* was pre-determined by Divine will to be the name of the Messiah King. An angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom *Jesus* was born, and the angel commanded Joseph to give the baby the name *Jesus*. Matthew reported the angel's words as follows: ". . .And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). When Mary gave birth to the Child, Joseph was obedient to the heavenly instruction and ". . .[H]e called His name JESUS" (Matthew 1:25).

The name *Jesus* wonderfully and powerfully evidences that *he* is Savior. Brown has stated:

That the meaning of the name was thoroughly well known at this period is attested by the Alexandrian Jewish exegete and philosopher of religion, Philo, when he

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interprets Joshua's name as follows: *Iesous soteria Kyrion, JESUS MEANS SALVATION THROUGH THE LORD.* (2: 332, emp. added)

However, the name also implies the claim of Jesus and of historic Christianity that he is Deity. Brown affirms that the words of Matthew 1:21 (i.e., "He will save His people from their sins") "attribute to Jesus what was formerly reserved for God" (332). The very name Jesus is "itself a gift from heaven, designed to indicate that in this person" (Warfield 91) is forgiveness of, and salvation from, sin. When Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sins, some of the scribes accused him of blasphemy (Matthew 9:2-3). Only God can forgive and save one from his sins (cf. Mark 2:7). However, to prove his claim that is implied in his name, Jesus performed a confirmatory sign. He said, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. . . Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Matthew 9:6).

Jesus – Jesus – Jesus: Sweetest name I know! In the 1800's, J. Randall, while nearly blind, wrote and published a book titled, *The Titles Of Our Lord Adopted By Himself In The New Testament*. In the chapter on the name Jesus, Randall, in part, concluded with the following:

The name of Jesus is full of consolation to the Christian, because it reminds him of the state of guilt and misery in which grace found him; of the amazing cost at which salvation was purchased. . . The name of Jesus is sweet. . . [H]ow the name of Jesus has been an inexhaustible spring of peace and joy; how it has driven back many temptations, dried many tears, and healed many sorrows. . . In his house, and at his table, how sweet have we found his name!
(59)

Designations of *Deification*

Jesus means Savior, and he is Savior because he is Deity. He is the *DIVINE* King. Among the names, titles and designations of such a One are those designations that relate to his deification (i.e. his glorification as God). One of the first of these deification designations in Matthew is *Immanuel* (1:23). It is the first of three designations that Matthew finds in the prophets. The other two are *Nazarene* (2:23) and *Lord* (3:3). Concerning Immanuel, Matthew affirmed that the birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah that said, “Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23). Immanuel is the term of *incarnation*. God came in the flesh to be with man (cf. John 1:14). The significance of the name *Immanuel* (as well as the name *Jesus*) was noted by Warfield when he stated the following:

[I]t. . . is thus freighted with an implication of the deity of its bearer: and this is only a symbol of the saturation of his (i.e. Matthew’s) Gospel with the sense of the supreme majesty of the great personality whose life-history as the promised Messiah he has undertaken to portray. (88)

Supreme among those designations that declare his Deity is *Son of God*. This term is Messianic in nature (Stalker 93; cf. Ps. 2:1-12). Passages in Matthew in which Jesus is called the Son of God by others, and in which he sometimes adopts the name himself, include the following: 2:15; 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; 21:37-38; 26:63-64; 27:40, 43, 54. Passages in which Jesus calls himself *The Son* include: 11:27; 22:2; 27:43; 28:19. Matthew also contains the following passages in which Jesus calls God his Father: 7:21; 10:32-33; 11:25-27; 12:50; 15:13; 16:17, 27; 18:10, 19, 35; 20:23; 24:36; 25:34;

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26:29, 39, 42, 53; 28:19. In his discussion of the designation, *Son of God*, and its related titles (i.e., *Son, My Beloved Son, Son of the living God*), Warfield says that, in some respects, “the most remarkable” utterance “in the whole compass of the four Gospels” is Matthew 11:25-27 (82). Here Jesus says:

I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. . . All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Matthew 11:25, 27).

The message of 11:27 is that Jesus affirms he has a relationship of “practical equality with the Father, here described in most elevated terms as the ‘Lord of heaven and earth’” (Warfield 82). *Only* the Father can know the Son. *Only* the Son can know the Father [Others may know the Father if the Son reveals him to them]. Likewise, as Warfield explained:

The Son can be known only by the Father in all that He is, as if His being were infinite and as such inscrutable to the finite intelligence; and His knowledge alone — again as if He were infinite in His attributes — is competent to compass the depths of the Father’s infinite being. **HE WHO HOLDS THIS RELATION TO THE FATHER CANNOT CONCEIVABLY BE A CREATURE.** . . (82-83, emp. added)

The Messiah King’s favorite self-designation is *Son of Man*. It appears in Matthew in the following passages: 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27,

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28; 17:9, 12, 22; 18:11; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:13, 31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64. The Messianic character of this designation is indisputable in light of its interchange with other titles of the Messiah (cf. Matthew 16:13, 16, 20; 17:9-10; 24:27; 26:63-64) [Warfield 85].

Although the phrase “son of man” occurs frequently in the Old Testament (i.e., Psalms 8:4; 80:17; Ezekiel: 90 times), it is believed the primary source for the Messianic designation *Son of Man*, is the following passage from the prophet Daniel:

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one which shall not pass away (Daniel 7:13-14).

In light of the total context of New Testament Messianic teaching, it seems rather obvious that the above passage is a clear reference to the ascension, coronation and exaltation of King Jesus. With the theme — The King and His Kingdom — Matthew contains information that is closely connected to the kingdom and rule of the Son of Man from the Daniel passage. The high priest, before whom Jesus appeared in trial and judgment, demanded, “I adjure You by the living God that you tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God” (Matthew 26:63). Jesus answered, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). The Son of Man is the King on his throne who will

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apportion to men their eternal destinies (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).

Although both the Deity and majesty of Matthew's King are manifested in the designation Son of Man, there is also another important aspect to this favorite expression of Jesus. Stalker eloquently summarized it when he stated:

. . .[T]he figure in Daniel, being of heavenly origin and engaged in high and solemn fellowship with the Ancient of Days. . . would correspond with His consciousness of pre-existence. . . [T]he name (i.e. Son of Man) suited His purpose of concealing His messianic claims, while it expressed them to Himself and hinted them to His disciples. but, it seems to me, the deepest reason for His choice of this name must have been the admirable expression which it gives to His connexion with the human race. That the sense of His identity with all mankind was one of His master-sentiments requires no demonstration. With whatever is high and noble in man's nature or destiny He was in intimate sympathy; and His compassion reached down to everything that is painful or pathetic in the human lot. ***HE IS THE BROTHER OF ALL, THE MAN OF MEN. This is ONE OF THE TWO POLES ON WHICH HIS MESSIAHSHIP RESTS. WITHOUT THIS CONNEXION WITH THE RACE AND THIS UNIVERSALITY OF SYMPATHY HE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN THE MESSIAH.*** (76)

Another crucial deification title of the Messiah King is *Lord*. There is only one instance in Matthew of Jesus referring to himself as the Lord (21:3). However, there are more than twenty passages in Matthew that record others

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addressing Jesus as Lord (7:21-22; 8:2, 6, 8, 21, 25; 9:28; 14:28, 30; 15:25, 27; 16:22; 17:4, 15; 18:21; 20:30, 33; 26:22; 25:37, 44).

The Greek word for lord is *kurios*. It was a word of respect (cf. Arndt and Gingrich 459-61) and manifested “a general recognition of authority” (Warfield 71). In Matthew, it is used to refer to a master to whom service is due (Matthew 6:24); a title of respect for a father (Matthew 21:30); a master-owner (Matthew 13:27); and a civil governor or ruler (Matthew 27:63). However, in the context of messianic doctrine, *kurios* (*lord*) moves to a higher level than just a term for *any* master, ruler or owner. Arndt and Gingrich say, “. . . [T]he use of the word *kurios* raises Jesus above the human level” (460). This is reflected in the following observations:

[I]ts tendency is distinctly upwards; and no reader can fail to catch a very high note in its repeated use, or can feel surprise when it is observed to be connected usually with at least Messianic implications (15:22; 20:30, 31; 7:21) and is found occasionally to be suggestive of something even higher (25:37, 44). . . [I]n its highest connotation it appears characteristically upon the lips of our Lord Himself, who represents men as seeking to enter the Kingdom of Heaven by crying to Him ‘Lord, Lord’ (7:21), and as addressing Him on the Day of Judgment as He sits King on the throne of His glory by the appropriate title of ‘Lord’ (25:37, 44). In the latter case, of course, nothing is lacking of recognition of divine majesty itself: this ‘Lord’ is not only “the Son of Man” come in His glory with all the angels with Him (verse 31), ‘the King’ (verses 34, 40) seated on the throne of His majesty (verse 31), but ‘the Judge of all

the earth,' distributing to each man his eternal destiny, according to the relation in which each stands to His own person. (71)

Designations of *Coronation*

Jesus is the God-Man, and thus he is qualified to be Savior. He is the *Anointed One* (King). The basic *coronation* title given to the Lord is *Christ*. Of this designation Stalker has written the following:

Of all the names of our Lord, with the exception of His birthname, "Jesus," the one which has stuck most firmly in the memory of the world is "Christ," which is the Greek equivalent for "Messiah," and in English is correctly rendered by the word "Anointed." (127)

The Christ (ho Christos) means "the Messiah, the anointed one" (Rogers 37). Passages in Matthew in which Jesus refers to himself as the Christ include: 16:20, 22, 42; 23:8, 10; 24:5, 23, 24; 26:64. Passages from Mathew in which others refer to him as the Christ include: 1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4; 11:2-3; 16:16; 26:68; 27:17, 22.

The King was called "the anointed" because at his coronation sacred oil was poured on his head and by this he was consecrated to his office (Stalker 129). The oil was a symbol of the Spirit of God from whom the anointed monarch received the necessary things to fulfill his duties (i.e., wisdom, dignity, etc.) [cf. Isaiah 11:1-4; Luke 4:18]. Rogers (37) affirms that, minus the article (*the, ho*), *Christ* has the sense of a personal name (Matthew 1:16) and, with the article, it is a title of the One promised in the Old Testament (Matthew 2:4). [NOTE: The most in-depth word study I have located on *Christos* and related words is in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 9 493-580].

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Even as a proper name, *Christ* was “the name of dignity as distinguished from the simple name of designation, and preserved, even when employed as a proper name, its implications of Messiahship” (Warfield 63). Jesus accepted the designation Christ as belonging to him (Matthew 16:16-17) and saw it as *exclusively* his (Matthew 24:5). When asked if he were the Christ, the Son of God, he accepted the title and gave it such a high connotation that the one who had asked him charged him with blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-65). So significant is this name/title of Jesus that his identity as the Christ is the foundation on which his church is built (Matthew 16:16-18).

An obvious coronation designation that is connected with *Christ* is *King*. He was called *King of the Jews* (Matthew 2:2) by his adversaries (Matthew 27:11, 29, 37). Concerning such, he answered, “It is as you say” (27:11b). He used the title *King* in reference to himself in the great Judgment scene (Matthew 25:34, 40). As King, he was *Son of David* (1:1). The Messianic King was to be of David’s lineage (cf. Psalm 89:3-4; 2 Samuel 7:12-13). God’s Anointed was to occupy the Davidic throne. Passages in Matthew in which Jesus is called the Son of David include 1:1, 6, 17, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45. It is significant that in all the great variety of objections leveled against Jesus there is never any attempt to deny Jesus’ Davidic descent (Zahn 534).

And yet, the Christ was *more* than David’s Son. He was David’s Lord (Matthew 22:42-46)! David, himself, in the Spirit (i.e., writing by inspiration) called the Christ his Lord. He wrote, “The Lord said to my Lord. . .” (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44). Thus, Jesus asked his opponents to answer the question: If the Christ is the Son of David, how could he also be David’s Lord? (22:41-42). This question has been called “one of the most significant indications

ever thrown out by Him of His own consciousness of divine sonship in a unique sense” (Stalker 135).

Designations of *Anticipation*

The divine salvation delivered through the Messiah King was that for which there had been great anticipation and expectation. Such expectation was evidenced when John the Baptist, imprisoned in Herod’s dungeon at the end of a life of self-denial and suffering, and with his conscience alive to God, sent two of his disciples with the question: “Are You **THE COMING ONE**, or do we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3; emp. added). In commenting on the Greek word *erchomai* (*to come*) as used in the preceding text, Thayer says, “[H]e that cometh (i.e. is about to come) acc[ording] to prophetic promise and universal expectation, *the coming one*” (251). In the superb work authored by Edersheim on *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, we find the following statement appropriate to this discussion:

The designation “The Coming One” (***habba***), though a most truthful expression of Jewish expectancy, was not one ordinarily used of the Messiah. But it was invariably used in reference to the Messianic age. . .or coming future (literally, the prepared for to come). . . [I]t implied the setting right of all things by the Messiah, the assumption and vindication of His Power. In the mouth of John it might therefore mean chiefly this: Art Thou He that is to establish the Messianic Kingdom in its outward power, or have we to wait for another? (668)

This Coming One was to be the ***Son of Abraham*** (Matthew 1:1). God had given to Abraham the promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed

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(Genesis 12:1-3). God would make Abraham a father of many nations (Genesis 17:5-6). In His true humanity, the Messiah King's descent was traced not only from Adam but from the great progenitor of the nation of Israel — their father Abraham (cf. John 8:33, 56). Jesus Christ is *the* Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1) or, as Paul so wonderfully expounded (cf. Galatians 3:7-29), he is the long-awaited, expected, and anticipated Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16). It is significant that Matthew began his Gospel record with four names and titles, and ***Son of Abraham*** (though only appearing once in Matthew) is one of these great titles.

Designations of *Instruction*

It was believed among the Jews that the Coming One would be a great Messianic Teacher. He would be *the* Teacher ***par excellence*** (Smith 222). The Messianic Teacher would provide expert guidance to his people (280) [NOTE: Smith discusses this designation of *The Teacher* in the context of two Old Testament Messianic prophecies: Isaiah 30:19-26 and Joel 2:23. His comments that include a “Special Note” on “Jesus As Teacher” are highly recommended for serious students (220-29, 278-81)].

Matthew's designations related to the teaching of the Messiah include the following: ***Teacher*** (*Master*, KJV, 8:19; 9:11; 10:24-25; 12:38; 17:24; 19:16; 22:16, 24, 36; 26:18); ***Rabbi*** (23:8; 26:25, 49); ***Leader*** (NASV) (23:8, 10). The designation *rabbi* “was in NT times a title of respect given by a student to his teacher” (Brown 3: 115). It was sometimes rendered *Teacher* (cf. John 1:38). In some contexts it was supplanted by Lord (*kurios*) and represented the Aramaic term *mari* (i.e., My Lord) (115).

The usual Greek word for *Teacher* (Master, KJV) is ***didaskolos*** and is used in the above mentioned passages. However, another word is used uniquely on one occasion in Matthew. Jesus said, “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi;’

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for One is your **TEACHER**, the Christ, and you are all brethren. . . And do not be called **TEACHERS**; for One is your **TEACHER**, the Christ” (Matthew 23:8, 10, emp. added.) The Greek word used in these verses is *kathegetes*. It seems to have been used in the Greek philosophical schools as a synonym of *didaskolos* and it has been suggested that it might have been a Messianic title (*Hathab-the Guide*) among the Samaritans (Rogers 51; Warfield 67). Could it be that the Samaritan woman had this in mind when she said, “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes he will tell us all things” (John 4:25)? Jesus then said to her, “I who speak to you am He” (John 4:26). Truly, He is **THE Teacher—THE Guide**.

Conclusion

In this study of Matthew’s designations (names/titles) of the Messiah, we have observed some things about his name and the salvation he procured: his name and the deification he possesses; his name and the coronation he was presented; his name and the anticipation he produced; and his name and the instruction he provides. In all of this, we have only “scratched the surface.”

I must confess that, in more than thirty-five years of preaching, I have never attempted to fulfill an assignment with a deeper sense of my inadequacies and limitations. As Paul, I feel that I am “less than the least” (Ephesians 3:8). Rogers says this means “‘the smallest, leaster’. . .[U]sed to designate the deepest self-abasement. . . PAUL MAY BE MAKING AN ALLUSION TO HIS OWN NAME” (439, emp. added).

But **HIS** name is “THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME” and the One that, at its sound, “EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW. . .and EVERY TONGUE SHOULD CONFESS” that he is Lord (Philippians 2:9-10, emp. added)! His name is the One that is **EXCELLENT** in

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all the Earth (Psalm 8:9)! His name is the One that has “the joyful sound” (Psalm 89:15-16)! His name is the One that “is a strong tower” to which the righteous may run and are safe (Proverbs 18:10)! His name is the One that is “**HOLY** and **AWESOME**” (Psalm 111:9, emp. added)!

Randall wrote:

The names of the Lord Jesus are real things, not a mere pageant or an empty sound; but what Christ calls himself that he is. Among men, titles are frequently bestowed which are undeserved; Christ has a pre-eminent right to every title assigned to him in the Bible, but no title does justice to him. He is what it implies, but *more*; more than *all combined*, yea, combined in their *best* state; and infinitely more. (10)

May God, if he so wills, use our feeble efforts to explore the treasures of the names, titles and designations of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16) and promote the cause of his Son and the consolation of his saints.

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KINGDOM ATTITUDES

By Frank Higginbotham

When the Lord promised to build his church, he not only intended to provide a way of redemption to the human family, but also to change the way people look upon life. In eternity, he planned the church as the means of reconciliation to himself. “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:11). There were also certain attitudes that would characterize those who were committed to the advancement of the kingdom. The application of these attitudes enriches men’s lives here and prepare for life eternal. “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). There is great profit in living according to God’s Kingdom Attitudes.

The discussion of these attitudes is found in both the book of Matthew and the book of Luke. In this study, we will deal primarily with the way that Matthew, by inspiration, tells us about them. Read carefully Matthew Five, verses three through twelve. A blessing is pronounced on those who develop these attitudes. The word ‘blessed’ comes from a word that is defined as being happy and being favored. The happiness described is not based on externals. Frequently, we hear people speak of happiness that is tied to some event in their lives. People are happy when they graduate, when they marry, when they have children or when they receive a promotion. This happiness is based on good things that occur in life. However, the blessedness discussed in these verses is happiness that does not depend on good things happening to us during life. This

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is made clear in the discussion of persecution. Few consider persecution as a motive for happiness, yet the Lord tells his listeners that they should rejoice and be exceedingly glad. It is with amazement that we observe the Woman of Shunem in Second Kings Four as she deals with the death of her only son. Instead of being overtaken by her grief, she has peace that is not based on externals. She was blessed in spite of her misfortune and had an inner peace that caused her to react in a way we might think strange.

And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well. Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee. So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well (2 Kings 4:22-26).

When her world was crumbling, she could still say, ‘it is well.’ Her blessedness did not come from external things but from the inner peace that comes by serving God. No wonder that the world in general does not understand the attitudes of those who are citizens of the kingdom of Heaven. “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds

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through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). The happiness that comes to those following these principles does not depend on everything being just right in the world about us.

The first of the attitudes that the Lord discusses is the basis on which the other attitudes depend. ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 5:3).

In order for us to be the most effective servants of God, we must be humble. Poor in spirit is defined in *Vincent’s Word Study* as being reduced to beggary, destitute. Until we empty ourselves of our arrogance, there is no way to progress in our spiritual development. Paul reminded the Christians at Rome that they had been blessed to partake of the mercy of God and thus needed to develop an attitude of humility. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:1-3).

When we approach the Lord with a feeling of self worth we are betraying a lack of understanding of all God has done for us and how undeserving we really are. Christ did not go to the cross because we deserved it, but out of love and mercy to fallen men. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath

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through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:6-10).

In writing to the churches of Galatia, Paul urged that the brethren not think themselves to be something when they were nothing. The starting point for real development in Christianity is the recognition that we have no self worth. We must be poor in spirit. Our salvation is by the grace of God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10). We could not do enough good things to merit salvation. Therefore, it is not of works least any man should boast. Grace does not exclude the works of obedience. When we have done all that has been commanded, we still should say, we are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). Surely, salvation by the grace of God does not exclude our baptism, but this does not give us room for self pride. The reward for having this attitude of humility is seen in the fact that the Lord said that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit are those who are the recipients of the kingdom.

The next kingdom attitude has to do with mourning. ***“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”*** (Matthew 5:4). Men mourn for a number of reasons. Some are sad because of sickness and death. They seek and need comfort. Some have sorrow in a worldly way. Our prisons are filled with people who are sorry. Most are not sorry for the wrong they did but because they were caught in their ungodly deeds. “Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh

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repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). We will not make any change of mind or action if the only sorrow we have is a sorrow of this world. If we genuinely mourn over our sins, we will then move to repentance.

The difference in the kinds of sorrow can be seen by comparing Judas and Peter. Judas sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. When his sin began to work on him, he hanged himself. Contrast this with Peter. Peter did a terrible thing when he denied the Lord three times. When the impact of his sin came home to him, he followed with genuine godly repentance. He went out and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). The evidence of his genuine repentance is seen as you observe Peter in the work he does for the kingdom. Peter stood up with eleven and boldly proclaimed that the same Jesus they had killed was now the Lord and Christ. Without fear, he was now putting his life on the line for Christ. He had said he did not know Christ, but now he lets all know of the change he has made. The first twelve chapters of Acts focus primarily on the work of this servant of God. None could deny that he repented. He had godly sorrow for his sin. We mourn for our sins. The happiness that results from this attitude is that we shall be comforted. Comfort is offered when we are genuinely sorry for the sin that has entered our lives.

We are next told about the attitude of meekness. ***“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”*** (Matthew 5:5). The term ‘meek’ seems hard to understand. Many have understood it to mean the same as ‘weakness.’ Moses was noted for his meekness and Jesus also was meek. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). Even though Christ was meek, he was very strong in overturning the tables of the

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moneychangers in the Temple. Someone explained meekness without showing weakness in this manner. A young horse as he grows develops great strength. A person then undertakes the job of breaking the horse. He is not making the horse weak but is teaching the horse how to control his strength. The strength is still there, but has been brought into control. One of the qualities that Christians add to their faith is temperance (2 Peter 1:5-10). This self-control helps the Christian to bring his strength under control where he can meekly meet the challenges of life. The blessing pronounced on the meek is that they shall inherit the earth. Some misunderstanding of this passage is used by one religious group to aid them in teaching that this earth will never be destroyed. We are told that God will cleanse or purify the earth and the meek will then live on it. Let it be remembered that Peter tells us that the earth and the elements will be burned up. They will be melted with fervent heat (2 Peter 3:10). What then is meant by the expression 'shall inherit the earth'? The answer is found in the fact that the meek are the people who will make the best of life here on the earth. They are now inheriting the earth. The benefits of living right are enjoyed by the meek.

Blessing is then pronounced on those who seek righteousness. ***“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”*** (Matthew 5:6). There needs to be an insatiable desire to learn about righteousness. Two of the strong desires of the human body are to have food and water. Think of the distress that exists when food and water is not available. This is compared to the strong desire of the citizen of the kingdom for righteousness. We learn of the righteousness of God by our constant study of the Word of God. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the

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righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17).

David stated that the blessed man is the one that spends time with the Word of God. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:1-2). Think of the many blessings of studying God’s book. We grow by the study of the Bible (2 Peter 2:2). We get direction for our lives and this manner of conduct helps us to avoid sin. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). We find the real joy of life by living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). The desire for this kind of life needs to be a driving force in our life. The blessing of this attitude is that we shall be filled. Our desire for righteousness moves us to learn about and to live a righteous life.

Next the Lord points us to mercy. “***Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy***” (Matthew 5:7). The quality of mercy is defined as compassion and understanding. Jesus showed mercy to many people. The followers of Christ have real happiness when they share good will with others. On one occasion, some brought a woman taken in the very act of adultery. They evidently expected very harsh condemnation of her act. The Lord dealt with it in a way that they did not expect. He dispersed her accusers by saying that the one who had no sin should cast the first stone. He was not at all giving approval of her conduct, but he told her to go her way and sin no more. She was given understanding that might help her to turn her life around.

He also explained mercy in his great lesson concerning the man who was beaten and robbed. The priest and the Levite both saw an opportunity to show mercy but they passed by on the other side. The ‘good Samaritan’ looked

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on the unfortunate man with mercy and compassion. He cared for him and even made plans to give future care. When Jesus asked which one was neighbor to him, no one had trouble in answering. None suggested that it was the priest who was his friend. It was not suggested that the Levite was the friend. The one who had mercy was the neighbor (Luke 10:30-37). Those who show mercy are promised that they will obtain mercy.

Next, the Lord commends the pure in heart. ***“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”*** (Matthew 5:8). The heart referred to is not the ‘blood-pump.’ Many misunderstand the Bible teaching concerning the heart. They pound themselves on the chest and speak of having religion down deep in their hearts. The Bible heart is the mind. It is the source of the emotions. A pure heart is not a blood pump that has no impurities in it. This rather refers to keeping our minds clean. What we put into the heart comes out in our conduct. If we keep our life clean, we must guard what goes into our heart. “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12:34-35).

When we fill our minds with trashy literature, pornography, dirty movies and television, it is no surprise to see these things acted out in life. Our thoughts need to be on things that will build us up. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). Those who are pure in heart shall see God. Their understanding of God will permit others to see Christ living in them.

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We also learn that being a peacemaker is a part of kingdom attitudes. ***“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”*** (Matthew 5:9). In a world of war and troublemakers, we need someone who will seek after peace and pursue it. “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14). The account of Abraham’s herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen having a conflict is a classic example of Abraham acting as a peacemaker. He gave first choice to Lot and stated that he would take what is left. He did the thing that brought about peace. There are many occasions for Christian people to put this attitude into practice. The blessing promised with this attitude is that you will be called a child of God.

The last of the kingdom attitudes that Jesus mentions is in regard to persecution. ***“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 5:10). Persecution for just any cause does not meet the qualification of this passage. Many suffer by being persecuted for evil deeds they have done. We deserve persecution when we do the wrong thing. “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16). All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). We must patiently endure persecution and rejoice that we have been counted worthy to suffer for him. The blessing pronounced is that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Great is your reward in heaven (Matthew 5:12).

The best of life here and all that there is in the future comes from developing these kingdom attitudes.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV, February 21, 1933. He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. A. G. (Bus) Higginbotham. He was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, Fl. First located work was at Columbia Street in Fairmont, WV (1953-1956). This was then followed by Wellsburg, WV (1956-1958) and West Street in Weirton, WV (1958-1964) and Virginia Avenue in Chester (1964-Present). He is currently in his 39th year at Chester. Radio preaching includes WETZ in New Martinsville, WMMN in Fairmont, WEIR in Weirton and WOHI in East Liverpool, OH. This program is a five-day-a-week, fifteen minute program that began in 1949. He was one of the speakers on a television program in Steubenville, OH over WSTV. He has spoken on various lecture programs (Ohio Valley College, Ohio Valley Lectures, Greater Kanawha Lectures, West Virginia School of Preaching). He is married to the former Rose King (1954). They had three children. Donna (passed away in 1965), Janie is married to Brent Gallagher, preacher at Oakwood Road in Fairmont, WV. Steve is the preacher at South Green Street in Glasgow, KY. The Higginbotham's have seven grandchildren.

THE GOLDEN RULE

By Steve Higginbotham

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12).

Everyone has some fundamental principles/rules/ethics by which he chooses to govern his life. That is true whether one is a Christian or an atheist. All men live by some standard or code of conduct. When it comes to a Christian, his code of conduct, it can be summed up in one word... "Love." When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus said to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Jesus furthermore stated that the second greatest commandment was to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Upon this rule of love all the commandments of God and all our obligations rest.

What we call the "golden rule" is simply an expression of this "rule of love." I can think of many religions in the world today, but I can think of none that call men to such high and noble goals as does Christianity. While I believe this to be the case, not everyone feels the same way. In fact, many attempt to dismiss the lofty ideal expressed by Jesus in the golden rule by suggesting that it is no more lofty than the principles contained in other world religions. For instance:

- ❖ Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain."
- ❖ Buddhism: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself."
- ❖ Zoroastrian: "Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others."

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...And the list could go on. But notice a subtle difference between what Jesus offered in the “golden rule” and what is said to be parallel in these other world religions. The difference is that in these world religions, the bar is set at withholding evil from another person, whereas Jesus raised the bar and obligated his disciples to actively do good to others. In other words, the ethic of the Christian lifestyle is not to go through life refraining from evil, but to go through life actively pursuing good. That’s quite a difference.

The story is told of a man who was arrested because of his part in a drunken brawl in a bar. When standing before the judge, the judge asked him if he had any character witnesses who could speak on his behalf. This man said, “Yes I do, the Sheriff.” Immediately the Sheriff stood to his feet and said, “Your honor, I’ve never even seen this man before.” To which the man said, “See your honor, the Sheriff has never even seen me before, what further proof do you need that I’m a good man?”

Well I suppose for some, simply staying out of trouble and refraining from doing evil to others is sufficient proof of good character, but it is not for the Christian. The rule of love by which the Christian lives his life demands that we not only avoid doing evil, but that we also actively pursue doing good. This truth is summed up in the golden rule.

There are any number of “lesser ethics” or rules of conduct by which people live. Some of them are summarized below:

- ❖ **The Vandal Ethic:** This ethic finds satisfaction and fulfillment in making others miserable. Computer hackers and those who destroy another person’s property would be an example of such a way of life. While they derive no profit from their action, their satisfaction is in making other people miserable.
- ❖ **The Hedonistic Ethic:** This ethic states that whatever brings me pleasure is therefore right, and

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worthy to be pursued. Just think of the atrocities that could be committed under such an ethic!

- ❖ **The Might Makes Right Ethic:** I can think of many tyrants who have lived by this ethic and in their wake is death and destruction. King Ahab lived by this ethic when he killed Naboth to steal his vineyard.
- ❖ **The Whatever Is Legal Ethic:** Under this ethic, any action can be justified so long as it is legal. However, not everything that is legal can be morally justified in God's sight.
- ❖ **The Mind My Own Business Ethic:** Under this ethic people feel justified so long as they don't contribute to another person's misfortune. The priest and the levite Jesus told about in the parable of the good Samaritan would fit into this ethic.
- ❖ **The Treat Others As They Treat You Ethic:** Under this ethic, one is called upon to act toward others only as good as they have acted toward him.
- ❖ **The Silver Ethic:** This ethic states that one should not do to anyone what you would not want them to do to you. This ethic doesn't require that good be done, just the abstinence of evil.

Then you have the words of Jesus, the Golden Rule, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." Without question, this ethic is the highest to which one could ever aspire. Consequently, this ethic is also the most challenging and most difficult by which to live. This ethic requires us to try to understand the other person's point of view. It causes us to ask what's in the other person's best interest. It requires that we look beyond our own needs and desires and look to the needs and desires of our neighbors.

Although it is challenging, think how much better this world would be if we strived to practice such an ethic!

Consider some of the applications for this ethic:

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1. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he treat the lost? Would he not do his very best to teach them the Gospel ?
2. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he treat the wayward child of God? Would he not exhaust every effort to restore this one to the Lord?
3. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he treat one who made a mistake? Would he not, in a spirit of meekness and gentleness, try to correct this one? Would he not also attempt to cover this mistake and protect the reputation of the one who made it?
4. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he receive an accusation made against another? Would he immediately believe the accusation, or would he believe the best until evidence proved otherwise?
5. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he treat one who is sick, lonely and shut-in? Would he not do what he could to visit them or encourage them, bringing cheer to his life?
6. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he treat the one who is bereaved at the loss of a loved one? Would he not demonstrate compassion and sympathy?
7. If one practiced the golden rule, how would he treat one who is weak in the faith? Would he not bear with this one, trying not to be a stumbling block? Would he not also refrain from belittling him for his imperfect knowledge?

You see, the golden rule is challenging. It is practical. It is daily. And it requires us to actively pursue the good of another person. When you stop and think about it, isn't the golden rule simply the pursuit of Christlikeness? For it was Jesus who acted on behalf of our good, even to his own harm.

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May God help us to think and focus more clearly upon the opportunities we have daily to put this noble ethic, this “Golden Rule,” into practice.

KINGDOM DIVIDED

Matthew 12:22-37

By Glenn E. Hawkins

Introduction

The text for our consideration at this time is from Matthew 12:22-37:

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? {And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be

forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Jesus is in the midst of controversy with the Pharisees in this whole chapter. First, Jesus defended his disciples over eating grain on the Sabbath. Second, Jesus defended himself when accused of breaking the Sabbath by healing a man of his withered hand. And now, the controversy is taken to new heights when the miracle of casting out a demon from a deaf and blind man was attributed by the Pharisees to Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

Body

The reaction after Jesus performed this great miracle was not long in coming. First, the people themselves who saw and heard what had happened were amazed, and raised the question, “Is not this the Son of David?” The term “Son of David” was a popular name for the Messiah. Even the

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people could see what their blinded leaders could not see. Jesus was the Messiah.

The second reaction came from the Pharisees and it was much different from the people. There were only two possible ways they could avoid the force of this great miracle. One was to deny a miracle took place, which was not a viable option because they saw it and the people saw it. The second option was the one they chose. They attributed the cause of this miracle to the power of Satan rather than the power of God. Thus, they thought to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people.

Regarding “Beelzebub,” we note that the name was a combination of “Baal,” the old Canaanite god, and “zebul,” meaning dunghill. Thus, you see some of the maliciousness of the Pharisees to link Christ with the false god of the Canaanites.

The response of Jesus was not long in coming. He responded with two very plain and simple arguments that showed how illogical and unsound the argument of the Pharisees was. The first argument — that Jesus cast out demons by the power of the prince of demons — represented Satan as being divided against himself. Why would Satan work against himself? Why would he use his power to cast out demons when the demon-possessed person demonstrated Satan’s power over a living human being? Satan’s kingdom thus divided would not stand.

Abraham Lincoln said that this nation could not stand half slave and half free. It took a terrible Civil War to bring about that unity. No nation or country will stand for long if it has continued internal strife and division.

The same also can be said of God’s kingdom, the church. The church divided against itself cannot stand. The work of the church at Corinth was hindered because of division — over personalities, over morality and over worship. The church of our Lord in this country was torn asunder at the turn of the 20th century because we divided

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over the Missionary Society and instrumental music. The church today over the past two or three decades has seen division again over various issues. Man does not have the right to divide the body of Christ by rejecting God's plan for the work, worship, organization and doctrines which he himself has set forth. Man also does not have the right to divide the church over matters of opinion and judgment. It is sinful to loose where God has bound and bind where God has loosed!

The second argument used by Jesus had to do with an appeal to the Pharisees themselves. In Matthew 12:27, he asked, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils (demons), by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges." That there were some Jews whom at last claimed to have this power is evident from both Scripture (Acts 19:13) and by Josephus. As McGarvey wrote in his commentary on Matthew and Mark, "the truth of the charge that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan depended upon the assumption that he had access to no other power by which it could be done. But if this assumption were true, then it would affect the exorcists as well as himself. On the other hand, if they cast out demons by divine power, then the same might be true of him. This was an argument *ad hominem*, which could be answered only by showing the exorcists had some reason to claim favor with God, which Jesus had not; and this they dared not pretend" (McGarvey 105). I might add that it is not to be implied that these Jewish exorcists actually did cast out demons, but only that the Pharisees believed they could do so.

The third argument of Jesus is to show that if he did not cast out demons by the power of Satan, the only other alternative is that it was done by the power of God. Notice Matthew 12:28, "But if I cast out devils (demons) by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you." Very simply and persuasively, Jesus argued that if he is casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then this proved

that he spoke with divine authority and they should believe all that he said about the coming kingdom.

The fourth and last argument of Jesus is in Matthew 12:29, “Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.” The explanation is obvious. Satan is the strong man; his house the body of the demoniac; and the goods, the evil spirits. Jesus was able to overpower Satan, bind him and take his goods, cast out the demons. Thus, Jesus totally devastated the explanation offered by the Pharisees. No wonder they hated him so.

Jesus now turned his attention to what we know as the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit — “the evil speech just made by the Pharisees in which a work performed by the Holy Spirit was attributed to Satan” (McGarvey 106). Notice our text in Matthew 12:31-32 — “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” I would also like to read the parallel account of this in Mark 3:29-30 — “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” I believe Mark 3:30 really can help us here.

The first question we need to answer has to do with what the word ‘blasphemy’ means. The word ‘blasphemy’ comes from two Greek words – *blapto* (to hinder, hurt, injure) and *phemi* (to make known, speak or say). To blaspheme is to speak injuriously, with the intent of defaming or hurting. Whatever the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is, it has to do with speaking against the Holy Spirit.

A second question needs to be answered at this time — what does blasphemy of the Holy Spirit not mean? A number of things have been proposed. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not suicide, backsliding, murder, adultery, profanity or any other sin. We have the record of people being forgiven of such sins as these.

The third question, then, is — what is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Going back to our text, we see that the Pharisees had attributed the miracle-working, demon-expelling power, which Jesus manifested, to Satan. Mark 3:30 helps us here because it says, “Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” This statement is given by Mark to explain why Jesus said in Mark 3:29, “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.” The miracles of Jesus, particularly the casting out of demons, were an irrefutable display of the power of the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees saw this; they knew what they meant; they knew the miracles of Jesus proved him to be the Son of God; and instead of acknowledging it, they attributed this power to Satan. And Jesus said that they had committed a sin which would not be forgiven in this world or the world to come.

A fourth and final question needs to be asked — can the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit be committed today? There are great and good men in our brotherhood who have disagreed. Brother C.R. Nichol believed that this sin was limited to the age of Jesus when he was performing these miracles and people were eyewitnesses to these miracles. Brother Bobby Dockery, in his work, *The Holy Spirit – Unraveling the Mystery*, wrote on page 73:

It is NOT a sin which can be committed today. It was only during the personal ministry of Christ that the Holy Spirit performed such unprecedented signs and wonders. Only during that time span could

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the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit be committed. The only mention of this sin in all the New Testament is connected with the ministry of Christ. There are no warnings against it in Acts or any of the epistles. Why??? If people were in danger of committing a sin for which there was no forgiveness, surely the Apostles would have warned us. Their silence on the subject is conclusive evidence that it is no longer possible to commit this sin.

On the other hand, in pages 638-639 of *Questions Answered* (Lipscomb and Sewell), the following statement is found: “I have no doubt but that it may be committed now. Men may as easily blaspheme the Spirit in his revelations today through the word of truth as they did his development in the days of the Savior. The Spirit of God in the New Testament brings the last message from God to sinful men, and the only message whereby men can be saved; and the man that attributes any other origin to the New Testament than to the Spirit of God is guilty of blasphemy against the Spirit of God.” There are others we could quote, but these are sufficient.

I believe that it is possible for one to commit this sin today. Notice exactly what the sin entailed — attributing the miracle-working, demon-casting power which Jesus had to Satan himself. As Mark 3:30 says, “Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.” People today do not have to be an eyewitness to Jesus casting out demons before they attribute it to the power of Satan. Have I ever personally heard anyone do this? No, I haven’t. But I do not doubt that it could be done.

The final passage in our text from Matthew 12:33-37 reads as follows:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his

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fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Why did the Pharisees so speak against Jesus? Because their hearts were corrupt. The state of one's heart will determine the speech and the deeds of a person. When the heart is good, good things come out. When the heart is evil, bad things come out. Remember, words, speech are important. We will be judged not only by what we say, but what we do.

Conclusion

Jesus proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that his power to perform miracles, including casting our demons, was by the power of God, not Satan. We can either accept him as God's divine Son and our Savior, or reject him. While we may be certain that Satan is alive and well today, one can also rest assured that his power is limited and that Christ has the power to enable us to overcome him. As members of the kingdom of God, let us strive to be untied in faith and practice and in our love towards all humanity so that the world may indeed know that we are the disciples and the followers of Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and forever. Amen!

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Glenn Hawkins, 718 – 9th Street NE, Massillon OH 44646
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Background

- Born October 16, 1943, in Dexter, Missouri
- Parents: Jack & Frona Hawkins (both deceased)
- Father was a Gospel preacher for almost 60 years

Family

- Married June 27, 1965
- Wife – Hope (Shutts) Hawkins, originally from Parkersburg, West Virginia
- Children – Ken Hawkins (age 34) of Atlanta, Georgia, Adam Hawkins (age 25) of Massillon, Ohio

Education

- Graduated high school in Newark, Ohio, 1961
- AA Degree, Ohio Valley College, 1963
- BA in Bible, Harding University, 1965
- MA in Philosophy of Religion, Harding Graduate School, 1975

Local Work

- George Street Church of Christ, St. Marys, West Virginia, summer of 1964
- Church of Christ, St. Clair, Missouri, 1965-1968
- Church of Christ, Waverly, Tennessee, 1968-1973
- Macon Road Church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee, 1973-1975

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- Church of Christ, Massillon, Ohio, 1975 – Present (in 29th year)

Other Activities

- Taught Bible part-time at Ohio Valley College
- Write weekly newspaper column, *Truth for Today*
- Spoken at several lectureships, written for several Gospel papers
- Serve as co-director of Family Camp Week at Northwestern Ohio Christian Youth Camp

JESUS: DEATH

By Roy H. Lanier, Jr.

The death of Jesus is the ultimate of submission. He submitted to the kiss of betrayal by Judas in the Garden, he submitted to the rabble who came to arrest him, he submitted to the Jewish courts, he submitted to the Roman courts, he submitted to the Roman soldiers who took him to Calvary, and his final submission was to the will of the Father. He suffered crucifixion.

The shame of his death, predicted so marvelously in Isaiah 53, involved insults and physical pain as is certainly hard for moderns to comprehend. He is the Lord of Glory, yet he was willing to suffer all the assaults heaped upon him.

He was scourged before Pilate, the pain of which is almost indescribable. The ancient practice was usually with a stick applied to the feet. Later the Romans invented even harsher procedures by stripping the recipient, tying his wrists, stretching the person up with thongs by his arms, and then beating with a lash.

The body was at times torn and lacerated to such an extent that deep-seated veins and arteries – sometimes even entrails and inner organs – were exposed. Such flogging, from which Roman citizens were exempt, often resulted in death. Or it preceded execution, and was ordered as a sign to indicate that the person to whom it was administered was about to be crucified. (Hendricksen 414)

The Jews were not permitted to use more than forty lashes (Deuteronomy 25:2-3), but the Romans limited theirs only by strength and inclination. The scourges were tipped with sharp metal, bones or stones that would literally cut the victim's back to shreds.

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It is thought by many commentators that the scourging by Pilate was an attempt to provide a lesser sentence for the innocent Jesus, but the Jews would not have it.

Pilate... should have immediately released his prisoner. But he dilly-dallies. This time, in complete harmony with all his previous attempts to get rid of the case, he tries to work on the sympathy of the people. He exposes to their view a pathetic spectacle: Jesus, covered with gashing wounds, blood streaking down his face, neck, back; the horrible 'crown' still upon his head; the purple robe still around him. Then Pilate exclaims, 'Look! The man!' Has he not suffered enough? Is it really necessary to inflict more punishment upon him? And does *he* look like a dangerous rebel? (Hendricksen 415-416)

The Jews had condemned Jesus because he had declared himself to be the Son of God, his only-begotten Son. This, in the mind of the Jews, particularly the Sanhedrin, was either the most heinous blasphemy or it was the most glorious truth. The Jews would not abide the latter, so in their envy and wickedness, they chose to believe it blasphemy. Now Pilate can find no wrong in the man, indicating that Jesus had not broken any Roman law.

Enraged, the Jews said, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). Now, when all else has failed, every other method has not brought success to the Jews, Pilate once again said, "I find no guilt in him" (John 19:4, 6). The Jews, in effect, are saying to Pilate that it was his duty to respect their laws. If the Jewish law said he ought to die, then Pilate should see that he dies.

Jesus was mocked by a supposed coronation, a scarlet robe (Matthew 27:28 though it is called purple in Mark

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15:17) after being stripped naked of his clothes. He was given a crown of thorns and a reed for a staff. (Is there any irony in the fact that thorns were part of the curse of the first sins – Genesis 3:18)? The soldiers bowed in mocking homage as if he were a king. Derision and insults poured forth, he was spit upon; the soldiers took the reed and struck him with it. His garments were taken and the soldiers cast lots for them.

The Romans nailed his feet and hands to a cross. The cross was an upright post with a horizontal beam. It was customary to set it up, then hoist the victim to a peg that passed between his legs, where his hands and feet were nailed to the cross. The criminal was stripped naked, the garments usually went to the executioners (John 19:23-25), and the supposition that a cloth covered the loins of Jesus is without any early testimony (Meyer 503-505).

It was customary to place a tablet containing a statement of the crime either over the head of the victim or hanging from a cord around the neck. All four biographers mention that a statement about Jesus was placed on the cross, and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek (John 19:19-22). “These three languages were respectively those of religion, law, and philosophy; but Pilate made use of them because all three were spoken by people then in Jerusalem” (McGarvey and Pendleton 726). It seems to be implied that the place of crucifixion was near a public thoroughfare where crowds could pass by and observe.

Then the soldiers sat back and watched. He was challenged to come down from the cross if he were God. He was offered wine with gall. All this was done by the Romans.

The Jewish crowds, led by the priests, elders and scribes, railed on Jesus vehemently, adding many more abuses. They mocked and derided him, all the while venting their anger and hatred of him. Even one of the robbers joined in from an adjacent cross.

The Seven Steps

The sublime context describing the mind of Christ is a classic statement of Jesus going to his death (Philippians 2:5-8). Supreme moral glory is seen in his gracious voluntariness, marching to inevitable death. This self-humbling, knowing from the inception of the eternal plan that he must die, is the true exhibition of what the mind of the believer ought to be.

Seven steps toward death have been pointed out:

1. "Being in the form of God He deemed it not to be selfishly clung to";
2. "but he emptied Himself";
3. "and took the form of a bondman";
4. "becoming in likeness of men";
5. "He humbled Himself";
6. "and became obedient unto death";
7. "even the death of the cross."

"Marvel again at the wonder of it -- God...Man...Slave...Criminal! In time or eternity, on earth or throughout the universe, this is the supreme expression of self-sacrificing *otherism*. Here is the supreme example. 'Let this mind be in you'" (Baxter 189).

The Seven Sayings

Jesus uttered seven sayings while hanging on the cross. These are indicative of his compassion, since he understood what was happening. He knew the benefit he was providing for all mankind. These utterances from the cross indicate truly that a man was dying a horrible death, an innocent death, and a magnificently sacrificial death.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). How marvelous that Jesus could look down upon the crowds, the spiteful and hateful Jews, and even the Roman soldiers, and ask for forgiveness for them all.

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“Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). How could Jesus be so compassionate as to care for one of the brigands being crucified with him on a cross? His compassion and forgiveness was so personal, so individual, that he could accept the penitence of the robber. He could do this even in all the physical agony that he was himself suffering.

“Woman, behold thy son!...Behold, thy mother” (John 19:26-27). Jesus, the son all sons, cared for his mother in his dying hour. What surprise John must have felt that Jesus would make this statement at this time! What anguish Mary must have been feeling, but she remembered the words of Simeon, the old spirit-filled prophet. He had told her during the days of purification that “a sword shall pierce thine own soul” (Luke 2:35). Sadly, this was the time. Jesus was concerned about his mother even as he gave himself on the cross for the sins of the world. Such selflessness is unmatched in human history.

All three of these sayings were pronounced during the brightness of the day’s sun. The next four were spoken during the three hours of darkness that came over the land (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33). Some scholars conclude that the next four sayings came as the darkness was lifting over the city.

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). This is an expression of agony perhaps even deeper than that expressed in the garden prayers. He was the sacrifice for our sins. He was taking our sins upon himself, bearing them to his death, the wages of sin that all mankind deserved. “As the sin offering for his people He was treated as if He were sinful in His own person” (Boettner 190). The Father made him the sin offering (2 Corinthians 5:21) and a curse (Galatians 3:13); now he must stay the course. In this mysterious and awful experience, there came a sense of separation from the Father, a loneliness that was real and

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horrible, though it is inexplicable to us. The Father had to look upon the Son as if covered with sin, all the sins of all mankind. A wall of separation had arisen between the Father and Son, a wall of sin. Jesus must endure the wrath of the Father, a wrath for all sin and unrighteousness. In all this, Jesus still clung to the relationship, for he said “my God,” not “dear God,” or just “God.” He was forsaken but not deserted.

Some have argued that Deity left Jesus and that he now suffered only as a man. This would mean that his human nature was left alone to bear the suffering and death. Yet, this would deprive his sacrifice of infinite merit, and would leave the sins of the world without atonement. “Take deity away from any redeeming act of Christ and redemption is ruined” (Clarke 277).

Understand it? No, we finite creatures cannot understand the mind and workings of God: “how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out” (Romans 11:33). We simply accept the descriptions of that awful hour by faith, and we offer praise and homage for what it means to us. This unfathomable experience of Jesus was in the spiritual realm of eternity, and we can only bow at the feet of the Father and the Son and cry “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

“I thirst” (John 19:28). Jesus now calls for something to help his parched throat in order to vocalize the last two utterances. He previously had refused a drugged drink (Mark 15:23), but now, after hours on the cross, he needs something to quench his thirst. How human was this cry!

“It is finished” (John 19:30). This not the word of a defeated and vanquished person, this the exultant cry of victory. He had accomplished the greatest life ever known; he had carried out the will of his Father, he had brought the truth to all ages, he had provided the only acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the world, and then he endured to the death, an indescribable and glorious death. He “endured

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the cross, despising shame,” and he was now ready to take his place at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). There was nothing else left for him to do to accomplish the marvelous grace that could come to sinners. There was no more to accomplish for sinful man, he was accepting the sins of all men of all ages. He accepted his fate.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). He then “gave up the ghost.” It is interesting to note that all four biographers insist that Jesus died voluntarily: the other three say “yielded up his spirit” (Matthew 27:50), “gave up the ghost” (Mark 15:37) and “gave up his spirit” (John 19:30). Though he suffered all the arrows of his enemies, he went to this death of his own will. “I lay down my life for the sheep...No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself” (John 10:15, 18). Though the Jews and the Romans murdered Jesus, he willingly gave up his life “for the sheep.”

Heaven’s Witness to the Awful Shame

There was darkness over the scene from noon till 3:00 P.M. (sixth to the ninth hour – Matthew 27:45). This was no ordinary eclipse of the sun occasioned by the position of the moon, neither was it any natural incursion of darkness preceding some storm. “The darkness upon this occasion was of an *unusual, a supernatural* character, being as it were the voice of God making itself heard through nature, the gloom over which made it appear as though the whole earth were bewailing the ignominious death which the Son of God was dying” (Meyer 507).

The veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). This was not the result of the earthquake, or any kind of convulsion in nature. It was a momentous truth being shown in reality; the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God, then ended the bloody animal sacrifices and the sprinkling of the blood on the

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mercy seat each year. The old worship actions that presaged the coming of the true blood-offering were then made unnecessary, ineffective and out of date. The unseen hand of God thundered a message to priests who must have been present in the Temple as it was the time for their evening offerings. The disclosure of the Holy of Holies to the eyes of these priests must have been surprising and momentous (McGarvey and Pendleton 731). Could this be one reason that a “great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7)?

The earthquake was also a supernatural phenomenon that rent the rocks. All earth was shouting its pain and anguish at the death of this Jesus. Jesus was dead, his lips could speak no more; but the Father’s language was all his own. The Jews, the Romans, the disciples and the onlookers could not miss that this was an occasion differing from all other things ever seen, heard or experienced.

The graves were opened, the bodies of many saints came out and they walked the streets of Jerusalem after the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 27:52-53). These resurrections and appearances must have been after that of Jesus since he was the firstfruit of those asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). Most of the tombs in that area and time were carved out of rocky elevations and sealed with a stone slab. The earthquake did not dislodge the slabs, but God opened the tombs of some of the saints, not all of them, and no mention is made of any who were not believers (Lenski 1125-1132). Who these were, whether they were recognized by those in Jerusalem, what happened to them eventually, are questions that remain unanswered.

What does remain for all eternity is that God gave a clear message to all the world: his love gave his Son, his Son was willing to bear the sins of the world, and this occasion involved the most heinous crime in all history.

Conclusion: Memories That Never Leave

- ❖ How ugly that envy caused the Jews to deliver up Jesus (Matthew 27:18)!
- ❖ How dishonest and illegal were the trials!
- ❖ How terrible were the sufferings inflicted by the people!
- ❖ How awesome is the guilt of the Jews (Acts 2:23)!
- ❖ How humiliating was the treatment for the Lord of Glory!
- ❖ How faithful were the women, the last at the cross and the first at the tomb!
- ❖ How marvelous is the gift of the Father (John 3:16; Galatians 4:4)!
- ❖ How selfless was the incarnation of the Son of God (Hebrews 2:14-15).
- ❖ How terrible was the sin of all ages:
“...there they crucified him” (Luke 23:33)!

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TRANSFIGURATION OF THE KING

Matthew 17:1-13

By Greg Tidwell

The Transfiguration (recorded also in Mark 9:2-8 and Luke 9:28-36) happened near Caesarea Philippi about a year before the crucifixion of Jesus. Matthew describes the event:

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light (Matthew 17:1-2).

“Transfigured,” a rendering of the Greek word “metamorphoo,” means “to change the form.” The New Testament only uses this term here and in Mark 9:2, Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18.

The transformation of Moses (Exodus 34:29-35) provides interesting parallels:

And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD

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had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Both Moses and Jesus are described as becoming luminous through miraculous transformation.

Many have seen in the Transfiguration a fulfillment of the prophecy Jesus gave recorded in the previous chapter: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28).

Peter, James and John witnessed the work of Christ in a special way on two other important occasions: the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37) and the Gethsemane prayer (Matthew 26:37).

The Transfiguration, occurring a few days after Peter's confession (Matthew 16:13-20), had a profound impact on the apostle:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount (2 Peter 1:16-18).

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John, who also witnessed the Transfiguration, wrote: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The Transfiguration of Jesus proves that he is true God and true man. His Divinity shone through his humanity on this occasion, but evidently Moses and Elijah strengthened Jesus for his suffering and death:

And, behold, there appeared unto them
Moses and Elias talking with him (Matthew
17:3).

The glory of the Lord appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:13-16), but Moses gave the Law only. Elijah the prophet was victorious on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18:19-46), but he was only a servant preparing the way. Jesus was the central person in this scene. Luke tells us that Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about his suffering, death and resurrection.

The sight of these three great figures made the disciples ecstatic. Peter wanted the occasion to last but Luke says that he did not know whereof he spoke. God corrected their mistake:

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus,
Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou
wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one
for thee, and one for Moses, and one for
Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright
cloud overshadowed them: and behold a
voice out of the cloud, which said, This is
my beloved Son, in whom I am well
pleased; hear ye him. And when the
disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and
were sore afraid. And Jesus came and
touched them, and said, Arise, and be not
afraid (Matthew 17:4-7).

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Peter, James and John then heard what the Father said. This caused them to fall down in fear. Then Jesus approached them and said: "Rise up and quit fearing." Human nature is always fickle. One moment the disciples were in ecstasy. Another moment they were afraid.

What the Father said to the disciples contains three parts: the first from the Psalms, "Thou are My Son" (Psalm 2:7); the second from the prophets, "In Whom My soul delights" (Isaiah 42:1); and the third from Moses, "Listen to Him" (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Moses and Elijah were prophets of God who showed people their sin. But only Jesus could bring forgiveness. In the Lord's church, we have the message of both, Law and Gospel. We use them to God's glory to build the kingdom of God on earth as the way of salvation is believed and obeyed.

Revelation 1:13-16 portrays Christ in the state of glory, as the three disciples saw him:

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

No wonder Peter wanted this to continue. The Bible assures us that when we die we will see the glorified Jesus. We will not be afraid because we too will have glorified bodies. We will be like Jesus (except, of course, that we will not be God.) First John 3:2 tells us: "Beloved, now we

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are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He appears we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.”

The Transfiguration scene contains all the elements of the our eternal home with God: the Lord, shown in his glory; Moses, also glorified, representing the redeemed who have passed through death to be with the Lord; Elijah, a glorified representative of the redeemed who has entered the presence of God by translation. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17.)

The sight of the Transfiguration strengthened the apostles for the great work ahead. Guiding them through the building of the church was what the Father said: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” The Father was pleased and satisfied with the person and work of his Son. He directs our whole attention to Jesus and the message he brought. Jesus comes to us only through his Word, not in visions or emotional experiences. The Lord’s church must continue to look to Jesus alone.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

Matthew 13:24-30

By Wesley Simons

Introduction

We want to take a look at the parable of the tares found in Matthew 13:24-30 and explained by our Lord in verses 36-43. Now the theme of this parable is judgment. It is very important that you get the main lesson. **It is hard to pinpoint some of the unconverted “in the kingdom” because of their good job of pretense, but that separation will be made on the last day.** Notice, “in the kingdom” is in quotation marks because they are not the real converts which are produced in the kingdom though they pretend to be such. Why is it hard to pinpoint them? Because of their good job of pretense. They won't get by with their pretending and hypocrisy because there is a day coming when they will be judged according to the way that they have lived. This is a parable with which a lot of people have trouble so, we are going to build a little more background on this parable than usual.

This is a kingdom parable, so I am convinced it relates to the kingdom. I want to show you some other verses in Matthew 13 which are kingdom parables. Consider these verses: Matthew 13:31, “Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field.” Matthew 13:33, “Another parable spake He unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” Matthew 13:44, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” Matthew 13:45,

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“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.” Matthew 13:47, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.” Matthew 13:24, “Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.”

“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” (Matthew 13:41). Why won’t Bible students, especially preachers and elders, interpret this kingdom parable as they would all kingdom parables and limit it to the realm of the kingdom? The answer is, they feel that such an interpretation would do away with church discipline. However, one of the rules for interpreting parables is that no interpretation of a parable can contradict any clearly taught principle in the Word of God. Second Thessalonians 3:6 reads, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

I was talking to a man one time who was a preacher. I was trying to show him that church discipline had to be practiced. He said, “Oh no, we are not to withdraw from anybody.” I said, “How in the world did you reach that conclusion?” He said, “Have you ever read the parable of the tares where the Lord said let the tares and the wheat grow together for if we try to pull those tares, we will destroy the wheat. So, if we try to practice church discipline, we are going to destroy good members of the church.” I said, “You have misunderstood that parable badly. That is not what the Lord meant.” I then stated, “You mean to tell me the Lord taught a parable that went against what other inspired men taught relative to withdrawing fellowship from those who were living

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ungodly?” He said, “All I know is what the parable of the tares says.” I said, “Surely you don’t believe that.” However, he did believe it and was not going to give up his false position, and that’s amazing!!

Enemy Sows Tares

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also (Matthew 13:24-26).

This is one of two parables that the Lord explained and people still have trouble with it. Notice, the Lord’s explanation of this in Matthew 13 beginning with verse 37: “He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*.” He that sowed the good seed is said to be the Son of Man. When we read verses like Matthew 16:13, the Bible says, “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” The Lord often referred to himself as the Son of man. The one then who sows the good seed is said to be the Son of man. The field is the world, not the kingdom. Keep that in mind. The field is where the Gospel is preached. The kingdom grows out of the world or out of the world of humanity. However, among the kingdom, the seed of the evil one is sown.

The Lord said the enemy came and **sowed seed among the wheat not just among the world**, but among the wheat, or where the wheat was. The wheat represents the children of God, so **the devil comes and sows seed among**

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the children of God. What are you trying to say Wesley? I'm trying to say that even in the Lord's church there are those who are there because **they say they are children of God when in reality they are not. I might have to fellowship them because I don't know the difference.** We will explain more about that in just a moment and give more detail. But where I can recognize the difference, I am under a God-given obligation to stand against that individual even to the point of loving him enough to work with him and if he will not repent, then withdraw fellowship. Therefore, **the children of the wicked one were sown among the children of the kingdom.** Thus, the thought of the tares, or that which looked like the wheat.

Now watch this. This is from *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, page 674:

There can be little doubt that the zizania of the parable, Matthew 13:25, denotes the weed called "darnel." The darnel before it comes into ear is very similar in appearance to wheat; hence the command that zizania should be left to the harvest, lest while men plucked up the tares "they should root up the wheat with them."

Whatever this is that has been sown looks like the wheat. Now folks, the people out in the world do not look like Christians! They live ungodly lives. They live for self. They live for the devil. **But there are some in the church that might claim to be members of the church that are not there by way of conversion, but they are there by way of claim.** We're going to demonstrate this in a moment.

Notice then, about the only time that you can recognize the difference between the tares and the wheat is when it comes to a head or when it's ready to be harvested. **Therefore, the tares look like God's people.** Now these are the unconverted sown among the local congregations in

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the kingdom. They claim to be citizens in the kingdom, but they have never from the heart obeyed God or are major hypocrites. I want to give you some examples of what I'm talking about so you will understand the point being made. First, a person "obeys the Gospel" because it will get his wife off his back. He goes through the act, but his heart is not in it. When he comes up out of the water, we all rejoice with him. However, he has fooled us. Second, a person who is married unscripturally declares that he is married scripturally and "obeys the Gospel." We fellowship him thinking he is a faithful child of God, but he has lied to us. Third, a young person comes forward with all his friends to "obey the Gospel," but his heart is not in it. He is doing this because everyone else was "obeying the Gospel." We rejoice because we believe he was sincere. Fourth, a person becomes a member of the church just because his parents are members of the church. He has not studied and does not know the truth. Fifth, a man becomes a member of the church because he has an agenda to push.

How many times have you heard of a member of the church state relative to another member, "He has never been converted"? How many times have you seen one "re-baptized" and make the statement, "I did not know what I was doing the first time." Therefore, I wanted to do the right thing and obey the Gospel." These are not like the man in 1 Corinthians who had his father's wife. He could easily be identified and disciplined. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

Tares Discovered

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good

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seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? (Matthew 13:27-28).

The Lord's explanation is in Matthew 13:39: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." For the sake of the parable, a distinction has to be made. Otherwise, we do not have a parable. **The point is, the tares look so much like the wheat it would be hard to get rid of the tares without destroying the wheat.** We cannot judge some situations. We do not know people's hearts. We cannot judge their motives. We cannot know some situations relative to marriage, divorce and remarriage, because some people will not tell the truth. There are those who will promise us that they put their mates away for the cause of fornication, when nothing could be further from the truth. However, we fellowship them based on their claim. We do right. They do wrong. The Bible says, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

God expects us to give our fellowman the benefit of the doubt. When a man declares himself to be a faithful member of the Lord's church and acting in harmony with God's laws as far as we can tell, all we can do is fellowship him. If he is a hypocrite and lying about his relationship with God, this will be taken care of in the judgment. **There are those in the kingdom based on claim rather than conversion.** There are those who are fellowshipped based on their claim, when in reality, they are unfaithful or not members at all. I think that sometimes we believe that if we do not mark these individuals in this life, then they will have gotten by with their ungodliness. Those who fool us, God has identified: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some *men* they follow after"

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(1 Timothy 5:24). “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us” (1 John 2:19).

Do Not Root Up the Wheat

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn (Matthew 13:29-30).

The Lord’s explanation is in Matthew 13:40-42: “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” The tares will be gathered and burned. The angels will be sent and they will gather out of his kingdom those that offend and those that do iniquity. The **“look-a-likes”** will not get by with it. It is not good enough to look like a Christian; one must be a Christian from the heart. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). There is a separation made of the good and the bad. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now notice, we have the tares and the wheat looking so much alike that we can hardly tell which is which, but God knows!

We ask where is the rapture in this parable? Neither do we see the Lord reigning for 1,000 years in Jerusalem on

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the literal throne of David! Somehow the battle of Armageddon is missing! The three or four resurrections and judgments spoken of by the premillennial advocates are also missing. The Bible knows nothing of three or four resurrections: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

The premillennial people know they have a problem with this parable. It is so problematic that Scofield tries to fix the problem in his notes. The *C.I. Scofield Reference Bible (A terrible Bible because of the footnotes)* has been an important tool of the dispensationalists for propagating their brand of premillennialism. It has extensive footnotes and references to accomplish this. It is interesting to notice his comments on this parable regarding verse 30 which says:

“Gather ye together first the tares” he says, “at the end of this age (v. 40) the tares are set apart for burning, but first the wheat is gathered into the barn.” He switched ‘first’ from ‘the tares’ in the Bible text to ‘the wheat’ in his comments! (qtd. in a tract on the rapture by Joe Galloway.)

According to the false premillennial theory, the rapture occurs first before the wicked are raised and punished. However, this parable says that the tares are harvested first. Therefore, the ungodly doctrine of premillennialism is crushed again by the inspired Word of God!

The Righteous Are Rewarded

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who

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hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew 13:43).

The righteous shall be clearly identified. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs. 14:34). If we do that which is right, we shall be received into glory: “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory” (Psalm 73:24). We cannot become discouraged by the hypocrites. The kingdom has been promised to those who love God not the hypocrites: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5).

Notice that the ungodly (tares) get their reward. They are burned and there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous hear the greatest words that anyone can hear: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). It will be God’s good pleasure to reward the faithful: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Conclusion

In our conclusion, we want to notice some lessons that we can learn from this parable. We all fall into one category or the other. We have been converted out of a good heart by good seed, or else we are children of the wicked one. We are obligated to keep the church pure, but we are not obligated beyond our abilities to discern. When the evidence is in, we must take a stand. There are some things that we must leave to the Lord. I do not have to sit in judgment on all cases, because I cannot know some things. There will always be hypocrites in the church. Hypocrisy is real. I cannot judge a man’s heart. I cannot judge a man’s motives. God will take care of the tares. We cannot judge

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every situation. If I try to rip out the tares, I will destroy some of the wheat and I will have to answer to God for that. We are to give our fellowman the benefit of the doubt. One can become a professional “tare hunter.” The Devil will have his disciples claiming to be in the kingdom. Some of Satan’s people can be hard to identify because they will say, “I am this or that” when in reality, they are not what they claim to be. One can fool me, but he cannot fool God. A man will reap what he sows. The righteous will be rewarded. Obedience is a must, not an option and we must obey from the heart. We are not to interpret any parable to contradict a clear cut doctrine such as church discipline. It takes the sowing of the seed to produce Christians. We must be careful not to make rash judgments. Sin in the church is the work of Satan. Satan is trying to destroy the church. We must be careful not to cause others to stumble. The church will never be free from sin while on earth.

Though the church will never be free from sin, we are obligated to practice church discipline: 2 Thessalonians 3:6, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” 2 Thessalonians 3:14, “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

It is a sad commentary on the church today to see all the elderships that will not practice what God has commanded. Come judgment day, I am afraid they shall be found among the tares. Think of all the elders that will not back good sound Gospel preaching. These also are among the tares. They claim to be faithful members and even leaders in the Lord’s church. However, they are pretenders and not the real wheat. Come judgment day, they shall be gathered and burned at that last great harvest.

Do not let anyone use the parable of the tares to try to eliminate any commandment of God. Such use of any

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passage is wrong and sinful. May God help us to be pure wheat and avoid being a tare. (Some of the material in this lesson was taken from a tape on the *Parable of the Tares* by Harold Turner).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 16

By Bruce Daugherty

Matthew 16 compels us to give attention to its message. It contains the announcement that Jesus gave concerning the establishment of His Church. Matthew is the only one of the Gospels to use the word church (Gk. - ἐκκλησία).¹ Due to the One who made this announcement and its import for all mankind, it is an announcement that doubly compels us to strain to listen to it, catch its significance and give it priority in our lives. Do you know about the kingdom Jesus announced? Can you identify it? More importantly, have you been added to Jesus' church?

Timing of the Announcement

The announcement of Jesus comes at an interesting point in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew's purpose in writing was twofold. He was making a defense of the faith from its opponents in Judaism and he was instructing his fellow Christians regarding their responsibilities as kingdom people (Nickle 113). Chapter 16 is pivotal in regard to both purposes. The confession as to the identity of Jesus and his subsequent promise to build his church set a defense for Christian convictions and gave insight into their relationship to their Lord.

The chapter opens as Jesus was tempted by the Pharisees and Saducees to give a sign from heaven. Jesus pointed out that though these sign seekers were able to read physical signs about the weather, they were unable to interpret the spiritual signs about Jesus. Only the sign of

¹In 16:18 and also in Matthew 18:17.

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Jonah would help them to identify Jesus (Matthew 16:1-4; see also Matthew 12:38-42).

Following this encounter, Jesus warned his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees. When they thought he was referring to their lack of physical bread, he rebuked them for their lack of spiritual understanding. The disciples, as well as the Pharisees and Saducees, were not reading the signs available to them (Matthew 16:5-12).

As they neared the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked the twelve about his identity (Matthew 16:13-20). First, he asked for the testimony of popular opinion. His disciples supplied the various answers: John the Baptizer, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. Though Jesus shared similar characteristics to all these great servants of God, the answers of men were incorrect. Opinion polls do not determine truth.

In contrast to the answers of men, Jesus then asked the disciples for their understanding of his identity. Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:17). Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Jewish term Messiah, “Anointed one.” In the Old Testament, servants of God were set apart for God’s particular tasks for them by anointing. Prophets, priests and kings were anointed for their special service (Leviticus 8:12; 1 Samuel 16:13; 1 Kings 19:16). Peter identified Jesus as the expected Anointed Servant of Jewish hopes.

Jesus’ response to this confession was immediate. He pronounced a blessing on Peter and the other disciples, because their correct understanding of his identity was not a deduction from the logic and reasoning of men. Instead, it was acceptance of the revelation that God had given to them. Unlike the Pharisees, the disciples were able to “interpret the signs of the times” enough to identify Jesus as the Messiah.

Now Jesus was ready to make his announcement. Only with a proper understanding of who Jesus was could his disciples understand what he was about to tell them.

Truth of the Announcement

“And on this rock I will build My Church” (Matthew 16:18). The identification of Jesus as the Messiah is now followed by the news that the Messiah would have a people! The Anointed One would have his assembly. The Savior would have those whom he saved (Matthew 1:21). The King would have a kingdom!

This announcement helps us to see the inseparable bond that exists between Jesus and his church. A correct identification of Jesus ties him to his people. Some people today plead, “Give me Jesus, not the Church.” Such a statement completely misunderstands Jesus’ announcement.

The announcement of the kingdom was accompanied by assurance from Jesus that the gates of Hades would not be able to overcome his kingdom. No one is stronger than Jesus the Christ. With this assurance Jesus also promised to give Peter the keys of the kingdom. This is a delegation of authority from the reigning King.

The promise of Jesus became a reality when the Gospel began to be preached. On the day of Pentecost, Peter and the other disciples used the keys of the kingdom as they proclaimed the truth about Jesus. When interrupted by the request of what to do, Peter responded, “Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized and that day about 3000 souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Trouble with the Announcement

After Jesus made this promise, something unusual took place. Jesus prohibited his disciples from telling anyone that he was the Christ. The reason for the prohibition can be seen in verses 21-23. While the disciples had correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah, they still did not understand what kind of Messiah Jesus would be. He was not a political deliverer of popular Jewish hopes. Instead, he told them how he would go to Jerusalem to suffer, die and to rise from the dead. This was so different from the first century understandings of the Messiah. Peter's rebuke of Jesus is typical of how objectionable this was: to conceive of their Messiah in these terms. It was probably because of these preconceptions that Jesus prohibited proclaiming the truth of his Messiahship at that time. While Peter meant well, he was ignorant of God's plan. In very strong and plain language, Jesus told Peter that he was not "minding the things of God but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23).

Trouble about the Rock

The announcement passage of Matthew 16 contains some expressions that need further study. Foremost among these is correctly identifying the "rock" in this passage. Roman Catholic interpretation has long held that Peter is the rock referred to by Christ. While Catholic supporters have countered the terminology of the Greek text (petros - Peter, is not the same as petra - rock) with the claim that Jesus was speaking Aramaic (in Aramaic there is no difference between the name Cephas [kepha was used for both Peter, and rock] - see John 1:42), there is no need to be an expert in Greek or Aramaic before we can understand what "rock" refers to in the text (Ferguson 47). But, why did Jesus use this term if there was going to be all this confusion about it?

A comparison of the passage to the accounts in Mark and Luke shows that while Peter's confession is found in all three Gospels, the blessing and promise of Matthew 16:17-19 are found only in Matthew's account.² Why? The answer is that the content of those verses had meaning for Matthew's original Jewish readers.

"He will be as a sanctuary; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel . . ." (Isaiah 8:14). "Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation . . .'" (Isaiah 28:16). "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22-23). "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure" (Daniel 2:44-45).³ The Hebrew Scriptures, that were

²Any New Testament can be used for making this kind of comparison but a publication of all four texts on the same page like United Bible Societies' edition allows the gospel accounts to be seen side by side which helps the student see the contrasts more readily. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, Kurt Aland, ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1982), 150.

³Some people argue that *petra* — rock and *lithos* — stone are not the same words and therefore should not be interchanged, but the Septuagint text of Isaiah 8:14 uses both terms with reference to the same individual, Jesus.

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so familiar to Jesus' disciples as well as Matthew's readers, are the "quarry" that Jesus used for the term "rock."

Now notice the New Testament use of these passages: Jesus quotes Psalm 118 in Matthew 21:42. He was obviously referring to himself as the stone. His enemies also understood this as they sought to arrest Jesus, not Peter.

Paul combines both Isaiah passages in Romans 9:32-33. The stone of stumbling that the Jews stumbled over was the fact that the Messiah was crucified — the very fact that caused Peter such a problem in Matthew 16:22. This fact is also brought out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23.

If anyone would know who "rock" referred to it would have been Peter. Peter's testimony as to the identity of the "rock" should forever settle this question.

In Acts 2:36 Peter summed up his sermon on the day of Pentecost by asserting, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." He was proclaiming Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Messiah. When Peter was on trial before the Sanhedrin he boldly proclaimed the truth about Jesus. "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands before you whole. This is 'the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12). The preaching that the Jewish leaders wanted to eliminate was

Similar terms can be used to communicate the same idea. For a discussion of the bearing of synonyms on interpretation see Peter Cottrell & Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 156-161.

preaching in Jesus' name not Peter's!⁴ How appropriate that it is Peter who sums these passages together in 1 Peter 2:4-8. "Come to Him, as to a living stone - rejected indeed by men but chosen by God and precious." These Christians had come to their Messiah Jesus, not Peter.

Trouble with the Gates of Hades

This phrase too, was familiar to Matthew's Jewish readers. The "gates of Hades" was a Semitic expression for the entrance to the realm of the dead, with gates being understood as the strongest part of ancient walled cities. It signified the "power of death." (See Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13; 107:18; Isaiah 38:10) (Ferguson 52). Because of this meaning, it is not likely that Jesus had in mind here conflict with the kingdom of Satan. Instead, death would not prevent him from establishing the church. While some church history students refer to Matthew 16:18 as they seek to trace out an unbroken line of ancestry from Pentecost to this day,⁵ in my judgment, it is a misunderstanding of what Jesus was saying. Jesus was simply stating that he was stronger than the gates of death. The resurrection was God's powerful declaration of Jesus' Sonship and Messiahship (Romans 1:4).

⁴Follow the "name" thread beginning in Acts 3: 6, 16; 4 :7,10, 17, 18, 30; 5:28, 40-41.

⁵Dr. Bill Patterson's *Search for True Discipleship in Church History* (Ft. Worth, TX: Star Publishing, 1989) 69, is an example of one such interpretation. An unbroken chain of succession from Pentecost to today is incapable of being established with the historical evidence currently available. Is such a chain necessary? All that is needed is the seed, the Word of God (Matthew 13:18-23; Luke 8:11). And we have the promise that this word will abide forever (Isaiah 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:23).

Trouble with the Keys of the Kingdom

The figure of Peter as the doorkeeper to heaven has a long history. Medieval imagery and popular jokes of today refer to Peter as heaven's gatekeeper. But, this is an erroneous understanding of Peter's receiving the keys of the kingdom. The imagery of the keys referred to the "binding and loosing" that the apostle exercised. This was not some arbitrary power left to Peter's judgment. Peter's task, along with the rest of the apostles, was not to determine who entered the kingdom or was kept out of it. Instead, they proclaimed the terms of entry and access into the kingdom. The authority exercised by the apostles was authority given to them by Jesus.

Today's Application of the Announcement

The great announcement of Jesus came after his identity was declared. It foretold of the great event that would be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The proclamation of Jesus as Anointed King signified that he would have a people over whom he reigns. The church is that people in relation to Christ. We should be ever thankful to God and humble in his sight to be recipients of this announcement and its reality in our lives! We must continue the task of proclaiming the truth of this announcement and its significance for salvation (Matthew 28:18-20).

But, just as there were misunderstandings of Jesus in his day, there are misunderstandings of Jesus and his church today. While we would be flattered to be known as John, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets, to think of Jesus as one of God's servants instead of the Son, is a disservice to him (Hebrews 3:5-6).

In a similar manner, to think of the church as one among many in the world detracts from the King and his authority. The uniqueness and unity of Christ's people is

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seen in the various images for it in Scripture. There is one kingdom, one flock, one bride, one temple, one body. And, there is one church.

We must also remember that the answers of men are wrong regarding Jesus and his church. We will not find the truth about the Savior and his church by following popular opinion and traditions of men. Only in the revelation from God, his Word, will we find the truth. The basis of religious unity is not acceptance of denominationalism but upholding the one church revealed in Scripture.

We must also have a clear concept of the Messiah whom we seek to serve. The concepts of the Messiah were highly confused in Jesus' day. Our understanding may be just as confused today. The challenge is to accept Jesus not on man's terms and understanding, but on God's! Are we mindful of the things of men or the things of God if we are desiring to have a "health and wealth" Gospel? The Messiah suffered as he was obedient to the will of God. May the Messiah's people also be willing to suffer as they follow him (1 Peter 4:19).

Have you answered Jesus' question as to his identity? Have you understood the announcement Jesus made about his kingdom? Have you been added to his church?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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THE KINGS TRIUMPHANT ENTRY

Matthew 21:1-12

By Dennis Curd

In a life that was generally less than self-exalting, Jesus does provide us with a show that seems somewhat out of place. He had been born in a small town of Israel, born to a poor and unknown couple. His early years were unnoticeable in the flow of life in Judea and Galilee, with even two years or so spent as a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2:13-21). His return to Nazareth saw him raised as an ordinary boy doing ordinary things. With the exception of his interaction with the doctors at the temple at twelve years of age (Luke 2:46), we have no knowledge of anything unusual about this young man.

Even as Jesus began his personal ministry, he was always quick to defer attention to his own work, forcing people to see the Father through him. He once told a crowd, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which had sent me” (John 5:30). His personal interactions with the crowds that followed him early on were somewhat diverse. At times, he was more than glad to have the crowds gather around him (cf. Matthew 9:35-38). In such settings, he welcomed them all as sheep without a shepherd. He healed all that came to him, and told the disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would provide adequately for the harvesting of the precious crop of souls before them.

However, when the people wanted to give too much honor to him, he backed away and left them. At one point when the people wanted to make him a king, he departed into a mountain alone (John 6:15). It would seem that such a position was not part of his plan, at least not in the way the people had in mind. Yet, it is this very thing that he

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would one day soon after seem to altogether accept. Why on one occasion did he retreat at the people's praise, and on another accept it as inevitable?

Each of the Gospel records record what has been come to be known as the Triumphant Entry (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38; John 12:18-19). Jesus arrives in Jerusalem at the beginning of his final week before the events of the cross. This climactic week was to see Jesus in all his power and might culminated with his ultimate submission in the suffering and death he bore at the crucifixion. The week was to begin in the same way. He was to enter the city as a conquering King, triumphant and deserving of the adoration of the people. Yet, his entry was one of submission and meekness as well. Recognition of both elements is essential in understanding what took place at their important events in the ministry of Jesus.

Jerusalem's place in God's plan for man is critical. Just why it is or how much it is, are interesting thoughts that we may never be able to fully answer. God brought Abraham into the land early in biblical records (Genesis 11-12). Abraham and the other patriarchs lived and moved throughout the land. No city of their possession, however, was to be called Jerusalem. Some have speculated that Melchizedek that met with Abraham on at least one occasion was from a place that may have been an early Jerusalem. (In Genesis 14:18, Melchizedek is called the King of Salem, causing some to connect that with Jerusalem. Later the Jebusites were said to occupy Jerusalem (Judges 1:21). The etymology of these names of people have caused some to speculate on the ancient significance of this city of God's people.) It is clear, however, that the city was not in Israelite hands until only a thousand years or so before Christ was born. David took the city from the Jebusites after he had become King of Israel (cf. 2 Samuel 5:6-10). Soon this city took on what appears to be God's intentions for Israel long before. From

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the time of Moses God had told Israel that he would choose a place among them which would be called after his name and where sacrifices would be performed (Deuteronomy 16:2, 6). It was only after the conquest of Jerusalem that one can see these promises congeal in one specific place. Prior to that, the Tabernacle with its attendant functions was moved about in the wilderness, settled at Shiloh until Eli and destroyed by the Philistines who likewise took the ark of the covenant with them (1 Samuel 4;11; 5:1). David's conquest of Jerusalem saw the rebuilding of the Tabernacle and the reacquisition of the ark of the covenant (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13, 15).

From this time forward, Jerusalem becomes the center of Israel's religious life. Three times a year all the males were to assemble there to keep the feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16). David's desire to provide a permanency to the dwelling place of the ark of God was not fulfilled personally but fell to his son, Solomon. The Temple of Solomon was completed and dedicated in a great way (cf. 1 Kings 6, 8). The Temple in the entwining years saw its ups and downs as it was gloriously maintained or left desolate. Finally, God allowed it to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. It was rebuilt in the days of Darius the Great (ca. 516 B.C.), and modernized by Herod the Great in the years immediately prior to the birth of Jesus.

The Temple, however, is not the subject at the present, but rather the city where it existed. Jerusalem was the place the prophets told Israel that God would one day establish "the mountain of the Lord's house" and "all nations shall flow into it" (Isaiah 2:2). Out of Jerusalem the word of the Lord would go forth. This promise must have seemed quite elusive as Jerusalem's physical existence was often in doubt; nevertheless, as Jesus walked the earth, Jerusalem was in a great moment of its history. Some must have easily connected Jesus, his teachings and his miracles with a coming moment of glory. Rome was the ever-present

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enemy and they wanted independence. As noted above, Jesus would not accept the rule that they offered him, but that didn't mean he wasn't to be King.

As Jesus' ministry reached its pinnacle, Luke records that Jesus "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). It seems clear that after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ (Luke 9:20), that the direction of Jesus work decidedly turned towards the cross (9:22-27). The kingdom of God would be seen before that generation passed, and Jerusalem would play a key role in its appearance. From this moment until Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, he was working toward finalizing the work of heaven in preparation for the coming kingdom.

It is evident, then, that his entrance into the city would not be as unassuring as it had been in the past. How could all the work of God from eternity come down to the last days of preparation and go by unnoticed? How could the physical world ignore it? As Jesus entered and was ordered to rebuke the ones crying out to his glory, he responded that "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:40). It seems that this moment was one that was not to be impeded. It was part of God's gathering together all things in heaven and earth in Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

Jesus enters the city in a way that truly was for kings returning from a glorious military campaign, or of a coronation ceremony. The people laid branches of trees along the path he was taking. They also laid the clothes along the path (Matthew 21:8). They generally praised God for all the works that had been done, openly blessing "the King that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matthew 21:9). Matthew and Mark record that the people cried out Hosanna, to the son of David (Matthew 21: 9; Mark 11:9), meaning "save us" son of David. They understood Jesus' connection to David's Kingship and the saving power of such a King in God's service.

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Nevertheless, this King's entrance into the city was not in typical fashion as a conquering king. He came riding a young donkey. Zechariah the prophet had once said, "Behold thy King cometh unto thee meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matthew 21:5). Each of the Gospels record Jesus riding the animal and Matthew, Mark and Luke describes his provision to acquire the animal. Seemingly, arrangements had been made by Jesus for the occasion, unless we must believe the procurement of the animal was miraculously arranged. More likely, it was planned by Jesus indicating his intention to do precisely as he did. Therefore, the entrance into the city on the foal of a donkey was a vivid sign of triumph and submission all rolled into one.

John records that many who had been at Lazarus' resurrection (John 11) were in Jerusalem not only to see Jesus but Lazarus as well. The stage was being set for the final events of Jesus' life and work. The activities that day were so profound that the Pharisees' perception of the events indicated the concession that "the world is gone after him" (John 12:19).

As the brief record of this entry concludes, Jesus moves quickly to his final interactions with his enemies and his disciples. No more is said about the mode of entry, but the fact of how it was done was clearly in the minds of all who saw him. This was a man to be dealt with and not to be ignored. Sadly, the world didn't realize who he was, or as Paul would later say, if they had known "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8). Even the multitudes that seemed to welcome the King, the son of David, would within days cry out for his blood (Matthew 27:22, 25).

Jesus went to the cross, but at his own time and with his own plan. He forcefully, yet humbly, laid out his intentions and accomplished his goals. The triumphant entry of Jesus into the doomed city of Jerusalem falls

THE KING'S TRIUMPHANT ENTRY by Dennis Curd

clearly into God's plan of completion in the "fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:10). Jesus looked over this city as he entered the city this very time and wept over it and its future (Luke 19:41). He would in a few days hence speak those haunting words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, but ye would not" (Matthew 23:37)!

This city that he came to in glory would brutally murder him. Some forty years later, the Roman armies would lay it in ruins. Jesus is alive and in power at the right hand of God, and his enemies reign no more. Truly, the triumph of the meek and mighty one is powerfully proclaimed.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dennis L. Curd was born in Union, South Carolina. He is married to Sandra Jean, and they have two children. Their daughter, Jennifer, is married to Shawn Sprouse, and they live in Aylette, Virginia where she is a high school teacher. Their son, Justin, is a Junior in high school. Dennis has a B.S. degree in Biological Sciences from Auburn University. He is also a 1988 graduate of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. He has done local preaching in Phenix City, Alabama and Christiansburg, Virginia where he has lived and worked for the last six years. He has done mission work in Ukraine, having made four trips to that country. Prior to his preaching, he worked as truck driver and served in the army, working in a medical research facility. He enjoys woodworking, gardening and hiking.

JUDGING

By Frank Higginbotham

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matthew 7:1-2). It seems that about everyone knows this passage of Scripture. They may not know any other verse in the Bible but they know and use ‘judge not.’ This passage is used as a defense against anyone who tries to help another with his spiritual welfare. They are turned away by claiming that the Bible prohibits judging. Those who refuse to give any attention to the salvation of their souls use this defense in turning away anyone who tries to help them. The person who wants to justify himself in living an immoral life uses this passage. The member of the church who has been walking disorderly seeks to cover his error by making an appeal to this Scripture. Is this what the Bible intends when we are told not to judge?

The word for judging used in this verse is the Greek word ‘krino.’ It means to distinguish, to decide, to try, to condemn or punish. It is used about 114 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it is used in a favorable way and sometimes in a negative way. A careful study of the context in which it is used is thus necessary. The surrounding verses hold the key as to what is meant in the particular passage.

Is judging wrong within itself? Remember that God judges men. “To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23). The passage makes it clear that God does judge men. Also, remember that Christ will judge all men in the Judgment Day at the end of time. “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that

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it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:42). Paul affirms that Christ will judge all. “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:1). It is further stated that God has given judgment to his Son. “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). Some would reason that it is certainly right for God and Christ to judge because they know the hearts of men, however we do not and therefore it is not permitted for us to judge in any way. While we would grant that we do not know the hearts of men, this does not exclude us from exercising the judging that we are commanded to do. “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). It becomes obvious that some judging by us is approved by God and some is not approved.

What kind of judging does not meet the approval from God? We are forbidden to judge according to appearance. A man’s worth does not depend on what his racial origin is. We have struggled for years with the race problem because some make a snap judgment about a person based on the color of his skin. Racial prejudice makes some treat others as though they are not even human. It is clear that improvement has been made along these lines in the past few years but much more needs to be done. Some look at the things a man has and decide his worth by these things. James deals with a principle that needs to govern our activities. We must not judge according to appearance. “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

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Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" (James 2:1-4).

To make a difference in our treatment of others based on material wealth is in plain opposition to the teachings of Christ. The poor man of Luke Sixteen did fare better than the rich man. Their acceptance with God did not rest with the amount of wealth they had during life. The poor man was not accepted because of his poverty nor the rich man rejected because of his material goods. The judgment was made on the kind of person each was. We thus become judges of the thoughts of men if we decide our treatment of them on the basis of what they have.

It is also wrong to judge men based on some rumor or story we have heard without knowing the facts. People sometimes have such dislike for a person that they do not care what is done to the reputation of that individual. It is very easy for a person to start a rumor against someone that is not liked. This rumor, though unfounded, still dwells in the minds of people and sometimes causes them to discriminate against that person without ever taking the time or putting forth the effort to find out the facts. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37).

Christians must be very careful what they say so they do not hurt or destroy the reputation of others. To judge in this way is totally unkind and violates what the Bible says about judging. We are forbidden to treat people based on appearance. Only God knows the heart. We are forbidden to pass judgment on others when we are guilty of the very things we condemn. In Romans One, the apostle Paul exposes the sins that were so prevalent with the Gentiles. He begins chapter two by giving a warning to the Jews. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou

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condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things” (Romans 2:1). Later in the chapter, he makes clear how they were being unfair in their judgments. “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written” (Romans 2:21-24).

God’s name is looked down upon when we do not practice what we preach. To judge others without taking a look at our own lives is hypocritical. “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3-5). The kind of judging that is forbidden by the Bible is based on race, material worth, rumor or on insincerity.

The Lord very plainly commands us to judge in other ways. In Matthew Chapter Seven, while we are warned against judging in the first verse of the chapter, in verse twenty of the same chapter, we are given some insight in regard to our own judging. “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). We are not violating Bible teaching when we look at the fruit a tree bears and make a determination based on that. When we look at the fruit on a tree and see an apple, we are correct in deducing that it is an apple tree. When we observe a man who is drunk, we are not out of line when we make conclusions based on what we see. Some would like to back others off as they live sinful lives by saying that we are not to judge.

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The late Marshall Keeble used to say that we are just ‘fruit inspectors.’ It is not improper judging when we point out that the immoral conduct described in the Bible will condemn men’s souls. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21). To say that we are judging when we try to help others escape the grasp of these sins is not what the Bible teaches. We are under obligation to teach the truth about the sins that will keep men’s souls from entering heaven.

We also are commanded to judge in regard to false teachings. Some consider it highly offensive when a Christian stands up for the Bible teachings and opposes the erroneous teachings of denominationalism. Is it proper judging when error is condemned? “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). How would it be possible to try the teachers without making some judgments? Not everyone who teaches in religion is teaching the right thing. We can only tell about this by using the Scriptures as the correct standard and then make a determination based on what God said. When we have judged properly, we must reject the false way.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Paul declares it to be a noble act when men determine or judge between truth and error. The attitude of the people of Berea was that they readily received the teaching they heard. Then they judged between truth and

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error based on what God had said in his Word. This is proper judging. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 1:9-11). If we are to forbid some to come into my house because of their false teachings, it is essential that judgment must be made on some basis. The passage we are considering tells us that the doctrine of Christ is the standard by which we judge.

We also have an obligation in regard to the false teacher. Paul explained to the Ephesians elders that they needed to guard against false ways. They had to judge between truth and error. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-:30). How could elders tell if a person should come among them if they are forbidden to judge at all. They judge righteous judgment when they consider the teachings a man does and compare it to the Word of God. They are not wrong in making this judgment.

Note another warning given by Paul. “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18). In carrying out the instruction of this passage,

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there must be some judging done. God gives his approval in so doing.

We also are commanded to do some judging in regard to our erring brethren. Without doing so, how would we even know that they were erring? The church at Corinth was rebuked because they had a brother living openly in sin. He was guilty of a sin that Paul said was not even practiced by the Gentiles. They had done nothing to stop the effect of this sin on the brother or on the church. They were given specific instruction that they were to carry out. Read the instruction and then see if they were commanded to judge in this matter. "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

Many people today are opposed to the withdrawal of fellowship for a disorderly brother by saying that there is no one without sin and therefore no one is qualified to withdraw. It is certainly true that none of us live a sinless life but was this not the case when Paul wrote this letter to Corinth? Judging from the things written in Paul's letter, the brethren had a number of things that they needed to correct in regard to their own lives. Remember that the instruction to withdraw was still given to the church. The instruction was not given to sinless, perfect men but to those who were trying to do the things God instructed. Paul was not commanding them to do something that they could

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not carry out. To argue that it takes sinless men to carry out the command to withdraw fellowship is a very weak way of trying to get around God's instructions.

Note the instruction given to the church at Thessalonica. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6). When this is pointed out to be a command, this instruction is no longer in the realm of option. We are not given a choice. What other command of God can be ignored or neglected and still please God? Do we have an option with the command to be baptized (Acts 10:48)? Why, then, do we hear of congregations that have not exercised discipline in years and some perhaps never? To reason that it will upset the church and we have no perfect people to carry it out is very poor reasoning. We must judge based on the facts and then out of love for the soul and for the church we must act.

We also are instructed to judge in regard to our own lives. "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:21-25). The reason for consulting a mirror is that we want to see what we look like in God's sight. We then make the corrections that need to be made. We judge our lives by the things written in the Bible. It is not hard for us to know our standing. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;

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prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). To examine ourselves means that we compare our lives to the teachings of God's Word. We must do some judging and bring our lives in line with the teachings of God. We can tell if we are Christians by determining if we have obeyed the Lord's command to repent and be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). We also can determine if we have been faithful by the way we participate in the work and worship of the church (Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 4:2). The Lord wants us to judge our lives regularly so that we will be ready to meet him when he comes.

The verse in our text that forbids judging forbids improper judging. It is not a prohibition against all judging. We are to judge righteous judgment.

INVITATION OF KING

Matthew 11:28-30

By Terry Jones

Invitations are important and ought to be treated as such. When engaged couples set a date when they will be married, they send out invitations to friends and acquaintances that they would like to have present at the wedding to share in their happiness. Those receiving the invitation should feel honored to have been chosen, and if possible, return the favor with their presence.

In Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus taught a parable about a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent invitations to many people to attend the wedding. Those who were invited insulted the king by rejecting the invitation and killing his servants. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is like that. All are invited into the kingdom but many reject the invitation.

It is a great theme that has been chosen for this lecture program. “The King and His Kingdom in Matthew” is a subject that will certainly provide an opportunity for serious study, excellent edification and great growth for those who hunger and thirst for the word of God. The topic for this study is “The Invitation of the King” as recorded in Matthew 11:28-30. There Jesus said:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

This invitation is a special one because it comes from Jesus Christ our King. The acceptance or rejection of this

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invitation will have eternal ramifications. Let us notice the following five things about this invitation from our text.

The Request (Matthew 11:28a)

This invitation begins with the Lord making the simple request, “Come to Me.” There are two things that ought to jump out at us from these three words. First, there is the *direction*. Jesus directs us to “come.” That involves action on our part. We must be both hearers and doers (James 1:22-25). Not only must we hear the invitation, but we must also respond with our obedience to the Lord.

Secondly, there is the *destination*. We must come to Jesus! Coming to Buddha, Mohammed or Joseph Smith is of no value whatsoever. Only by coming to Jesus will we ever find salvation for our souls. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). On one occasion, many disciples turned away from following Jesus. He then asked the twelve if they also would go away. “Then Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’” (John 6:68).

Come to Jesus! He will save you, Tho your
sins as crimson glow;

If you give your hearts to Jesus, He will
make them white as snow.

Come to Jesus! Dying sinner! Other Savior
there is none;

He will share with you His glory, When
your pilgrimage is done.

The Recipients (Matthew 11:28b)

The Lord’s invitation has been issued to “all you who labor and are heavy laden.” This invitation is universal in its scope because every one of this earth’s inhabitants has

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labored under the heavy burden of the cares, troubles and trials associated with this life. Many struggle with physical diseases and maladies that have plagued their body. Others are sinking beneath loads of moral and mental stresses. All are burdened by sin and spiritual defects.

Many in Jesus' day were heavy laden with the burdens of religion. "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers'" (Matthew 23:1-4). Whatever the burden, Jesus is the answer. It is imperative that every person understand that they are a recipient of the King's invitation.

The Reward (Matthew 11:28c)

Those who receive the King's invitation and come to Him will be rewarded. To them Jesus promised, "and I will give you rest." He has given assurance that he will provide rest to those who are weary and fatigued by whatever burden they may be bearing. For those drowning in sin, Jesus offers forgiveness and remission. Sin is a cancer that eats away at our souls, gnaws on our consciences and leads to eternal death. Without Christ, there is no possible relief, but coming to him we will find rest. For those who are troubled with the trials of this life, the Lord provides restful peace. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The Requirement (Matthew 11:29a)

In verse twenty-nine, Jesus sets forth two requirements of those who receive the invitation. The first is, "Take My

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yoke upon you.” Oxen are yoked by their master so that they might be able to bear heavy burdens. Jesus was addressing Jews who had been overburdened by the legalistic teachers of the Law of Moses who were binding strict regulations upon them. He wanted them to trade that yoke for the one that he would give. Notice that Jesus didn’t promise to take away the yoke altogether. Rather, he will replace the existing yoke with a much easier one. The yoke is necessary for discipline and control. The Christian willingly disciplines himself and places himself under the control of Christ to do his will. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

The second requirement Jesus gave is “learn from Me.” Jesus spent his earthly ministry teaching and seeking people who would learn from him. Through his Word, we still have the privilege of learning from him. As Jesus drew to a close the sermon on the mount, he said:

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall (Matthew 7:24-27).

The wise man is one who is willing to listen to Jesus and learn from him. It is from Jesus that we learn how to be saved. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him” (Hebrews 2:3). We take Christ’s yoke and learn from him

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when we obey the Gospel plan of salvation and fulfill our duties and obligations with faithful service in the church.

The Reasons (Matthew 11:29b-30)

Not only does Jesus give this invitation, but he also provides three reasons why we ought to receive it. First, we ought to come to Jesus because he is “gentle and lowly in heart.” Jesus did not present himself as one who was pompous and proud, but gentle and humble. He did not cast off sinners and reject the sick and down-trodden. Rather, he patiently and tenderly cared even for them. This can be readily seen in his dealing with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-26), in healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9), in saving the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-12) and a host of other examples that could be cited.

Secondly, we ought to come to Jesus because “you will find rest for your souls.” The weary soul who comes to Jesus and learns from him will find rest. To the woman at the well, Jesus said, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13-14). Just as those who come to Jesus will never again thirst, neither will they again need rest. Only Jesus can provide eternal rest for our souls. This is a place of work but heaven is a place of rest. “...Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them” (Revelation 14:13). Jesus has gone ahead to prepare a place of rest for us in the Father’s house (John 14:1-3).

Will you come, will you come, With your
poor broken heart, Burdened and sin
oppressed?

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Lay it down at the feet of your Savior and
Lord, Jesus will give you rest.

O, happy rest, sweet happy rest, Jesus will
give you rest.

O, why won't you come in simple, trusting
faith? Jesus will give you rest.

Thirdly, we ought to come to Jesus because, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Jesus did not say that there would be no burden and no yoke. What He did say is that if we come to him the yoke would be easy and the burden light. Being a Christian can sometimes be a very difficult and trying thing. Yet, when we think of the sacrifice of Christ as he died for our sins, the church that he purchased with his blood for our well-being, and the home in heaven that is awaiting us, the burdens of this life seem not so difficult. The apostle Paul said it best, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

There are some invitations that may not impress us and we may cast them aside. But, may we never think lightly of the invitation of the King. Will you come to Jesus?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Terry G. Jones was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia and was raised in Toll Gate, West Virginia. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They now have two sons - Austin (Age 17) and Quintin (Age 14).

Terry is a 1986 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, Tennessee. He received the A.A. and B.A. degrees from Ohio Valley College in 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, Tennessee from 1986 to 1989. He then moved to Pennsboro, West Virginia where he has been preaching to the present.

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RESURRECTION

By Dennis Curd

Solomon once said, “that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath; so the man hath no preeminence above a beast; for all is vanity, all go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20). Everyone, sooner or later, will stand over a dead, departed loved one. Their physical remains lie before us. With a few words, the casket is laid in the grave and their physical presence is forever removed from sight. It is easy to conclude from the natural senses that Solomon was exactly right. What happens to a beast happens to men. They all go to the ground and return to dust.

Solomon uses a common refrain in Ecclesiastes that betrays a limited view of perception. He repeats often that life and existence “under the sun” are in everyway “vanity” and “vexation of spirit” (cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2, 17). If all one had was the perception of limited physical senses, the only conclusion to come to would be consistent with his. Death is the end, and there is nothing beyond.

Yet, from the beginning man has believed in life after death. Every culture that has ever been studied has revealed a strong and powerful concept of life beyond the grave. Elaborate preparations for that life are evident in the vast and rich tombs discovered in Egypt, Sumer, China and elsewhere. The question that remains for anthropologists is where did such a concept come from? If our physical senses conclude this world is all there is, how did man ever envision something beyond?

The truth of life beyond the physical world has been revealed by him who is beyond this world. By faith, we can see into the realm of God, because he has revealed it to us

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(Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Even before the flood, God gave remarkable evidence of life beyond this world when he “took” Enoch, a man of faith. Enoch’s “taking” was evidence to all that the grave is not the end, for “he was not” (Genesis 5:24). He was not any longer here, but he was somewhere else. The else is the basis of all of man’s hope.

Abraham longed for something else where he is described as seeking a better country, “that is, a heavenly” one (Hebrews 11:16). Abraham believed in life hereafter, a life that had been revealed to him by God’s Word. Jesus would later say that Abraham rejoiced to see his day (John 8:56). He saw it and rejoiced in it from his place beyond this world. Jesus would use this basic idea to prove to the Sadducees the reality of the resurrection (cf. Matthew 22:23-31). This religious sect of Jews in Jesus’ day had come to disbelieve in life after death or even the belief in angels (Acts 23:8). Jesus used a passage from an accepted text to prove their error. Quoting from Moses’ encounter at the burning bush, Jesus described God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and as being the God of the living (Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:32). As far as Jesus was concerned, Abraham was dead, but he still was alive. His life continued in a realm beyond.

Life beyond death, however, is only part of this study. Resurrection is descriptive of more than existence beyond life. It is descriptive of life with God beyond life. While technically even the wicked are resurrected, they are resurrected to damnation (John 5:29). It is not that resurrection that brings hope to the faithful. Peter would describe the more positive aspect of resurrection in these words: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy had begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Our hope as God’s children rests ultimately on the work of Christ, and

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preeminently on his resurrection from the dead. While even the wicked will live forever, only the righteous will live with God. Thus, our hope is a lively, or living, hope, and it is to be had only in Jesus.

Therefore, a study of resurrection in general can have no real power until it deals specifically with the resurrection of Jesus. In the many grand aspects of Jesus' life that can occupy our minds, such as his birth, his preaching, his mighty works, his suffering, his death and his ascension, none of them have any real power without his resurrection. Paul was even so bold as to say that it is by the resurrection from the dead that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power" (Romans 1:4). Paul had preached the same in Antioch of Pisidia, stating that the fulfillment of the second Psalm that "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" was accomplished by Jesus being raised from the dead (Acts 13:33). Clearly the resurrection of Jesus was the centerpiece of his work.

It is amazing, then, how little is said about the actual resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel records. One can look quickly to the closing chapters of each of the four Gospels and note the brevity of space assigned to the moment of resurrection. In fact, it cannot be ascertained when exactly he was raised. It was on the first day of the week, but when the interested parties arrived at the tomb at the rising of the sun, the first day was already twelve hours gone. The tomb was empty at their arrival, and without the declaration of the angels who stood thereby, no pronouncement of the resurrection was made. The simple message of even this heavenly host was that "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is raised" (Matthew 28:5-6).

One might think that such an important event would be described in more detail. Apparently, from God's perspective, all that is necessary is provided. The fact of the resurrection is far more important than the details

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pertaining to its happening. Jesus' appearances to the women who came that early morning, as well as to the apostles in the weeks to come, give the real emphasis to the event. In fact, over the period of forty days after the resurrection, Jesus gave powerful testimony to the truthfulness of this momentous act. Appearing to the groups already mention, as well as to over five hundred at once (1 Corinthians 15:6), Jesus produced numerous eyewitnesses to the reality of his bodily resurrection. These things, like all of Jesus' work, were surely not done in secret (cf. John 18:20). It is evident, therefore, that the power of the resurrection is more important than the event itself. This power is the topic of discussion in much of the New Testament.

Victory over death is a key aspect of man's hope. Hebrews says that the fear of death has kept man in bondage (Hebrews 2:15). Paul's words of victory recorded in that beautiful resurrection chapter written to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 15), concludes with the statement, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). The victory we have in Christ is centered in his conquest over death, which is the sting of sin.

In the course of God's Word, we have cases of people being raised from the dead. Elijah and Elisha both accomplished this feat (1 Kings 17:17a; 2 Kings 4:27-37). Jesus performed the miracle on several recorded occasions (Luke 7:11-17; John 11). The apostles likewise (Acts 9:36-42). Even in the course of Jesus' own resurrection, God opened the tombs nearby and many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose (Matthew 27:52). All of these were seen after their resurrection, producing eyewitnesses throughout the area. The fact of life after death was obvious by their presence. Nevertheless, these all died again, as far as we can determine. Jesus, the exception, ascended into heaven to provide us with more than just a temporary

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reprieve from death. His victory was not limited in scope and time but was permanent. It is to this end that we hope.

The allusion to resurrection that is evident in obedience to the Gospel takes us another step. In one's baptism, the physical body remains flesh and blood, still awaiting its ultimate death and decay, but the soul is released from its death terminus by the power of the resurrection of Jesus. Baptism's power is in its duplication of Jesus' action in his own death, burial and resurrection. Each of these are examples of what we must do and thereby what he will do for us (Romans 6:3-6). His death on the cross, his burial and his resurrection are examples of what we must do and what he will do for us (Romans 6:3-6). Our old body of sin is crucified and dies. We are buried in baptism (immersion alone is a burial). All this is done in order that we can be raised to walk in newness of life. The ability to live brand new in Christ, even while we are still in this world, is found in the power of his resurrection. Peter would put it this way: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). The parenthetical statement in that verse that describes what really changes, the conscience rather than a fleshly cleansing, somewhat obscures the connection being salvation and the resurrection intended. It was not the death of Christ, or the burial of Christ that provides hope, although each is essential. If Christ had died and remained buried, no hope would be possible. His resurrection changed forever the ability of man to conquer sin's effect.

Jesus discussed personally this temporal aspect of the power of the resurrection. He said this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). Several verses later, the Son of man, also referring to Jesus, is given credit for the general resurrection of the dead that will take place for all men

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(John 5:28-29). On Pentecost (Acts 2), not many days from then, some three thousand, dead in sin, were baptized into Christ's death, and rose again. Those who had been dead in sin were now alive in Christ. They were among the saved (Acts 2:47).

Our present resurrection from death by the saving of our souls changes our state of living. Paul said that our citizenship is in heaven, "from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). It is interesting that he says "from" whence rather "unto" whence we look. In a very real sense we are already heavenly beings in spirit even while still in our physical bodies. Paul told the Ephesians, "even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved ;) and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:5-6). The victory over death is evident even before we die physically. Truly, death has certainly lost its sting!

Yet, there is another resurrection to which we await. Heaven will not be the immediate home of the faithful even after their death. They die in the Lord, but enter the hadean realm until the Lord returns (cf. Luke 16:19-31; 23:43). Our labors are over and our trials are ended, but our final glory has not yet come. The fact that some in the early church misunderstood this reality led Paul to explain to them just what will happen to the Christians who've departed before the Lord's return. He said: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess.

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4:15-17). Jesus had already spoken on the same topic, saying that, “the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29). It is Jesus as the Son of man that is given credit for this reality. Jesus rose from the grave as a resurrected man. Because he was the “firstfruits,” all of mankind has the hope of bodily resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20ff).

The great judgment scene of Matthew Twenty-Five describes the immediate aftermath of the return of Jesus and the gathering of the dead and the living together. The sheep and the goats are separated and quickly dispersed to their appropriate places. This moment of final sentencing will be the concluding act of God upon the affairs of the old world, it physically now having been consumed (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12).

The power of Jesus’ resurrection was the centerpiece of the preaching of the early church (Acts 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18, 32; 24:15, 21). This message of victory was for all men. It rings just as powerfully clear today as then, for men are still engaged in battle with death from which “there is no discharge” (Ecclesiastes 8:8). Christ and he alone, can offer us redemption from sin that has its effect now and forever. “Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph ore his foes” we sing. May we learn to understand and appreciate the power of the resurrection. May we live lives that evidence that knowledge while we anticipate the coming of our blessed Savior.

OFFENSES IN THE KINGDOM

Matthew 18:15-35

By Wesley Simons

Introduction

These verses have been misapplied by some. They claim that these verses are saying that before one can expose a false teacher, he must go to him first. Do I have to go to Billy Graham before I can expose his faith only doctrine? Do I need to call Rubel Shelly before I expose his error? This is not the import of these verses. Matthew is not addressing false doctrine taught by those in or out of the church. He is talking about personal differences between brethren and how to solve them.

If we would follow the prescription for problem-solving laid out by our Lord, then many problems in the church would go away. However, what brethren have a tendency to do is call as many fellow Christians as possible and line them up on their side. By the time both sides have done this, the problem is too large and out of control. The church is then facing the possibility of a split. Most church splits are over personalities rather than doctrine. This is an ungodly shame!

If we do not forgive our fellow man, God will not forgive us: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). However, we do not have to forgive them until they repent: “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3). God will not forgive us until we repent. He does not require more of us than what he is willing to do. We must always have a forgiving

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attitude. Forgiveness is something that all of us are in need of at one time or another.

Leo Boles made these observations:

In addition to what Jesus had already said about causing others to stumble, he now gives instructions how to restore those who do stumble. Certain rules are to be observed and principles followed in dealing with the erring... This teaching is prospective as the church had not been established at this time. (375)

Attempt Reconciliation

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother (Matthew 18:15).

When our brother trespasses against us, we are to go to him. Many times we say, "He wronged me. Let him come and make it right." Here God puts the obligation upon the innocent party to take the first step. This is how important unity is among brethren.

Brethren are very slow in going to tell a brother that he has offended them. However, Jesus says this is what needs to be done. We are afraid that going to a brother will cause more trouble. Before we go, we need to make sure it is a genuine offense and not a petty or nitpicking adventure. Neither should it be with the attitude that I will get even with you.

On the other hand, if we go to worship and remember that our brother has ought against us, we are to make every effort to make it right: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before

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the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). The offended and the offender both have an obligation to make things right with each other. What a beautiful plan!

The concept of “**hear**” in this verse is that he is willing to do that which is right. Some will hear and some will not. The following verses tell us what to do if a brother will not hear.

McGarvey states:

The word rendered *trespass* (*amartasa*) means to *sin*; and the clause should be rendered, ‘if thy brother sin against thee.’ In the former part of the discourse Jesus had warned the disciples against giving offense, or in any way mistreating a brother; now he tells them how to proceed when a brother sins against them. (158)

Establish the Facts

But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established (Matthew 18:16).

After one has tried to be reconciled to his brother, but the brother refuses to make things right, then he is told to take one or two witnesses and go back to the one who has done the offending. God does not want it to come down to one brother’s word against another’s. He wants witnesses to establish the effort put forth by the innocent brother in trying to solve the problem. If a brother is truly innocent, why would he fear going to the offending party? Why would he mind having others to hear what takes place?

We should appreciate a brother who loves us enough to tell us when we have done wrong. If we love God and our fellow man, we will do all we can to make things right.

Why? Because we want peace with God, our brother and the church of our Lord.

Coffman makes the following points:

When one feels wronged by another in the church, the temptation is for him to seek out some personal friend or confidant, and to elaborate the real or fancied wrong by embellishing it with every possible coloring and emphasis, thus spreading hate against the offending party. Telling the elders, the deacons, or the preacher, or anyone else, of the evil detected in another is wrong (till after the first admonition); and even after the first admonition, the greatest number to be acquainted with it is two others (see verse 16). *Go to the offender first!* That is God's commandment! Those who depart from it, preferring some other way, do so at their eternal peril. (283)

Tell It to the Church

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matthew 18:17).

If the brother will not hear the offended brother and if he will not make it right before witnesses, then it is to be told to the church. How many times have you known this to happen? Very few!! The church is then to address the problem. If he will not hear the church, then he is to be treated as an heathen or a publican. This means that the church is to withdraw fellowship from the hard-hearted brother.

Discipline is a forgotten commandment. However, it is a command from God: "Now we command you,

brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We say the Baptists are in trouble for neglecting the command to be baptized for the remission of sins. In like fashion, all congregations that will not practice church discipline are in trouble in the sight of God.

God’s Plan for Personal Unity

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:18).

Whatsoever has already been bound in heaven is to be bound on earth. God has a plan for solving problems between brethren and he wants it bound on us. Once this is bound on me, it forces me to go the extra mile to solve all problems with my brother. This is productive of congregational love and unity.

Bob Winton shows the meaning of this verse in its context:

If this verse is taken as part of the preceding three-verse context, then it means that their decision about withdrawal of fellowship from a certain member of the coming church would be honored in heaven. (*Notes on Matthew*)

How shall the world know that we are Christians?

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). We must show the world the beauty of living the Christian life by the way we love each other.

If Two or Three Agree

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 18:19).

The religious world has done great damage to these verses. They say, “If so and so has cancer and two or three agree to pray for that person, then God will remove the cancer.” God has made no such promise! Why don’t two or three of them get together and ask God to save the world? Because he has pointed out how he plans to do that. The context of this verse is solving problems between brethren.

All prayers must be governed by the Scriptures. We cannot pray for just anything. It must be in harmony with his will. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

We must pray as our Lord prayed. “Saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh be removed. However, God’s grace was sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Winton observes:

God is well-pleased when we offer up united prayers to him. This is one among many scriptural indications that audible, public prayers are permitted and encouraged. Some have assumed, based on a misinterpretation of Matthew 6:5f, that prayers must always be offered in privacy (when no one else is present, or silently). The prayer of one humble, faith-filled saint has great influence

on our Heavenly Father; of how much greater impact must the prayers of several of His saints have with Him! (*Notes on Matthew*)

Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).

These verses have been misused to show if two of three are gathered together for worship, God will be there. This is not talking about worship. It is talking about solving problems. What about John on the Isle of Patmos? He might have been the only Christian on that Isle. Could he have worshipped God? He could not if it takes two or three before God is there.

It takes at least two to have an argument. However, if these two (or more, if more are involved) get together as per Matthew 18:15-18 to solve their problems in a Bible way, then God is there and approves of their action and love for each other. One of the things that we can do and know that the presence of God is involved is to solve the differences we have with our brothers. We should work hard to promote the unity that each congregation needs to be pleasing to God.

How Often Shall We Forgive Our Brother

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven (Matthew 18:21-22).

Some get upset with Peter because he came up with the number seven as if forgiveness could be limited, but we

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need to commend him. How many of us can forgive a brother who has truly offended us just one time? The Lord said not seven times, but seven times seventy (490 times). Luke 17:4 reads, “And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” How many of us could forgive a person who trespassed against us seven times in a day? Have you ever trespassed against God seven times in a day? Do you want God to forgive you when you do such?

We expect from God what we are not willing to offer to others. We see the wrong in that person who is constantly doing that which offends us. Then we wonder why he will not change! Even though he repents, we have a hard time finding mercy toward such a weak brother. Do we want God to have this attitude toward us?

We All Need Forgiveness

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt (Matthew 18:23-27).

The context of this parable grows out of the disciples fighting among themselves over who is the greatest in the kingdom (v. 1). The Lord takes a little child unto himself

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and tells the disciples that they are going to have to be converted and become as a little child in order to be saved (vss. 2-3). He tells them that they must humble themselves to be great in the kingdom (v. 4). He also says that it would be better for a man to have a millstone hanged around his neck and then thrown into the sea than to offend one of these little ones (v. 5). He says that offenses will come, but woe unto him by whom the offenses come (v. 7). He states that one should get rid of that which is causing the offense (vss. 8-9). He warns against despising one of the little ones (v. 10). He then tells that he has come to seek and save that which is lost (v. 11). He tells the value of rescuing one soul by telling the parable of the ninety and nine (vss. 12-14). He shows how we ought to go about trying to rescue a brother who has offended us (vss. 15-17). He says that when people meet on earth to resolve differences, then he is there also (vss. 18-20). It is from this context that Peter asked the question that he did and the Lord told the parable of the unforgiving servant.

The kingdom of heaven is like a king taking account of his servants. He finds one who owes a debt that he cannot pay, a circumstance in which all of us are found at times. He finds that one owes him ten thousand talents and the king wants payment to be made in full. (McGarvey said that a talent would be equal to about \$1,600 American dollars. Ten thousand talents would be equal to \$16,000,000 American dollars. If it was a gold talent, the price would be \$325,000,000).

The debtor begs for patience. He wants more time to pay his debt. He falls down, worships the king and declares that he will pay all. (The average daily wage in Palestine was one shilling [17 cents]. At this pay rate, it would take 307,692 years to pay the debt. The fact that the servant said that he would pay the debt shows that he did not realize the enormity of it. If the debtor made \$5,000 a year and could pay all of it on the debt, it would only take 3,200 years to

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pay the debt. He would still have 1,230 years to go in 2003. If the debtor made \$10,000 a year and could pay all of that on the debt, it would only take him 1,600 years to pay the debt).

The king had commanded that the servant, his wife, their children and all that he had to be sold. We see a similar problem in 2 Kings 4:1. “Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.” This is indeed a terrible situation.

The plea for mercy is heard by the king, who was moved with compassion and looses the servant, sets him free and forgives his debt. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). “But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4).

The king did not have to forgive the debt, but he did. The king here represents God. The debtor represents us. We have a sin debt that we could not pay. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:8-9). Man stands bankrupt before the true and living God. Everything that we have belongs to God. Psalm 24:1 reads, “The earth *is* the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

The Unmerciful Servant

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying,

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Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt (Matthew 18:28-30).

One reason the first debtor might not have done better at paying his bills was because he had those who owed him. The forgiven servant goes out and finds a man who owes him one hundred pence (worth about \$15 American dollars according to McGarvey). This would have been about one third of a year's wage.

Notice how unforgiving the forgiven servant is. He lays hands on him and takes him by the throat and demands payment. The debtor asks the first servant to please be patient. He states that he will pay him all. However, the forgiven servant will not be patient and has the servant cast into prison. Jesus is trying to teach that after God has forgiven us of so much, can't we forgive our fellowman of just a little? The forgiven man was very unkind and unforgiving toward the man who owed him.

We Are Wicked If We Fail to Forgive

So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? (Matthew 18:31-33).

The fellowservants saw the unforgiving attitude of the unmerciful servant and were sorry for his conduct. People see our unforgiving attitude. One cannot hide hatred. The lord of the servant would not tolerate this servant's unforgiving and unmerciful attitude.

The lord reminded the man that he had been forgiven because he begged for mercy. However, when the forgiven servant had a chance to respond to another human being in like fashion, he refused to forgive. The lord calls him a wicked servant. We are wicked when we fail to forgive those who have repented of their wrongs toward us. Of all people, this man should have understood the concept of mercy and forgiveness. All he wanted was gain for self. He had no pity or mercy to share with others. “All for me and none for you” was his attitude even in the realm of forgiveness.

Forgive From the Heart

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses (Matthew 18:34-35).

I have known of two Christians who have stated, “I will never forgive so and so.” I told them they had just sealed their doom. If our brother repents, we must forgive him or be lost. **Here is the lesson the Lord wants us to get from this parable. We forgive, or we are not forgiven.** “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). **Again let me state, we do not have to forgive until they repent.** I have known of preachers and Bible teachers who have taught just the opposite. “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him” (Luke 17:3).

The forgiveness must come from the heart. We must always have a forgiving attitude. If our brother has ought against us, we are to go to him. We cannot state this strongly enough. “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the

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altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). If we have ought against our brother, we are to go to him. This is a must. “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matthew 18:15-17).

Brethren are commanded to treat each other a certain way. “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). Notice the Lord’s attitude: “For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” (Psalm 86:5). We must have the same attitude to be God-like.

If we want to be forgiven, we must forgive others. “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). Paul calls upon the church at Corinth to forgive the brother from whom they had withdrawn after he repents. “So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2 Corinthians 2:7).

Look at the example of Jesus when it came to forgiveness. “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots” (Luke 23:34). Stephen also left us a great example. “And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud

voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep” (Acts 7:60).

Conclusion

Let us notice some lessons that we can learn from this great chapter. If we do not forgive, then we will not be forgiven. We must forgive from the heart. Others see our ugly attitude when we do not forgive. Failing to forgive one allows that person to control our lives and thoughts. **I should want to forgive because it makes me God-like. I should want to forgive because I will always need the forgiveness of others. I should want to forgive because of what it does for me.** We cannot worship acceptably unless we forgive (Matthew 5:23-24). **I should want to forgive for the spiritual good of the person I am forgiving:** Second Corinthians 2:7 reads, “So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” It does not do any good to say, “Well, you do not know what that person has done to me.” Have they done more to you than what the people did to Christ? He had a forgiving attitude! This parable illustrates the point that as forgiveness is freely gained from God, it must be freely offered by us. May God help us to be a forgiving people.

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THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

By D. Gene West

In Matthew 21:33-46, we have one of the many important parables spoken by our Lord during his three and a half year ministry. Many of the parables spoken by Jesus were rather enigmatic to the Jews, as had been prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:10-17); however, the parable we have been assigned to study was not, for the Jews understood thoroughly what Jesus was saying and of whom he was speaking (Matthew 21:45). Our text reads,

Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son. But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, `This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? They said to Him, He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other

vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19).

There are so many things in this parable that are worthy of consideration that it is impossible to look at them in a lecture as brief as this one, so we shall look at the outstanding characteristics and leave a more minute study to the hearer/reader.

The Landowner of the parable is more than just that. He planted the vineyard, hedged the vineyard, provided the winepress and the tower for protection. On this matter the esteemed Trench wrote,

The householder is more than possessor of the vineyard: he has himself '*planted*' it (Exod. xv.17; Ps. xlv.2). The planting of the spiritual vineyard found place under Moses and Joshua, in the establishing of the Jewish polity in the land of Canaan; and is described, Deut. xxxii. 12-14; cf. Ezek. xvi. 9-14; Neh. ix. 23-25. But he did not satisfy himself with this. Having planted, he also

'hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower.' This hedge might be either a stone wall (Prov. xxiv.31; Num. xxii. 24; Isai. v. 5), or a fence of thorns or other quickset; this last, if formed, as is common in the East, of the prickly wild aloe, would more effectually exclude the enemies of the vineyard, the fox (Cant. ii. 15; Neh. iv. 3), and the wild boar (Ps. lxxx.13), than any wall of stone. At Isai. v. 5 the vineyard is furnished with both. That it should possess a *'winepress'* would be a matter of course. Not less needful would be the *'tower;'* by which we understand not so much the kiosk, or ornamental building, serving mainly for delight, as a place of shelter for the watchmen who should guard the fruits of the vineyard and a receptacle for the fruits themselves. (202-203)

God had made every provision for the care and guarding of this wonderful vineyard, and for her ultimate redemption, a fact that cannot be overlooked when one considers the subject under discussion in this parable.

The language of the parable is based on the Song of Isaiah in 5:1-7, which reads,

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: my Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have

been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.

In the balance of the chapter, God pronounced a series of seven “woes” against Jerusalem and prophesied of the coming of Jerusalem’s enemies. In the verses just read, God pronounced doom and destruction on the city of Jerusalem because of her evil. One need only read the Song of Isaiah and the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen to see the similarities assuring us the Lord based his parable on the song. If Isaiah Five predicts the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the great warlord Nebuchadnezzar, and it probably does, Jesus used very similar language to predict still another destruction of the Jewel of Palestine.

Another important matter to be noticed is that Jesus, as he did in so many of his parables, anthropomorphized God, giving him the characteristics of a man. He called him a “Landowner” who oversaw the development of a vineyard and then went into a far country. Absentee landowners were common in those times even as they are today. God made a tremendous investment in the nation of the Jews. God is further given human characteristics when Jesus quoted him as saying in verse 37, “They will respect my

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son.” God knew the Jews would not respect his Son when he came. Seven hundred fifty years before Jesus made his advent into the world, God had Isaiah the prophet tell how his Son would be abused when he came to his own who would reject him (Isaiah 53 & John 1:11). The Landowner, then, is God, and the Vineyard is the nation to which Jesus came with his message of salvation. The picture of Israel being a vineyard, or vine-stock, runs throughout the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:32; Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 27:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1-6; 19:10; Hosea 10:1).

Jesus likened the sending of the prophets to Israel to servants from the Landowner coming to receive what was due him at vintage-time, or the time of harvest. When the grapes were harvested and made into wine, or sold, or whatever was done with them, a portion of the income from them belonged to the One who had made the initial investment in the development of the Vineyard. Israel was not a Vineyard set free to do as she pleased, but was to bring glory to God and light to the world. In the parable, she had no right to do anything with the Vineyard except care for it with great diligence and return a portion of the profits to the Landowner. Yet, the mere vinedressers conducted themselves as if they were owners of the Vineyard, maltreating and killing the prophets who came to them demanding they give God what was rightfully his and what he deserved. Jesus said they beat some of the servants, killed some and stoned others. This was not done once, but repeatedly as the Lord pointed out in verses 35-36.

This parable, spoken during the last week of our Lord’s life, is reminiscent of the strong language of doom he spoke in an attempt to get the Jews to see what they were doing. For example, in Matthew 23:34-36, Jesus told the Jews,

Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will

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scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

In his famous lament over Jerusalem, in verses 37-39 of this chapter, recorded also by Luke in 13:34-35, Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" This nation had a long history of destroying God's anointed prophets, and they continued that tradition even after they rejected the Stone who became the Chief Cornerstone, namely, the Messiah himself. This was a recalcitrant and truculent nation which resisted the will of God right down to their last syllable of recorded time. In Acts 7:51-53, great Stephen, first Christian martyr, said to this same nation, "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." What an accusation he made, and how true it was!

Jesus emphasized that the vinedressers recognized the heir of the vineyard, and planned his death that they might have the inheritance for their own. Notice his words, "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among

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themselves, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him” (Vss. 38-39). The Jews recognized their Messiah when he came, and many of them became devout followers. However, there were those who recognized him and refused to accept the kind of kingdom he was bringing to them, deciding they could do a better job of organizing the kind of kingdom they should have than God. So, they determined, consciously, to kill the Heir (Messiah) and illegally seize his inheritance, the land of Israel, for themselves. The leadership of the Jews was not just blundering along like drunken lost men! There was no accident in the death of the Messiah! Too much had been said in prophecy regarding the death of the Son of God. This is borne out in the accusation that Peter and John made in Acts 3:14-15 when they said, “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.”

Some, based on Acts 3:17, aver the Jews and their rulers crucified Jesus in “ignorance,” that is, lacking knowledge or understanding of what they were doing. However, a brief excursus into the verse will show such was not the case. According to Thayer’s Lexicon, the word here translated “ignorance,” (agnoian) means not a lack of knowledge or awareness of what one is doing, but a moral blindness. In other words, these people were fully aware of what they were doing, and why, but they could not be dissuaded from their path to destruction because of their moral blindness to the will of God. It was their determination to carry out their own will rather than the will of the Almighty. They intended to have the kind of kingdom they wished rather than the kind God wished, and the way to accomplish this was to kill the Prince of Life taking his inheritance for themselves. However, when they did this, they delivered themselves to certain destruction.

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Someone will ask, “What about Luke 23:34 in which Jesus specifically stated they did not know what they were doing?” Luke recorded Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Again, let us investigate the text which goes on to say, “And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Let us ask a pertinent question or two. Is Jesus saying these people did not realize they were crucifying a man? Obviously this is not the case! Did he mean the Jewish nation as a whole was unaware of what they were doing? If he did, he contradicted what he said in the parable we are studying. If he contradicted himself, he was not the Messiah! He meant simply those who were casting lots for his garments did not know they were fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 22:18. The Romans who actually crucified the Lord of Glory were totally ignorant of the Old Testament prophecy they were fulfilling in murdering the Son of God and gambling for his clothes. This is the obvious meaning of the Lord’s language, it seems to us.

Let us return, for a moment, to the Landowner’s sending his Son. Matthew’s account says, “Then last of all he sent his son to them saying, They will respect my son.” Mark added some depth of dimension to Matthew’s statement when he wrote of God’s sending Christ, “Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, They will respect my son.” The parable implies the Householder thought that however these irreverent and vicious vinedressers had treated his other servants, (the prophets) they would reverence and respect his only begotten Son. However, we must emphasize again, the Landowner, God, knew from the very beginning what the nation of Israel would do to his Son. Therefore, when the vinedressers saw the Son they resolved to kill him and seize his inheritance, the kingdom of Israel, for themselves. This was a planned activity; they discussed it among themselves, and if one reads the accounts of the

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life of Christ carefully in the New Testament, he will be amazed at how often, during his short ministry, they plotted to try and take him. Finally, they did; they *killed him and cast him out of the vineyard*. In these words Jesus summarized his own death by crucifixion.

Jesus then proposed a question to these wicked people by which he allowed them to condemn themselves. He asked, “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?” Those in the process of working out their plans to crucify the Son of God condemned themselves when they answered, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons” (vss. 40-41). This answer convinces this student these people knew well their prophecies and understood the nature of the coming kingdom of Christ, but they did not want such a kingdom and choose to allow it to be given to “other vinedressers” who would render to God fruits in their seasons. It seems to us these Jews understood the spiritual kingdom would be given to the Gentiles; yet, they would have none of it. Paul discussed this matter thoroughly in Romans chapters 9 through 11, did he not? They wanted a kingdom of this world rather than one not of this world. The respected Lang commented in this vein,

The parable lets a lurid light fall upon those leaders of Christ’s day. They *knew* He was what He claimed to be, the Son of God: “those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir.” In public they denied it; among themselves they admitted it. Sin is a moral poison that induces the most fatal insanity. Those greed-mastered husbandmen did not stop to consider what the lord of the vineyard would certainly do. Nor did the chief priests and elders ponder what the Holy One of Israel, by reason of his own

nature, must certainly do if they committed the judicial murder of so great a Prophet.... Challenged as to this they admitted that the Lord of the vineyard would do two things: “He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their season” (Matt. 21:41). But application to themselves they would not make, and when Christ made it, by applying to them Ps. 118:22,23, they recognized that He meant that they would be broken to pieces, and scattered to the dust with an irretrievable ruin; but only resentment was provoked, and they would have seized Him at once and fulfilled the parable on the spot by killing Him then and there. (297-298)

Our Lord then quoted Psalm 118:22 to these wicked vinedressers, making sure they understood the full import of what they were doing and saying. He followed this by foretelling their coming destruction when he said, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (vss. 43-44). This language is highly reminiscent of the language of Daniel in his explanation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Of the little stone cut out of a mountain without hands, Daniel said, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the

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king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure” (2:44-45). While Daniel spoke of the kingdom that would break in pieces all the other kingdoms, Jesus spoke of himself as the rejected stone who if anyone fell on it, they would be broken, that is, caused to repent and follow the Master, while if he fell on them, they would be ground to powder. This language refers to the destruction of the rejecting Jews as the people of God. Regarding this last part of the parable the admired Bruce wrote,

The account given in the parable of the mission of the son has an important bearing on two topics, viz. The personal self-consciousness of Christ, and the knowledge possessed by the Jews of His peculiar claims. The son is described as the only and well-beloved son of his father, and it is natural to suppose that as that son represents the Speaker, He claims for Himself all that he ascribes to the former. In that case this text must be associated with the remarkable one in the eleventh chapter of Matthew as vindicating for Jesus a unique position in relation to God. The vine-dressers are represented as knowing the son and heir. Is it implied that the men to whom the parable is addressed knew the Speaker to be the Christ, the Son of the living God? In that case Jesus virtually charges them with being on the point of putting to death the one whom they admitted to be Divine, or at least invested with Messianic dignity...In asking Him as to His authority they affected not to know who He was, and perhaps it was not a mere affectation, for prejudice and passion had blinded their eyes. But they were not on

that account without blame, for they had resisted evidence and crushed down rising conviction. Had they been sincere and single-minded, their hearts would have yielded to the force of truth and hailed Jesus as their king...Hence the severity of tone in the sentences appended to our parable concerning the *Rejected Stone*, which might be regarded as forming another parable. Availing Himself of a well-known text in a psalm, Jesus happily describes His own fortunes and those of His hearers in terms borrowed from the art of house-building... The text from the psalm declares that the stone which the builders refused is to become the head of the corner. The reference is to despised Israel, restored to her former glory, by God's grace, a marvel to all beholders. But Jesus, appropriating the prophecy to Himself, thereby intimates to His hearers that in killing Him they will not be done with Him: He will be raised to a place of power, an object of admiration to friends, a source of dismay to foes...Then their case would not be that of men stumbling against a stone, as many had done in ignorance, sinning against the Son of man to their hurt and loss, but not unpardonably. It would be that of men on whom a great stone falls, descending in judgment to grind them to powder. (457-458)

Matthew closed the narration saying, "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet" (vss. 45-46). The

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chief priests, who were Sadducees, and the Pharisees understood clearly that he spoke of them. With this understanding, they made an effort to seize him, kill him and cast him out of the vineyard. They wanted rid of their Messiah. However, since the multitudes of people still considered Jesus a prophet, these leaders were afraid to carry out their plans. A few days later, they did just as our Lord prophesied they would; they killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. Forty years later, he returned to grind them into powder! After Jerusalem fell, the Jews, as a nation, have never had a kingdom.

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OPPONENTS OF THE KING

Matthew 22

By John F. Board

The events recorded in Matthew 22 took place on Tuesday, prior to the Lord's death on Friday. Two days earlier, as prophesied (Zechariah 9:9), Jesus had entered the city of Jerusalem, not on a horse, but on a donkey and her colt.¹ The enthusiastic crowd that some have estimated to be near two million people hailed him as the Messiah.² As Jesus approached the city, he wept for her; he knew that although they were praising him now, they would ultimately reject him. This rejection would lead to their destruction (Luke 19:41-44).

1 The Jews associated a horse with war and power. A donkey was a beast ridden by princes on peaceful missions. At the height of His enemies' hatred, Jesus did nothing to antagonize them. His entrance signified a peaceful coming. See H. I. Hester *The Heart of the New Testament* (Liberty, Mo.: The Quality Press, 1963), p. 190. Also see Deuteronomy 17:16-17 where kings were warned against pride and placing their trust in military might (horses). Israel's kings were to trust in the Lord, not in any military might (Psalms 20:7; 33:16-17; 147:10). Jesus as King humbly relied on God. Horses were not forbidden per se (as some have suggested); the multitude of horses or trusting in military might is what was forbidden.

2 Matthew 21:8-11. The multitudes cried "Hosanna" which is a Greek spelling combining two Hebrew words "Hoshiah" and "na." "Na" is a particle of entreaty added to imperatives. It is used by the Psalmist in Psalm 118:25 and is translated "Save now" or "Save, I pray." Also H. Leo Boles states that Psalm 118:25-26 was chanted by the people during the Feast of Tabernacles to show their desire for a coming Messiah. Boles states that the use of this phrase in connection with Jesus entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before his crucifixion indicates the peoples' belief that Jesus was the Messiah. See H. Leo Boles, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1983), p. 412.

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From the time of his entry into Jerusalem on Sunday until Tuesday, the battle between Jesus and his opponents was intensifying. Jesus had entered the Temple and began healing the blind and the lame. Jesus' actions brought forth more praise from the people and indignation from the chief priests and the scribes. Jesus also cleansed the Temple. These actions would provide the setting for the events of Tuesday.

On Tuesday while Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he was approached by the first of many who would question him that day. The Jewish leaders wanted to know by what authority Jesus had "taken over the Temple."³ Jesus answered with a question of his own.⁴ The leaders refused to answer Jesus' question so he illustrated some truths regarding the Jews through a series of three parables.⁵ Others came to Jesus on this Tuesday with more questions designed to trap him; Jesus silenced his questioners. After silencing his opponents, Jesus spoke delivering his strong rebuke and condemnation of the Pharisees. Later that day Jesus would leave Jerusalem, but not before he delivered one of his longest formal discourses detailing the destruction of Jerusalem and his second coming.⁶ The next time the Lord would return to Jerusalem (Thursday), he would stay until his crucifixion on Friday. His opponents believed they had finally won the battle; Matthew sets the record straight — even in the execution of

3 Jesus had taken authority in cleansing the Temple, healing in the temple, and now by teaching in the temple.

4 Matthew 21:24-25 ..."The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?"

5 The Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32); The Wicked Husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-45); and The Marriage of the King's Son (Matthew 22:1-14).

6 The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25). The destruction of Jerusalem would be one of the consequences of the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

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their enemy, the Jews have not been victorious. Through his resurrection Jesus is victorious again!⁷

The purpose of this study will be to examine the events and teaching of Jesus in response to his opponents as recorded in Matthew 22. The method employed in this study will be to present a brief overview of the events of Matthew 22. After an overview of the text, conclusions will be drawn.

An Overview of Matthew 22

Matthew 22 begins with the parable of The Marriage of the King's Son. As noted above, this parable was the last of three parables spoken by Jesus in an effort to illustrate some truths to the Jewish leaders who had been unable to answer his question regarding John's baptism (Matthew 21:27). Like the other two parables spoken by the Lord, The Marriage of the King's Son illustrated the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Son of God.⁸

The King in the parable represents God and the son represents Jesus. The blessings of the Gospel are represented by the marriage supper. The servants in the parable are the early messengers of the good news. "All things being ready" signified what Paul refers to as the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). The Jews were represented in the parable by those who rejected the invitation and persecuted its messengers. The King (God) would send his

⁷ Ultimately in Jesus' resurrection, the Jewish leaders are defeated. John records too, that although the Jewish leaders were willing to go to far lengths (John 19:15 "we have no king but Caesar"), the truth about Jesus continually came forth (John 19:21 compare what the Jewish leaders wanted the inscription to say vs. what it did say "The King of the Jews") in spite of all the efforts to the contrary.

⁸ The Marriage of the King's Son should not be considered the same parable as Luke records in Luke 14:15-24. Although some similarities are found in both parables, different occasions result in the telling of each parable and there are other variations as well.

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armies (Rome) to destroy those who had rejected the invitation. This was a picture of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The messengers sent into the highways represented the taking of the Gospel to the Gentiles. The good and the bad gathered for the wedding represents the good and bad in the church. The one without a wedding garment represents one who is unprepared at the judgment. The man's speechlessness could represent the fact that there will be no excuse for being unprepared at the judgment. The binding hand and foot and the casting into outer darkness represents eternal punishment.⁹ In this parable, Jesus attempts to warn the Jews that a rejection of the King's Son (Christ) was a rejection of the King (God) who they claimed to follow.

Next, Matthew reveals another effort to ensnare or trap Jesus with a question.¹⁰ The Pharisees sent some of their disciples along with some Herodians to ask Jesus a question about tribute paid to Caesar. Although these young disciples may have appeared sincere to those gathered, Jesus saw through the hollow, inadequate praise of these men. The Jewish leaders reasoned that Jesus could not answer the question without angering either the Jews or the Herodians. Either way, the Jewish leaders felt a victory was certain. But Jesus did not answer the question as they had expected. Jesus told the people to "render" to Caesar what was due him, and to "render" to God what was due him.¹¹ Again, Jesus defeated his opponents.

9 For further study see Wayne Jackson *The Parables in Profile* (Stockton: Courier Publications, 1998), pp.106-108 or consult the World Wide Web at www.christiancourier.com.

10 The first question (By what authority?) was found in chapter 21:23.

11 Taxes should have been paid by the Jews for the benefits they received from the Roman Government. Although this was the case, in matters where a choice had to be made between God and Rome, the Jews must obey God rather than man.

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Later on Tuesday, Jesus was approached by a group of Sadducees.¹² Their question was an old catch-question they had probably used on the Pharisees in times past. Although it was a hypothetical situation, the Sadducees had every right to use it, to illustrate their belief, to be the correct belief. The only problem was, as Jesus pointed out, they did err because they did not know the Scriptures. The Sadducees assumed that their hypothetical proved there is no resurrection from the dead; they failed to take into consideration that their hypothetical situation only applied to earth — where God ordained marriage for specific purposes.¹³ Jesus, as the author of marriage, knew the fallacy of the Sadducees' argument. Jesus also delivers another blow to the Sadducees in his reference to angels.¹⁴ Here, Jesus had shown the supposed experts of the Law, to be ignorant of that which they claimed to be champions. Jesus next used their Scriptures to defeat the Sadducees' belief that there is no resurrection from the dead.¹⁵ Jesus' answer to the Sadducees even draws the approval of those opposed to Jesus and the Sadducees.¹⁶ Jesus' opponents again withdraw in defeat.

12 One of the false teachings of the Sadducees was that there is no resurrection from the dead.

13 Some of those purposes would include, but not be limited to, companionship, procreation and the spiritual upbringing of children.

14 The Sadducees also denied the existence of angels even though the Pentateuch, which they accepted as Scripture, spoke of angels employed in the plan of God.

15 The Sadducees did not accept all of the Old Testament as being from God. Jesus uses an argument from the section the Sadducees did accept (Pentateuch Exodus 3:6ff) in order to prove there is a spiritual side to man; the fact that man has a spiritual side cut to the root of the Sadducees' error. See J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton *The Fourfold Gospel* (Bowling Green: Guardian of Truth, n.d.), p.602 for further discussion.

16 Luke 20:39 records some of the scribes speaking in approval of Jesus... "Master thou hast well said."

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Jesus' last opponent in Matthew 22 is a lawyer. Some suggest that his question stems from a more sincere desire to know the truth (Foster 1174-1175). Although Mark's account seems to indicate the lawyer, after hearing Jesus answer the Sadducees "well," simply asks Jesus a question, Matthew records the lawyer asked the question "trying Him" (See Mark 12:28 and Matthew 22:35). The lawyer asked which commandment was greatest. Some have suggested that the Jews counted the commandments to be over six hundred (McGarvey and Pendleton 603). Because of the number of commandments, there was much argumentation over which was the greatest. Here perhaps the Jews hoped to at the very least discredit Jesus. As in the other instances, Jesus answers in such a way that no fault can be found in his teaching. Jesus sums up the entire Law under two main headings — love God and love your fellow man. In doing so, Jesus points out the fact that all of the Law was important. Whether or not the lawyer was sincere when he asked the question, Mark's record seems to indicate that after Jesus answered his question, his mind was not far from God's kingdom (Mark 12:32-34).

Lastly, Jesus himself asks the questions.¹⁷ He inquires of the Pharisees, "What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42 ASV). In asking these questions, Jesus exposed the Pharisees' problem. They were willing to accept certain true things about the Christ, but they were not willing to accept all of the truth about the Christ. The Pharisees rightly answered that the Christ was the son of David, but they failed to realize as well that the Christ was the Son of God, and for that reason David's Lord as well.

Jesus had silenced his opponents. No longer would the Jewish leaders ask Jesus questions designed to trap him.

¹⁷ This writer does not believe Jesus asked the questions in retaliation. Jesus asked his questions with the pure motive of teaching an important lesson.

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His answers each time, rather than turn the people against him, drew them closer to him.

Conclusions from This Study

On Tuesday, prior to his death on Friday, Jesus encountered opposition from the Jewish leaders. Jesus had come to the city of Jerusalem during the Passover, one of the busiest times of the year. He came to the city knowing full well the animosity that was building against him. Jesus entered the city in a peaceful fashion. The people began to hail him as the Messiah. Jesus knew his acceptance was to be short-lived. The people would soon realize Jesus was not the type of Messiah they anticipated. Jesus knew he would be put to death and he knew the city would suffer because of their rejection of him.

Jesus' opponents were not limited to the Jewish leaders; in the end the people would reject him as well. In Matthew 22, though, there is a picture of Jesus' encounter with the Jewish leaders. These opponents of Jesus would soon learn that they were no match for the Son of God. As various groups of Jewish leaders tried their best to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people, the Master Teacher silenced them one by one. Matthew's record of this account serves not only as a testimony today for all to accept Jesus as their Messiah, but more specifically it served as a warning for the Jews shortly after Christ's time not to follow the greatest mistake of their fathers — the rejection of God's anointed One.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Board, son of John D. and Margaret Board, John was married to the former Brenna S. Wiley of Fairmont, WV in 1991. John and Brenna have two daughters, Kayleigh (8) and Emaleigh (4). John received his secular education from Oak Glen High School (83) and WVU (83-85). He received his biblical instruction from the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV, Freed-Hardeman College (BS), Southern Christian University (M.A. in Biblical Studies) and will complete his Masters of Divinity degree from SCU in December 2003. After FHC John began working with the Oakwood Road Church of Christ as an Associate minister with D. Gene West. In 1991, John and Brenna began working with the Church of Christ in Yreka, California with John serving as their minister. In December 1993 John and Brenna began working with the Church of Christ in Bridgeport, WV. December 2003 will mark the ten year anniversary of work with a supportive and encouraging eldership and congregation of people who love God and his Word. John has been blessed to be involved with WVCYC in various capacities, to be part of mission works in Merida and Cancun, Mexico and through the World Wide Web, and to be an instructor in the West Virginia School of Preaching.

JUDGMENTS OF KING

By Alan C. Cole

Introduction

Jesus had been in conflict with the Jewish leaders throughout his public ministry. He had denounced them severely several times and had spoken of judgment. The context would determine its exact meaning of the judgment they would encounter.

In Matthew 23, we have the Lord's severe denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. He pronounces the sentence and prescribes the punishment. About these religious leaders the Lord said: they were hypocrites, blind guides, fools, serpents, offspring of vipers, and they would receive just punishment. It should be noted here that the Lord said, "all of these things shall come upon this generation" (Matthew 23:36). Then we have the Lord's great "lamentation over Jerusalem." In the closing portion of Matthew 23, the Lord speaks of divine judgment upon the Jewish nation and that "your house [the Temple] is left unto you desolate."

Then Matthew 24:1-35 relates to the Lord's coming in judgment upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. "All these things" were fulfilled when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Roman general, Titus, saw to it that the walls of the city were completely destroyed, and that the temple and its buildings were thoroughly demolished. They even plowed the ground upon which had stood the great city. Josephus states that "...there was left nothing to make those who had come thither believe it had ever been inhabited." Verily, not one stone was left upon another!

With Matthew 24:36, the Lord begins discussing the final coming, the final judgment and the end of the world. Whereas the Lord has been discussing "those days," he

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now makes reference to “that day.” Obviously, this is a transition text. The Lord says, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” Because no one knows the time of the Lord’s final coming, and because the days preceding it will be characterized by normal activities and conduct, and because there are no signs — it will be necessary for the concerned to “watch” and to “be ready.” He then warned, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:42-44). The remainder of this lesson will focus on the final judgment.

On September 11, 2001, a sequence of events occurred which will forever “live in infamy.” Four planes were hijacked, two of which crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, one of which crashed into the Pentagon, and the last crashing in western Pennsylvanian field. More than 3,000 tragically lost their lives. How many do you think imagined it would happen to them? It is not unusual for people to think that things won’t happen to them. How many of the 18.5 million victims of AIDS thought it would happen to them? This same attitude is present when it comes to the Judgment Day! (2 Peter 3:3-10). The certainty and seriousness of the judgment day are greatly emphasized in the Bible. In Acts 17:30-31, Paul notes several important truths about the judgment: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” Paul set forth (1) the fact of the judgment, (2) the unavoidable day of judgment, (3) the world will be judged,

(4) the standard of judgment, (5) the Judge of the judgment and (6) the evidence for the judgment. The Bible makes it abundantly clear the King is returning, and he is coming in judgment. In Matthew 24:44-51, Jesus stressed the importance of being ready. In fact, Matthew 25 is an expanded account of or commentary on these verses. There are three important truths associated with the King's judgment.

Preparation

In Matthew 24:44 Jesus said, "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." He then presents the parable of the Ten Virgins to illustrate the importance of being adequately prepared for the judgment (Matthew 25:1-13). In this section, we learn several important truths.

Cognition is not enough (vss. 1-2). Believing without preparation is foolish. The unprepared virgins were neither ungodly nor immoral; they were simple foolish. They were foolish because they knew the bridegroom was returning, and they were unready. Believing includes obeying (2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 2:3). They should have been adequately prepared.

Excuses are not accepted (vs. 3). Some slumber and sleep like the five foolish virgins; some shudder and spurn like Felix (Acts 24:25); and some see and snub like Agrippa (Acts 26:28-29). Paul wrote, "For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Borrowing is not allowed (vs. 8). You cannot borrow some things. You cannot borrow someone's Christian life (Luke 9:23). You cannot borrow someone's righteousness (Ezekiel 18:20). You cannot borrow someone's faithfulness (Revelation 2:10). You cannot borrow someone's

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obedience (Matthew 7:21-23). The apostle profoundly stated: “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God,” and “for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

A second chance is not given (vs. 10). You cannot recall lost opportunities.

Seek not for fresher founts afar,
Just drop your bucket where you are...
Parch not your life with dry despair,
The stream of hope flows everywhere.
So under every sky and star,
Just drop your bucket where you are.

Christ’s return or our death seals our eternal destiny (Hebrews 9:27). You cannot then repent of sins. Jesus’ return will be like a thief and time and opportunities will end (Matthew 24:43). The apostles wrote: “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2). “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

The shut door is not reopened (Luke 16:22-26). The shut door has a twofold meaning: to the prepared, it means eternal security and peace, and to the unprepared it means eternal misery and despair. The shut door is promised; it separates, and it is closed without warning. No one knows when Jesus will return and shut the door (Mark 13:32), but it will happen.

Perspiration

In the previous chapter Jesus said, “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing” (Matthew 24:46). Jesus presents the parable of the

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talents to help his disciples understand the significance of working during the time of watchfulness (Matthew 25:14-30). There are several lessons taught in these verses that are paramount to understanding continuous faithful service.

We are each responsible (vs. 14). The man called his servants and delivered his goods to them.

We are each accountable (Galatians 3:26-27). We are accountable for what we are given (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14). We are accountable for how we are living. Jesus will judge our (1) secret things (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14), (2) words (Matthew 12:36-37), (3) deeds done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10) and (4) the fruits of our deeds (Jeremiah 17:10).

We are each different (vs. 15). We are given responsibilities according to our ability or abilities (Romans 12:6-8). The Lord does not expect us to do what we are unable to perform. We are each to be busy. The servants with five and two talents “went, traded and made.” But the one talent servant went, dug and hid. James wrote: “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works’” (James 2:18).

We are each characterized. Jesus said of the servants with five and two talents, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:23). But of the one talent servant he said, “You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed” (Matthew 25:26).

We are each to be rewarded (vss. 23, 30). The reward is not based upon the quantity in the hand, but the quality of the heart.

Proclamation

At the end of Matthew 24 Jesus stated: “The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (vss. 50-51). He then presents a vivid description of the final judgment explaining these few verses in Matthew 25:31-46. The proclamation of the judgment day should be remembered and keep us faithful.

There will be the prophetic proclamation (vss. 31-33). Jesus prophesied of the final judgment. The question is sometimes asked: “Why is Jesus coming in judgment?” There will be a judgment day (1) to perform God’s promise (Romans 14:10), (2) to fulfill prophecies (Romans 14:11), (3) to present rewards (2 Timothy 4:8), (4) to pronounce condemnation (Matthew 7:23) and (5) to prove God’s justice (Psalm 51:3-4).

There will be a good proclamation (vs. 34). Jesus will say, “Come you blessed.” You did good works (vss. 35-36). You lived a good life (vss. 37-39). You kept good company (vs. 40).

There will also be a bad proclamation (vs. 41). The Lord will say, “Depart you cursed.” You didn’t do good works (vss. 42-43). You didn’t live a good life (vs. 44). You didn’t keep good company (vs. 45).

There will be an eternal proclamation. “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). The proclamation will be final and irrevocable. The prepared can count on admission and acceptance (1 Peter 1:3-5). The procrastinators can count on denial and damnation.

Conclusion

Thus, in Matthew 25, the Lord teaches: (1) the fact of his coming, (2) the judgment of all mankind when he does come, (3) some things about the nature of the judgment, (4) the fact that in this life we are to prepare to face the Lord in judgment, (5) that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished, and (6) the fact that there will be no sign.

If the Judgment were to occur right now, **what would your verdict be?** Jesus wants to become your Savior before he becomes your Judge!

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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MARRIAGE-DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Matthew 5:32; 19:1-12

By Wesley Simons

Introduction

When we look at our society today, we're living in a day and time when many homes are broken up. As a matter of fact, in many cities more divorces are granted than marriage licenses. **We are allowing Hollywood to set our standards as far as morals are concerned, rather than the Word of God.** We are going to have to go back to the Bible. Otherwise, the home will be destroyed.

The sad part is that even some preachers in our great brotherhood have begun to loose the laws of God and advocate that we can fellowship just anyone regardless of how many times they have been married, divorced and remarried. Some elders and churches hold these same views. Some advocate that it doesn't matter what the reason is for divorce, that if one remarries unscripturally then all he has to do is either be baptized into Christ or if he is a Christian, pray and God will forgive and accept that situation. Is this what the Bible teaches? If it is what the Bible teaches, then that is what we want to do. But if it is not what the Bible teaches, then certainly we do not want to do that.

Jesus Influenced Multitudes

And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; 2 And great multitudes

followed him; and he healed them there
(Matthew 19:1-2).

While on earth, our Lord influenced multitudes. He had the golden opportunity to teach the greatest principles ever taught. In so doing, he changed the lives of many people. This shows the power of God's Word. Jesus always told them what they needed to hear, not what they wanted to hear. This is why they crucified him.

It was during his great popularity that he taught the truth on marriage, divorce and remarriage. Many preachers will not teach the truth on this subject because they want to be popular. Jesus wanted to do his Father's will, not be popular with the people.

Today, we have the opportunity to preach to multitudes. Will we tell them what they need to hear, or what they want to hear? What about the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage? The world is totally confused on this subject. We must be God's voice ringing forth loud and clear what needs to be heard from God's Word on this subject! If we do not preach the truth on this subject, who is going to do it?

Insincere Pharisees

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?
(Matthew 19:3).

The Pharisees were not interested in truth. The Bible says they came to him tempting him. I am convinced as a minister of the Gospel of Christ that many people have come to me with a marriage problem not looking for truth, but wanting me to sanction their situation. I have seen this time and time again. So, in a sense, they were tempting me to change God's Word. This I could not and would not do.

When I did not give them the answer they wanted to hear, they went running to another preacher. We must be

honest and accept the Bible answer. **A true Bible student will follow the Scriptures wherever they lead him even if the answer is not what he wants to hear.** We must love the Scriptures even when they oppose our practice. This can be a hard thing to do.

The Pharisees wanted to know if it was lawful to put away one's mate for every cause. What if we were to ask this question in America today? The answer from the world would be of course! However, this is not the Bible answer. We need to realize, as apparently the Pharisees did, that not all marriages are lawful. They might be lawful in the sight of men, but are they lawful in the sight of God?

John the Baptist told Herod that he unlawfully had his brother Philip's wife: "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not" (Mark 6:18-19). It is possible to unlawfully have someone else's wife. This being true, look at all the people in America who probably have someone else's mate. This is sinful or unlawful!

Have Ye Not Read

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female (Matthew 19:4).

When it comes to marriage, divorce and remarriage, the problem is that people have not read what the Bible says. Let us read for a minute. Look at Matthew 5:32, "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." In Matthew 19:9 the Bible says,

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“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” Now look at Luke 16:18 “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.” Many who are divorced have never read these verses.

From the aforementioned verses, we see that all parties that divorce and marry another are parties that commit adultery. The only exception to the rule is when an innocent party put his or her mate away for the cause of fornication. This is what we learn when we take the time to read God’s Word. Many have never taken the time to read God’s Word. Therefore, they find themselves in violation of his law and then try to find some unscriptural way to fix it. This will not work!

In Romans 7:1-3, while the contrast is between the two laws, still yet the marriage relationship is used. The Bible says, “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, (**now watch, WS**) she be married to another man, she shall be **called** an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”

I want you to take that word **called** and look it up in your concordance and I want you to notice how it is used every time in the Word of God. I’m talking about the **original word**. You do not have to be able to pronounce the Greek. Just look it up and find every place where the word is used in the Bible. You will find that every time, it is a **divine calling**. Who is **calling** this person an

adulteress? **God is doing it!** In Acts 11:26 where the disciples were **called** Christians, that is the same word. We can see that is a **divine calling**. God gave that name. In Matthew Chapter 2, when the wise men were **warned** in a dream, this is the same word as **called** and God is doing the **warning**. He is telling them do not go back to Herod. Every time it is used, it is a **divine calling or warning**. So, who is **calling** this person an **adulteress**? Some man? No, no! **God is calling the person an adulteress** who gets involved in a marriage while her mate still lives, unless she has put her mate away for the cause of fornication. Now let us read verse three again. “So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be **called an adulteress**: but if her **husband be dead**, she is free from that law; so that she is **no adulteress**, though she be married to another man.”

I want you to understand that God hates all divorces. Everyone of them: “Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously” (Malachi 2:14-16). However, under one condition, he will tolerate it. This is when one’s mate is found to be unfaithful (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). God says you and I do not have to tolerate that situation.

The Lord wanted the Pharisees to know when they came to him and tempted him asking, “Is it lawful to put away one’s mate for every reason?” that the answer is in God’s Word! You know God expects us to read. God

expects us to study. I want you to notice this contrast. When you and I thought about getting married, we had to think enough of the laws of the land to find out what they required. Some might require a blood test, one must be a certain age, marriage licenses must be obtained and certain other things. If we think that much of the laws of the land so we can act in harmony with them, shouldn't we think just as much of the law of God and find out what God has to say about marriage, divorce and remarriage?

We often get married with the attitude that if this one does not work, then I will try another one. Why? Because one does not know what the Bible says and could not care less at that time. However, we have to be honest enough to accept what this Book says.

The Lord says, "Have you not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and male." **No, that's not what it says, but that is what a lot of people today are advocating.** Some say if two men want to get married, that is all right. If two women want to get married, that is all right. I suggest unto you that it is not all right. That is not what the Bible teaches.

Some states are trying to pass laws to recognize homosexual marriages. Now a lot of people look down on preachers who insist that a separation must take place before a person can be right in the sight of God. But now you just put yourself in this situation: two men, who are married, come to you and say, "We have attended the services a few times, and we believe this is the right church. We have adopted two little children just as precious as they can be. We love them. We think they need to be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We want to obey the Gospel of Christ. So, what do you recommend?" Can you say, "Well now, you are happily married. You have two wonderful children. All you need to do is be baptized and the baptism will erase your situation?" Why no! Baptism does not erase a sinful state.

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We need to realize that. Prayer does not do away with a sinful state. Repentance is what does that!!!

We need to realize that baptism and prayer are tremendous according to the Word of God, but they do not change a sinful state. They only assist in getting rid of sins that are held against us. That is all they do. Repentance stops the sinful state! **Let us give you an illustration.** Suppose a person should come into my home and steal my watch. He also steals my television set. He wants my car and he steals it. Then he decides he wants Elva (my wife), so he steals her. Well, finally he decides that he wants to live right. He knows what he did was wrong. So, he comes to me and he says, “Brother Simons, I want to live right. However, I think I can keep all those things that I have stolen and still be right in the sight of God. You see, I am going to use the watch to tell time so I can be at worship on time. I am going to use the television to watch *Arise To Truth*. I am going to use the car to drive back and forth to services and to serve God. I am going to keep that precious woman, that darling wife of yours, as my companion.” Now can you believe with all seriousness that a person can keep all those things and be right in the sight of God? There is no way!!!

We have brethren today who will tell you that repentance simply means you change your mind and it has nothing to do with the reformation of life. But that is not what that word means. **True repentance bears fruits (Matthew 3:7-8).** If one steals my watch and he will not give it back even though he “**becomes a Christian,**” he will be **still a thief.** He is going to have to give my watch back to show he is not a thief any longer. In like manner, he must give back my television, my automobile, and he must give my wife back to be right in the sight of God. **Repentance comes before baptism (Acts 2:38).** There is no way around it.

Now, let us go back to those two homosexuals for just a moment. This is clear. Here are two men that are married and now they want to obey the Gospel of Christ. What are we going to tell them? Are we going to tell them all you have to do is be baptized. Once you are baptized, God is so loving and God is so forgiving that he is just going to forget about the sin in which they continue to live? God is loving. God is forgiving, but he demands that we do what this Book says. If you and I are going to do right, we are going to have to tell them that they cannot live in that state and be right in the sight of God! They might ask, “What about those two precious little children we have adopted?” That has nothing to do with it — nothing to do with it at all. All the sob stories in the world will not change what the Bible teaches.

Do you remember John the Baptist? He had a bad habit of preaching on this same subject. As a matter of fact, it cost him his head. The Bible says that he told Herod that he unlawfully had his brother Philip’s wife. The Greek language says, with the verb that is used, that he kept on saying, you have unlawfully got your brother Philip’s wife. If he saw him in the market place, he said, “Herod, you have unlawfully got your brother Philip’s wife.” If he saw him up at the temple, he said, “Herod, you have unlawfully got your brother Philip’s wife.” If he saw him in front of his palace, he said, “Herod, you have unlawfully got your brother Philip’s wife.” Finally, Herodias said, “That is enough, I am not going to put up with that anymore.” She tells her daughter to go and dance in front of Herod and when he asks her what she wants, she is to ask for the head of John the Baptist. She was not going to listen to that kind of preaching. A lot of people today in our great brotherhood are not going to accept that kind of preaching.

Some preachers today, and I’m talking about ministers in the Lord’s church, say that one cannot live in adultery. However, the Bible says otherwise (Romans

6:1-2; Colossians 3:7). These are the same weak-kneed preachers who will not preach the truth on this all important subject.

Leave to Cleave

And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? (Matthew 19:5).

Many marriages get into trouble because one of the mates will not leave father or mother. We are to love our mates more than we love our parents. Some married people never learn to do this. Therefore, there will always be marriage problems. Your mate should not have to compete with your parents for your love. A double-minded person is unstable in all his ways.

One has to have Bible authority to marry. Most people have never given this a thought. One must have Bible authority when it comes to the plan of salvation. One must have Bible authority as far as worship is concerned. However, one must also have Bible authority when it comes to marriage.

When one grows up, he might decide to get married. Who gives him this authority? The only three classes of people eligible to marry are: **(1) those who have never been married before (Matthew 19:5), (2) those who have been married and as an innocent party have put their mates away for the cause of fornication (Matthew 19:9), (3) those who have lost their mates to death (Romans 7:1-3).** If one who falls into one of these three classes wishes to marry, then he must marry one who also falls into one of these three classes. Otherwise, even though he is qualified to marry, he winds up committing adultery because he chose an unqualified mate.

I want you to notice that word **cleave**. It is also used in relationship to Christianity. What are we to do as far as

Christianity is concerned? The Bible says **cleave unto the Lord**: “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that **with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord**” (Acts 11:23). Just as you and I are to cleave unto the Lord, in just that way, we are to cleave unto our mate. The Bible plan is one man for one woman for a lifetime.

Now young people, you better listen. **You need to pay attention because once you say I do, in the sight of God, you did.** A lot of people have the attitude that marriages are made in heaven. Marriages are not made in heaven. God only gives the marriage kits and you and I have to put them together. This at times can be hard work. There will be times when there are heartaches. There will be times when the husband will do things that the wife does not like. The wife will do things the husband does not appreciate. Still, the Bible says they must live together, the only exception being for the cause of fornication. The Lord said there is to be one man for one woman and they are to cleave together for a lifetime.

Husband and wife are to become one flesh, one in love, purpose, aim, goal, etc. This was God’s original plan: “And Adam said, This *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:23-24). They are not to pull against one another. They are to be a loving team.

Put Not Asunder

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Matthew 19:6).

We need to realize that God and God only can join two together in marriage. He joins only those who comply with

his marriage laws. In like fashion, God and God only can disjoin those who are married. He disjoins only those who comply to his divorce law, the only scriptural reason being fornication.

I wish every judge in this great country would believe this verse. Then, they would quit coming down with their gavel saying, "Divorce granted"!!! They should realize that they do not have the right to put marriages asunder. You and I must realize that we do not have that right either, unless fornication is involved. God says no man has the right to put asunder what he has joined together. Will we listen to God?

From The Beginning It Was Not So

They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so (Matthew 19:7-8).

Divorce is brought about because of the hardness of hearts toward God and one's mate. God has always frowned upon divorce. Jesus Christ is going all the way back to the beginning to endorse God's original plan, one man for one woman for a lifetime. I want you to notice that the Bible teaches us in Acts 17:30-31 that at one time God winked at ignorance. These people did not have the full revelation of God. Therefore, they made mistakes that we should not make.

They could not turn to the New Testament and see that Jesus Christ had died for them and see the church and everything that the Bible teaches. What we must understand is that God winked at their ignorance but he says no more. He says it is one man for one woman for a lifetime with just one exception other than death. Let us

look at verse nine, one of the places where we learn about God's exception.

Except It Be For Fornication

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19:9).

The only reason for a scriptural divorce and remarriage is fornication. Envision fornication as a large word which takes into consideration all illicit sexual acts. This would include homosexuality, lesbianism, adultery, incest, bestiality, etc. Thank God that Jesus used a word that would include all these things. We know that a mate does not have to tolerate his/her mate committing adultery. However, it is also true that one does not have to put up with his/her mate being involved in homosexuality. This is the beauty and import of the word fornication.

Now just forget you have ever heard any teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage. What would this verse mean to you? I think one can understand it if he will just forget about what he has heard. If a person puts away his mate, not for the cause of fornication and marries again, then he commits adultery. If the put away mate marries again, she commits adultery. The word commits means keeps on committing adultery just as long as one is in that state.

Roy Deaver puts it this way:

Everybody who knows anything about Greek tense knows that the normal, regular, general, meaning of present tense is continuous action. On page 11 of ESSENTIALS OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK Dr. Ray Summers uses the words

“progressive” and “continuous” synonymously, and then makes the statement: “The present tense indicates progressive action at the present time.” In his BEGINNER’S GRAMMAR OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT William Hersey Davis says: “Continued action, or a state of incompleteness, is denoted by the present tense, - the kind of action is called durative or linear. The action of the verb is shown in progress, as going on.” Burton says: “The Present Indicative is used of action in progress in present time...The most constant characteristic of the Present Indicative is that it denotes action in progress.” (Ernest DeWitt Burton, SYNTAX OF THE MOODS AND TENSES IN NEW TESTAMENT GREEK, pages 7 and 8) (Deaver 27).

Now here is something we have to realize. We have always been a group of people that gives a thus saith the Lord. This is wonderful; we have to continue to do that. If the innocent party puts away his mate for the cause of fornication, the guilty party cannot marry again without committing adultery. The guilty party has no right to remarry. **There is no Bible authority for the guilty party to ever remarry.** There are grave consequences for being an unfaithful mate! Where is the verse or any Bible authority for the guilty party to remarry? One cannot be guilty of destroying a marriage and be rewarded by God with the right to remarry. If this is the case, then if one does not want to stay in his current marriage, all he would need to do would be commit fornication and after his wife divorced him he would be free to remarry. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If the divorce is unscriptural, then both parties will have to remain single or be reconciled to each other: “And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife” (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). I have had divorced people say to me, “Do you mean that I cannot remarry? Is my only hope found in returning to my mate?” What do these verses teach?

Some brethren have begun to try to do away with this commandment by saying, “The alien sinner is not subject to the law of God.” If the alien sinner is not subject to the law of God, how in the world did he become a sinner. For where there is no law, then there is no sin the Bible says (Romans 4:15). How did the non-Christian become a sinner? Well, there is no way. Does Billy Graham sin in preaching his faith only doctrine? Did Hitler sin in putting to death six million Jews? They could not have sinned in so doing if the alien is not subject to the law of God. What non-sense! All of this is designed to destroy God’s law on marriage, divorce and remarriage. However, the devil and his cohorts cannot get the job done.

John 3:16 says this, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” To whom does that **whosoever** apply? It applies to all of us, anyone, anytime, anywhere. In Matthew 19:9, why isn’t this **whosoever** the same way? Look at this verse, “And I say unto you, **Whosoever** shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” It has to be that way. **The word whosoever applies to everyone. It is universal in its application.** The alien sinner is just as much subject to the Bible as I am.

As a matter of fact, the Bible makes it plain when we stand before Jesus on that great judgment day, the Book will be opened. We are going to be judged according to this Book. It makes no difference whether we obeyed it or not. We are still going to be judged according to this Book. If we did not obey it, we are going to be condemned. If we did obey it, we are going to be saved. So, all mankind then is subject to his Will. Marriage is not a church ordinance. Many brethren today such as brother Bales, want to make marriage a church ordinance (covenant passages). It is not a church ordinance. God's marriage laws apply to everyone.

Two people, who are non-Christians, who have never been married before, get married. Are they married in the sight of God? If yes, why? Because God's marriage laws, as well as all his laws, apply to all. If marriage is a church ordinance, they are not married! The Bible teaches marriage is not a church ordinance. Therefore, they are married in the sight of God. We must abide by what the Bible says. The Bible says, **whosoever**, that is anyone, who puts away his wife unscripturally, and marries another commits adultery.

If one discovers his mate being unfaithful to him, the Lord says, he can put his mate away for the cause of fornication. God does not demand that one live with an unfaithful mate. Thank God for this provision. There is nothing much worse than a mate who is not trustworthy! When one has divorced his mate for fornication, then remarries, he should not be treated like a second-rate Christian. Why? Because he has complied with the law of God on this subject.

I venture to say that everyone of us has been touched by divorce in some way. Only scriptural divorces and remarriages are recognized by God. These are the only ones we can accept. Even though this is hard, it is what the Bible says. What is sad is that we have churches today that will accept anyone under any condition and fellowship them.

When this is done, it destroys the moral standard of the Bible, the sanctity of marriage and the commandments of God. We have to do like Paul did in 1 Corinthians Chapter Five. If the marriage is not right, we have to love the people and encourage them to repent. If they will not do right, then as a last act of love, we are to withdraw fellowship. This is done so the people can be saved. We want to cause them to seriously look at their condition.

The Disciples' View

His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry (Matthew 19:10).

The disciples said, “if this is the case, then it would be better if a man did not get married.” Now this is a hard commandment and I know it hits close to many of us. It hits close to me. I have people in my immediate family that are in an adulterous situation. It hurts to preach this. It hurts when I talk to them about their marriage. However, if I love the Lord and if I want to go to heaven, I have to preach the truth on this subject. It is the same way with baptism. Every time I read about baptism, marriage, divorce, remarriage, the one church, the one way to worship God, I realize more and more the Lord told the truth when he said, “few there be that find it,” speaking of salvation. He told the truth. The Lord knows. If we want to be among the few, then we have to obey the commandments of God Almighty.

Not All Can Receive This Commandment

But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for

the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it* (Matthew 19:11-12).

Some people are not able to enter marriage because they were born eunuchs. Others were made eunuchs by men. Then some have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Paul made himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He did this in a voluntary way. He chose not to get married.

However, there are others who will have to make themselves eunuchs because they found themselves in an unscriptural marriage. Paul put it this way: "And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

It is so hard to walk out of an unscriptural marriage. I have known those who loved God and their mates enough to do this. They are to be commended!

Conclusion

The time to fix all marriage problems is before they arise. We must teach our children the truth about marriage, divorce and remarriage before they find themselves in unscriptural marriages. Very few people will pay the price of giving up a mate to go to heaven. May God help us in this endeavor.

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SABBATH CONFLICTS OF THE KING

By Charles J. Aebi

The theme of this lectureship suggests Matthew as our source, but I propose to include the Sabbath conflicts Jesus encountered that are recorded in the other Gospels as well. By my count the word “Sabbath” is used in the *American Standard Version* 45 times in the Gospels, 34 of which refer to controversies due to either Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath or to the disciples’ eating grain on the Sabbath. Only eight of the 34 occur in Matthew.

The reason is the Christ’s controversies with the Scribes and Pharisees involved their traditions more than anything else. Jesus rejected whatever of their traditions interfered with doing good or understanding the nature of the King and his kingdom as prophesied in the Law and as taught by the King himself. Both Jesus’ teaching and his practice ran counter to Jewish expectations, and often these involved the Sabbath. Jack P. Lewis says, “No topic brought Jesus into as direct a conflict with the Pharisees as did that of Sabbath keeping” (168).

Sabbath Conflicts in Matthew

Of the ten times “Sabbath” is used in the Gospel of Matthew, eight times it is used in regard to two Sabbath conflicts, both in Matthew 12, the first regarding the disciples’ plucking grain on the Sabbath and the second over Jesus’ restoring a man’s withered hand (Matthew 12:1-8, parallel to Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5). The incident connected with plucking grain is the first Sabbath controversy recorded in the synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke). As they went through a grain field on a Sabbath, the disciples pulled off ears or heads of grain, rubbed the chaff off in their hands, and ate the grain they had thus threshed. Some Pharisees objected that this was unlawful; Jesus

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answered them with four arguments. (1) The Pharisees held David to have been justified in eating the tabernacle's showbread (which was reserved for the priests) on the Sabbath. (2) The priests themselves worked at offering sacrifices in the Temple on the Sabbath and were counted innocent of Sabbath breaking by the Jews. (3) A right understanding of Hosea 6:6 ("I desire mercy, and not sacrifice"), and of the principle that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, would have kept them from condemning the innocent disciples of breaking the Sabbath. (4) The Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath and was greater than the Temple in which the priests worked on the Sabbath. Jesus as part of the Godhead was Lord of the Sabbath because God, which includes Jesus, had given the Sabbath law to begin with, and the Father had given the Son authority to change that law when the time came. So from answers (3) and (4) we see that the Sadducees were not the only ones to have a flawed understanding of the Scriptures and the power of God!

In Matthew 12:9-14 (parallel to Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 6:6-11), Jesus healed a man with a withered hand. Our Lord went into the Capernaum synagogue on another Sabbath day, Luke says, from the one on which the controversy arose over eating grain. A man with his right hand withered was there, and the Scribes and Pharisees watched and asked him if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. They were not asking for information, but to find a way to accuse him of a capital offense. He knew their thoughts (motives) and was angry at their hard-hearted attitude against healing the sick. Our Lord did three things here: (1) He used the illustration of their helping a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, and pointed out that a man is of more value than a sheep, which put them to silence. (2) Jesus stated his conclusion, "Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day" (Matthew 12:12), as an answer to his own question posed in Mark 3:4 and Luke 6:9, "Is it lawful on

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the Sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? To save a life, or to kill?" The Scribes and Pharisees had declined to answer this, and Jesus shamed them before the people with his argument that it was lawful to do good and not evil on the Sabbath. Trench sees Jesus implying that the alternative is not doing or not doing, "But He shows that the alternative is, the doing good or the failing to do good, — which last He puts as identical with doing evil, the neglecting to save as equivalent to destroying" (343). And then (3) Jesus breaks their tradition about the Sabbath by restoring the man's hand to wholeness by merely telling him to stretch out his hand. What would the Jews have said if Jesus had argued that he did not do any work, but he merely spoke and the miracle occurred without his lifting a finger? No doubt, they would have done the same thing — held a meeting of Scribes, Pharisees and Herodians to discuss how to destroy Jesus.

Sabbath Conflicts in Mark, Luke and John

Three Sabbath healing incidents are described where no conflict is recorded — the healing of a demoniac in the Capernaum synagogue (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37); the healing of Simon's wife's mother (Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39); and as the sun was setting that same day, the healing of various diseases and casting out of demons (Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41).

Besides the healing controversy recorded in Matthew, five other conflicts are recorded over healing on the Sabbath: (1) An impotent or paralyzed man was healed by Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, which resulted in the Jews seeking to kill Jesus (John 5:1-18) "because He not only brake the Sabbath, but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). The Jews first told the man who had been cured that it was not lawful for him to take up his bed on the Sabbath. When they discovered it was Jesus who on the Sabbath had told

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the man to take up his bed and walk, they persecuted Jesus (John 5:16). Jesus' answer was that God was working just as Jesus was, on the Sabbath, as on all other days. [What would have happened if God ceased to work on the Sabbath? What if God's and Christ's maintaining of the universe (Colossians 1:17) stopped during the Sabbath? This may not have been understood by the Jews then, but that's what is involved in Christ's argument in John 5:17.]

(2) John 9:1-41 records Jesus' healing a man born blind by anointing his eyes with clay and telling him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Most of the controversy was between the Pharisees and the formerly-blind man, because Jesus was not present when the Pharisees interrogated him and his parents about whether he had really been blind and about Jesus' having sinned by healing him on the Sabbath. When they do confront Jesus, the Pharisees are told that their sin remains with them and that Jesus came with the power of judgment.

(3) Luke 13:10-17 tells how Jesus shamed a synagogue ruler who was indignant because in a synagogue on the Sabbath Jesus healed a woman who had been "bowed together" for eighteen years. Calling those who opposed this healing hypocrites, Jesus said they would loose an ox or a donkey and lead him to water on the Sabbath. "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:16).

(4) In Luke 14:1-6, Jesus uses illustration of an ox or donkey being drawn up out of a well it fell into on the Sabbath, to silence lawyers and Pharisees who watched him as he went into a Pharisee ruler's house to eat on the Sabbath. He then healed a man who had dropsy, and the Pharisees could not answer his reasoning.

(5) There is one indefinite healing incident of his making a man whole on the Sabbath, where Jesus (in John

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7:21-24) uses the argument that his making a man whole on the Sabbath was no more a violation of the law than the Jews' circumcising on the Sabbath. He then said, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." McGarvey thinks the healing incident Jesus refers to here is "the miracle performed on the Sabbath day at Bethesda eighteen months before, which gave rise to the plot to murder him" (McGarvey and Pendleton 445).

Christ's Position on the Sabbath Law

Christ's position on the Sabbath law was, first of all, that he kept it, while at the same time rejecting the Scribes' and Pharisees' traditions concerning it. Several statements of the evangelists Mark and Luke show that Jesus observed the Sabbath by worshiping and teaching in their synagogues on Sabbath days (Mark 1:21-28; 3:1-4; 6:2; Luke 4:16-21; 4:31-37; 6:6; 13:10). But the Jews had traditions about how far one could travel on the Sabbath, whether one could defend himself if attacked on the Sabbath, whether they might minister to the sick on the Sabbath and such like. One tradition held that you could help a sick person only if he were so desperately sick that he would not survive until the first day of the week. Lewis says that the traditions honored by the Pharisees defined the prohibition of work on the Sabbath "to forbid thirty-nine types of activity" (169).

Jesus charged the Scribes and Pharisees with hypocrisy in interpreting the Sabbath law to fit their traditions, just as he did in regard to other traditions they held (Matthew 15:6-9). They didn't apply their traditions to David (Matthew 12:3-4), nor to the priests in the temple (Matthew 12:5). They would circumcise on the Sabbath, and would pull a sheep or an ox or a donkey out of a pit on the Sabbath, but they would not allow Jesus to heal a sick person on the Sabbath. By holding that it was unlawful to do good on the Sabbath, they were in fact doing evil.

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Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man, and not vice versa. It was a day of rest (Exodus 20:9-10) for the Israelites, meaning that they were not to do unnecessary work then. Although the Bible does not speak to this issue, those familiar with cattle know that the farmer must milk his cows every day, lest they get mastitis and die. The Israelites were an agricultural people, and they had to do some such things on the Sabbath as milking cows and rescuing oxen and sheep that fell in pits. Their religious activities like circumcision and offering sacrifices also had to be done on the Sabbath at times. An overly stringent application of Sabbath law was harmful to man and would have meant that man was made for the Sabbath. It would be like rejecting mercy in favor of sacrifice, Jesus said, citing Hosea 6:6.

The Son of Man (a term meaning the Messiah, the Christ) was Lord of the Sabbath. It was a law of his making, since he was the second Person in the Godhead, so he could define what was lawful on the Sabbath and what was not. He defined the doing of good as lawful, and the refusing of permission to do good as unlawful (sinful). What would later be explained was that he had the right or authority to change the Sabbath law. As surely as he had a part in giving the Sabbath law, he had the authority (all authority — Matthew 28:18) to take it away and replace it with the Gospel. Christ's position on the Sabbath, as defined by his apostle Paul is that the law was nailed to the cross and superseded by the Gospel. Paul said God gave us new life with Christ, "having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross; having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the

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things to come; but the body is Christ's" (Colossians 2:13-17). The Sabbath law is no more binding on us than Old Testament rules about clean and unclean meat or about keeping the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

The point made by Paul here, and by Jesus when he said he was Lord of the Sabbath and that the Sabbath was made for man, is that the Sabbath law was a law for Israel while they were the people of God. The Sabbath law given on Mount Sinai in Exodus 20:8-11 is anticipated in Exodus 16:22-30 when God gave them manna on the first through the sixth day of the week and thus caused them to rest on the seventh day. Exodus 16 shows that the keeping of the Sabbath as a special day of rest was unknown previously. The Sabbath law was not given to Adam, nor to Abraham; it was given to the Israelites under the covenant of Moses; as clearly stated in Nehemiah 9:13-14, God "made known unto them thy holy Sabbath, and commandest them commandments, and statutes, and a law, by Moses thy servant." The Sabbath was given through Moses and was to be observed throughout the period of time Israel was under Mosaic law. But when the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross and the Law of Christ began to be proclaimed on the Pentecost of Acts 2, the Sabbath law was no longer God's requirement. It had served its purpose, and the day of worship was changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week, commemorating the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week and the birthday of the church on the first day of the week.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charles J. Aebi was born in Webster, Pennsylvania, and was raised in Aleppo and Clover Hill, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of the Pennsylvania State University, Abilene Christian University and Ohio University. He taught Bible at Ohio Valley College 1964-1998 and served as academic dean at the college for fifteen years and chairman of the Bible Department for six years. He has preached in the Ohio Valley since 1952, and has served churches full-time in Pennsylvania and West Virginia and part-time in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Texas and Ohio. He has preached Gospel meetings and conducted workshops on Bible classes, church leadership, the restoration principle and family relationships in several states and foreign countries. Since retiring from the Bible faculty at Ohio Valley College, he has taught part-time at the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has spoken on several area lecture series and on lectureships at colleges and schools of preaching.

He is married to Imogene McDonough Aebi, who taught business in the public schools and at Ohio Valley College, and also is a Bible class teacher and speaker for women's groups in lectureships and in workshops. She also taught at Ohio Valley College for several years. The Aebis have four children and twelve grandchildren. Among their children and their spouses, they count eight Bible class teachers, four preachers, two deacons, two medical doctors, one nurse and five public school teachers.

MARCHING ORDERS OF THE KING

By Denver Cooper

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:19-20).

And he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

Every government has authority. The authority gives MARCHING ORDERS. Though spiritual in nature, Christ the King (Authority) has given MARCHING ORDERS. As King, he has the sovereign right to give orders. The orders were first given to the apostles as related in the opening texts. The Great Commission constitutes those orders. We in turn must train men to MARCH!!! (2 Timothy 2:2)

Go - Preach - Baptize - Teach

The apostle Paul admonishes, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not [do not wage war]

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against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:10-12). Following is listed the coat of armor to be worn by the Christian soldier as he goes out into battle. We are to wage a constant war against all unrighteousness. Hence, we are to be ready for battle at all times. “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with TRUTH, and having on the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS; And your feet shot with the preparation of the GOSPEL OF PEACE; Above all, taking the SHIELD OF FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the HELMET OF SALVATION, and the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is the word of God. PRAYING always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:14-18). You will note that there is no protection for the back. The order is, FORWARD MARCH.

When Moses came to the banks of the Red Sea away from Pharaoh, Moses said to the people, “Fear ye not, STAND STILL and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show thee today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, the that go FORWARD” (Exodus 14:13-15). Go FORWARD was the marching order for Israel. Standing still would have brought certain disaster. No more can we obey God by standing still.

Joshua Chapter 3 reminds us that Joshua (at the order of God) prepared the people to pass over overflowing Jordan. While the priest who bore the ark stood in the midst of Jordan on dry ground, the people MOVED FORWARD!

Joshua Chapter 6 records for us the destruction of Jericho. Though the Lord had said, “I have given Jericho

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into your hand, its king and the mighty men of valor, he commanded, “You shall MARCH around the city.” They were able to capture Jericho by following the MARCHING ORDERS of the King.

After an unsuccessful attempt to overcome the city of Ai, because there was “sin in the camp,” the people were able to do what they intended to do. Discovery of sin and elimination of it caused the people to receive further orders from God. “ARISE and GO up to Ai” (Joshua 8:1). They were now successful.

No less is the command GO in God’s spiritual army. The very first order of the Great Commission is GO! We are told that there are six and one half billion people on the earth now and that number will increase to seven billion by the year 2010. All of this number need the freedom offered them by Christ which can only be provided them by GOD’s army MARCHING! Of the population mentioned, some have told us there are three and one half billion people who have not heard the name Jesus.

Over the years, we have come to a pretty good understanding of the generic word GO! We understand that just anyway we can get there fulfills the command of the KING! We are not influenced by those who believe we must go only with a horse and buggy or that we may drive a car so long as it has black bumpers and door handles. Several years ago, Bro E.F. Rhodes, a member of the church at Timberville, Va., and a former Mennonite, wanted me to go to a Mennonite funeral with him. I did. We drove and had to park the car quite a distance from the church house. It was a below zero day and the funeral procession had five miles to travel from the home to the church house. It was a procession of buggies. Even the hearse was a horse drawn one with the driver and his assistant sitting high on the front of it appearing to be nearly frozen. Of course, students of the Bible understand that none of this really matters. The MARCHING ORDER

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is GO! Walk, drive a car, ride a horse or mule, fly or sail the seas, but GO! GO! GO! Ephesus lost its desire (Revelation 2). Laodicea had lost interest in GOING. Many churches are, I fear, in the same condition today. Like those in the first century, they MUST repent and GO or have their candle stick removed. It is not enough to meet regularly and lay up a great bank account. To overcome the world, we must GO! **Preach.**

It will do no good to GO unless we PREACH or TEACH. Only a few thousand preachers are available to do fulltime work. It is not difficult to calculate that if each fulltime preacher is given 5000 people to teach it will take over a million preachers to do the job. Of course, every one in Christ is under MARCHING ORDERS to preach or teach. Even so, the task seems to be out of the realm of possibility. Imagine a long line of soldiers encompassing the world fulfilling the arching orders of the King by speaking, writing, mailing literature or encouraging someone to preach or teach.

All Nations

It is sinful to think America is God's only nation of souls. Rather, "into all the world" is the order of Christ the King. It is not true that some humans have no soul. God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). Unfortunately, there are still those among us who believe that a black man has no soul and if one were to enter our house of worship would be "snubbed" by that person.

Of course, we must not forget that we have an obligation to the person next door to us as well as that person in a far away nation. Have you taken the time to speak to your neighbor? In Junior, W.V. several years ago during a tent meeting, several were baptized. One older

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gentleman was in the number. When he came from the dressing room another elder brother greeted him. The one having just been baptized into Christ remarked, "I have worked side by side with you for twenty five years and didn't know you were a Christian." Is being a Christian important to you? Do you see all who have not obeyed the Gospel as being LOST? Or, like some, do you say, "Well, he is already a member of a church. Don't you believe that God will somehow help them into heaven without doing what I believe they ought to do??" I hear some say, "if God sees fit to permit them into heaven without obeying the Gospel, it is o.k. with me." Not I! I do not serve a God or March to the orders of a KING who is a respecter of persons.

The Gospel

As we go to all nations, just what are we to preach? Are we to preach politics, tell jokes, inform of current events, voice our opinions as Gospel or engage in speculations. None of these can save the soul. However, by inspiration the apostle Paul declares, "for I am not ashamed of the GOSPEL of CHRIST: for it is the POWER of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). What is the Gospel? As to facts, they are, Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). As to commands, 'Believe, Repent, Be Baptized' (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). The promises are, remission of sins, salvation and the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). It is said of the Corinthians, "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

I have read and heard of some Gospel Preachers who no longer teach people to be baptized. Can one MARCH to the orders of the King and leave off the plan of salvation??

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I believe not. Others seem to offer it as if ashamed to do so. Remember, dear friend, that no denomination, no civic or fraternal order; no social club or any other has such a charge and we. Faithful brethren teach it! Faithful brethren want to hear it! In fact they expect to hear it and especially when they have invited their lost friends to hear what they need to do to be saved. The Lord's church and ONLY the Lord's church has the MARCHING ORDER that will save the souls of men. When so many have not heard it, why should we not tell it. It should never lose its appeal to the preachers. It does not become obsolete.

“Preacher, just preach Christ and leave off baptism.” I can't even preach Jesus and leave it off because that is what Jesus did to be in compliance with his Father's will. Furthermore, I could not repeat his farewell message to man.

Some say it is a Christian duty. If so, doesn't it seem strange that it stands alone as a duty performed only one time? No act of worship, no act of benevolence or evangelism may be performed one time only and satisfy the Marching Orders of the KING.

Again, baptism is the only duty in the Bible specifically to be done, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Baptism is the final act by which a penitent enters into Christ and into his death, reaching the blood that takes away his sins. It is God's ceremony to the believer who leaves the world and wants to be married to Christ. The Pentecostians of Acts 2 were told, “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Saul “received his sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized” (Acts 9:18) to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16). He wasn't saved on Damascus Road as many claim. One denominational preacher was heard to say, “Baptism is a manmade doctrine. If so, who made it? Where did it originate???”

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When the Eunuch of Acts 8 heard of Jesus, his question was, “what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8: 36). Peter’s question to the Jews at Caesarea was, “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized? And he commanded them to be baptized.”

When the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, she along with her household, was baptized.

Some say Holy Spirit baptism is the baptism required. It most certainly cannot be, because the MARCHING ORDERS were clearly given. There are three verbs, GO, PREACH, BAPTIZE. The subject is understood. You is that subject. You GO! You PREACH! You BAPTIZE! To whom was Jesus talking? Obviously to the apostles. No man ever lived on earth who ever did, could or ever will administer Holy Ghost baptism. John said, “I indeed baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me, who is mightier than I, he it is that shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” Let no man declare the baptism of the Commission to be Holy Spirit baptism. It is a perversion of the truth. I preach, and will continue to preach faith, repentance, confession of Christ as the son of God and baptism for the remission of sins, as man’s ONLY MEANS OF SALVATION. The ridicule of sectarian preachers should not hinder us. The MARCHING ORDERS remain, GO, PREACH, BAPTIZE.

Teach Them

The job is not finished when we have baptized them. The apostles were to continue to teach them. Them who? Why the them who were baptized. A very important part of their work, and ours, is to continue to teach the new born babes in Christ. Edify them. Do good by helping the poor and needy. Three, that will involve preaching to the sinful.

I have read of a Civil War General who disregarded rules of war and ordered every man to the firing line. Christ has ordered each of us the firing line. There is NO place for

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the weakling, coward or the lazy. All are called upon to “fight the good fight.” The line of soldiers reaches around the world! Think of the power of it! The war is against all evil, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. Too often the evil germs of the TV stars, and other celebrities, seen in the looseness of their way of life, are undermining the very foundation of our homes and any work for CHRIST.

Benevolence

Benevolence is important. Jesus set the example of compassion. We must be compassionate toward the poor and downtrodden. The Samaritan was an example of compassion. The Father was to the Son what our Heavenly Father is to every one of his children — willing and ready to receive each who penitently returns.

Build Self

Many there are who are illiterate when it comes to the Bible. Not often do we hear it said of the average member of the church, “he is a walking Bible.” Once we passed the time of day discussing the Scriptures. Grandpa sat with dad and uncle Coy almost every Sunday afternoon discussing the Scriptures. Sometimes it was pretty heated when the boys tried to straighten grandpa out on the “one cup” or Bible classes. I’m thankful my dad knew the difference.

Fathers, teach and train your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Older women, mothers, teach the younger women to “be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:3-5).

At home and in the Bible classes, teach the children the Word of God. It seems we may be coming somewhat short in this matter in some places.

Conclusion

“Be thou faithful unto death and I will give unto thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). What a ray of hope! As we MARCH and wage war against the forces of evil, assured victory is at the end of the way. NO FEAR — NO DOUBT! Won’t you cast your lot with the soldiers of Christ? Come believing with all of you heart that Jesus is the Son of God; repent of all of your sins; confess your faith in Christ before men and be baptized into Christ. Won’t you come today?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Denver E. Cooper was born April 2, 1923 in Cairo, WV. His parents were Jesse and Sarah Cooper. One sister Doris, died in 1931. Donald R. Cooper, a Gospel preacher in Wadsworth, OH is his brother.

Denver married Florence Smith of Sistersville, WV March 25, 1945. To this union were born 8 children. Edward T. (Gospel preacher) Denver Jr., Kelly R., Timothy, Rebecca Vilga, Jesse, Prisca (deceased); Denise, (Mrs. J.D. Conley) whose husband is the local preacher at Elkins, WV; and Martha Noland, whose husband, Bob is an over Sunday preacher.

Denver has served churches throughout the Ohio Valley for 62 years. He was located at Ironton, OH; Harrisville, WV; Chester, WV; Philippi, WV; Weirton Heights, Weirton, WV; Timberville, VA; Moundsville, WV; Valley Bend, WV. He returned to Moundsville from Valley Bend, at the request of the elders, to become the present director of West Virginia School of Preaching.