
A Study
Of The Book Of
Matthew

by Orville Freestone, Jr.

MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew is a bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament. From Malachi to John the Baptist is four hundred years. This long period was a time of profound change. During the time of the Old Testament the language of the Israelites was Hebrew, a language similar to Canaanite. From the time of the Babylonian exile the international language was Aramaic. In the New Testament time the international language was Greek. The Eastern Jews spoke Aramaic while the Western Jews of Africa and Europe spoke Greek. The Eastern Jews were called Hebrews and the Western Jews were called Grecians (Acts 6:1). During those four hundred years Judahism developed into various sects. The most prominent were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Essenes, and there were others. The Scribes were usually Pharisees learned in the Old Hebrew language and Scriptures. Matthew was one of the twelve apostles (ch 10:3). His name is Aramaic. His Hebrew name was Levi (Luke 5:27). He was a Publican, a tax collector for Rome, and for that most Jews hated him. His customs station was at Capernaum, which was a crossroad for east-west traffic and commerce. The themes of this Gospel are: “Jesus Messiah, the Son of David,” “The Kingdom of heaven” and “That it might be fulfilled.” The first chapter gives Joseph’s genealogy to show that Jesus, as a direct descendant of David, had the right to be Israel’s king. The Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew and the Kingdom of God in Mark and Luke always refer to the Messianic kingdom promised by the prophets and must not be confused with the Kingdom of God in Paul’s letters. Paul’s use of “the Kingdom of God” refers to His sovereignty over all things. In neither case does the word kingdom refer to the Church. The church is not a kingdom. It is a gathering of people from all nations. Jesus said that he did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (ch 5:17). Israel was

commanded to **keep** the Law; Jesus came to **fulfill** the Law. Thirteen times Matthew uses the phrase “that it might be fulfilled.” All of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry was under the Law. Everything Jesus did during His earthly ministry was to fulfill (complete) the Law. He brought an end to the Law (Galatians 3:19-25, Hebrews 7:12). Matthew’s Gospel is built around three extended speeches of Jesus: the Sermon on the Mount (ch 5-7), the parables of chapter thirteen and the Olivet discourse (ch 24 and 25). All three of these passages concern Israel and the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew cannot be correctly understood apart from the Dispensational viewpoint.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

CONCERNING KING MESSIAH

THE ADVENT OF THE KING

CHAPTERS 1 & 2

The royal line - ch 1:1-17

The first verse of chapter one states the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be “The Son of David,” the “Messiah” (Christ), and “the King of Israel.” Everything in this Gospel was written to verify this claim. When He was crucified, the charge posted on the cross was “this is Jesus the king of the Jews” (chapter 27:37) and was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Luke 23:38). Genealogies were important for the Jews. Before the exile they were claims to property. The Kingship depended on the line of descent, as did the priesthood. During the second temple time those records were kept in the temple. When the temple was destroyed, so were all of those records, so Jesus is the last claimant for the throne of David. Matthew’s record is somewhat abbreviated by the omission of six names: Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakin, and Zedekiah. This was done to make it a three-part list of fourteen generations each from Abraham to David, from David to the exile and from the exile to Christ. This structure was more easily memorized. Hebrew genealogies were patrilineal. Seldom were women listed, but Matthew included five women, each one under a stigma. The first is Tamar (Genesis 38:27). The second is Rahab (Joshua 6:25). The third is Ruth (book of Ruth). Fourth is Bath-Sheba, and the fifth is the virgin Mary. In the Gospel of Luke we have the genealogy of Mary.

The birth of the King - ch 1:18-24

In the genealogy of Joseph it is not said that he begat Jesus (vs 16). It is said (vs 18) that Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit,” and Joseph was divinely informed of

the truth of the matter. Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 to show that the virgin birth of Christ was foretold. This is the first of thirteen times that the phrase “that it might be fulfilled” is used.

Wise men from the east - ch 2:1-12

The “wise men” were magi, a class of astrologers and scholars in Persia and Babylon. They had “seen his star rising.” (Wuest, ESV and NEB) It is apparent that this was some sign in the heavens. The word star in Matthew’s Greek is aster. Aster can mean an individual star or a grouping of stars. It can even mean a constellation. Daniel was grouped among the magi by the kings of Babylon and Persia in the book of Daniel. When the magi arrived and asked where the newborn king was, Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled. Herod had murdered many whom he considered rivals, including those of his own family. The priests and scribes well knew where Messiah would be born. They quoted Micah 5:2 that he would be born in Bethlehem. When they found the infant Jesus He was not in a manger, but in a house. It is significant that at His birth Jesus was rejected by the Jews of Jerusalem but sought and worshiped by Gentiles from the east. This was repeated during His ministry (John 12:21), and the age of Gospel for two millennia. Joseph was warned by God in a dream to flee to Egypt to escape the inhumanly cruel Herod.

Escape to Egypt – chapter 2:13-23

Herod was paranoid about rivals to the throne. The Angel of the Lord warned Joseph to go to Egypt where they would be beyond Herod’s jurisdiction. Verse 15 is the second use of the phrase “that it might be fulfilled.” The quotation is

from Hosea 11:1, which referred to Israel's exodus from Egypt. Matthew is drawing a parallel of Jesus' life and of Israel's history. Herod's response was swift and bloody. The third use of the phrase is from Jeremiah 3:15. The parallel here is the mourning in Bethlehem for their murdered children with the mourning for the deaths in Bethlehem caused by the Babylonians. Herod did not live long after this event, and Joseph was assured that it was safe to return. He took his family to Nazareth, in Galilee. The fourth time this phrase is used, in verse twenty-one, refers to Isaiah 11:1. There Messiah is called "a branch from the stem of Jesse" meaning David's descendant, and Zechariah 6:12 where He is called "the man whose name is the Branch. Nazareth means, "branch."

THE PRESENTATION OF THE KING

CHAPTER 3:1- 4:11

The King's herald - ch 3:1-12

The seventy weeks of years of Daniel 9:24-25 were coming to completion and there was great anticipation among the Jews when John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judah as "a voice crying in the wilderness" (Isaiah 40:3). His message was of great urgency: repent and be baptized to be prepared for the coming of the Mightier One who would come with a greater baptism. John's appearing was like Elijah's, suddenly appearing from nowhere and his dress and manners were similar. Great crowds came from far and near. This drew the attention of the powers that be in Jerusalem. They were very sensitive to any movement that would endanger the

status quo. Jesus affirmed (Matthew 17:10-13) that John's ministry was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi 4:5.

The King qualified by baptism - ch 3:13-17

When Jesus heard that John was baptizing He came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized. Why?? Why would the Messiah need to be baptized for repentance? This was John's response too. Jesus insisted and God responded in approval from heaven. As Daniel identified himself with his people in Israel's national sin, though he himself was innocent, so did Jesus identify Himself with His people? "**Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to become like unto His brethren**" (Hebrews 2:17). The Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus was the sign previously given to John (John 1:33).

Testing the King – ch 4:1-11

The first Adam was tested by Satan in a garden with plenty of food and drink, and failed. The second Adam (I Corinthians 15:45) was tested in a sere desert with no food or water and prevailed. These three tests were comprehensive for the King of Israel, redeemer of all from the realm of darkness. They address the matters of ease, presumption and power. Jesus replied to each temptation with the Word of God, a good example for us today. His reply to the first temptation was Deuteronomy 8:3. To the second his response was Psalm 91:11-12 vs. Deuteronomy 6:16, and to the third His answer was Deuteronomy 6:13.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

CHAPTER 4:12 - 7:29

Preaching and healing - ch 4:12-25

When Herod Antipas ended John's ministry by imprisoning him, Jesus returned to Galilee from Judaea, but He avoided Nazareth where He had been rejected (Luke 4:29). For the fifth time Matthew uses the phrase "that it might be fulfilled" and he quotes Isaiah 9:1-2. Jesus' coming to Galilee brought light into darkness (John 1:8). The phrase "from that time" (vs 17) marks a time of transition from his quiet mission in Judaea (John chapters 1-3) to a public campaign in Galilee. His message was "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." This was the Messianic kingdom that He was offering to Israel. It was the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34. Though He attracted great crowds there was also opposition from the start. He was rejected for who He was, the Messiah and king. In chapter 21:43 Jesus withdrew His offer of the kingdom of heaven. He now called Peter, Andrew, James and John to accompany Him as assistants. They had been disciples of John when they met Him where John was baptizing. Jesus' preaching attracted the needy and repelled the mighty.

The Sermon on the Mount - ch 5:1-29

Jesus was preaching the message of the Kingdom of Heaven and what it would be like when God's will is "done on earth as it is in heaven." This sermon is the Gospel of the kingdom and to enter it repentance was required (ch 4:17), and a new heart (Ezekiel 11:19). This was a genuine offer of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The nature of the Kingdom

The Beatitudes - vs 1-12

Jesus begins His sermon with ten short poetic sayings to show the happy state of all who enter the Kingdom of Heaven. They are in sharp contrast with Moses “ten words” with which he began his Law. The beatitudes are not promises; they are descriptive of those who by faith have Ezekiel’s “new heart.” These ten attributes are spiritual and moral. The poor in spirit are not haughty. They who mourn are repentant and sorrow for the effects of sin (Isaiah 66:2). The meek are patient and gentle. They who hunger and thirst for righteousness are passionate for holiness. The merciful are not vengeful. The pure in heart are open and transparent with nothing to hide. Peacemakers are themselves at peace. The persecuted are on the right side. God honors the slandered. For all these reasons they can rejoice. These are attributes of character, and happy are they. As salt preserves and cleanses so such persons have a salutary effect on society. As light they can show the way to enter the kingdom. Jesus was here describing those who were His true disciples.

Jesus and the Law - vs 17-20

Jesus “kept” the Law perfectly and He was the only one to do so. But He came to “fulfill” the Law and the prophets. Every thing He said or did was for this purpose. He came as the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15) and as the seed of Abraham (singular-Galatians 3:16). He is the Son of David (Matthew 1:1), the virgin’s son and Emanuel “God with us (Isaiah7:14).” He was the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah52:13). He is our offering for sin (53:10). He is God’s Anointed One ‘Messiah’ (Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18-21). He was betrayed

for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13). He came to Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:19 and Matthew 21:5). He was “that prophet” (John 1:21 and Deuteronomy 8:15), and the “Lamb of God” (John 1:36). There are literally hundreds of examples of prophecy and types that Jesus fulfilled at his first advent to Israel. This is only a sampling of them. There are also hundreds of prophecies and types that He will fulfill at His second advent to Israel (Acts 1:11). A jot is the Hebrew letter yod, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It looks somewhat like our apostrophe. A tittle was a small stroke to distinguish between Hebrew letters that look very similar. Jesus here shows that not only are **all** the words of the Old Testament divinely inspired, but also the very spelling of each word! The righteousness of the Pharisees was external. The righteousness of the Kingdom is first internal and affects the external life.

Jesus and the Pharisees - vs 21-48

Six times Jesus said, “You have heard it said...but I say.” He is not contradicting Moses, but “them of old time.” They accused Him of violating the “tradition of the elders” (Matthew 15:1-6). He accused them of voiding God’s commands by their traditions. He here gives six egregious examples. The first example is the sixth command of the “ten words,” thou shalt not kill. The Hebrew does not say kill. It is a prohibiting of murder. Jesus’ point is that this commandment goes further than the act of slaying, it has to do with the inner attitude that results in murder. It forbids ill will and anger including verbal abuse. The Jewish word Raca means empty head and “more” (the Jewish word translated as thou fool) means “you scoundrel.” Jesus’ point is that the

commandment includes the inner spirit that leads to violence. In the following verses He gives the way to handle such situations: reconciliation!

The second example is adultery, always a problem in every society. Again, it is the inner thoughts that lead to the act that is the problem. In the following verses twenty-nine and thirty Jesus is speaking in hyperbole, a common Rabbinic way of teaching. He did not mean to literally put ones eye out or cut off ones hand. Hyperbole is to exaggerate a point to the ridiculous to emphasize its importance.

The third example is divorce. Divorce was a scandal in Jesus' time and is a tragedy in our society today. There was a wide range of opinion in Israel concerning this subject. The disciples of Hillel held a very liberal view, and the disciples of Shammai held a very strict view. Jesus gave only one reason for divorce, infidelity. He agreed that Moses required a bill of divorcement be given to the wife. This is because only the husband had the right of divorce, the wife did not. This document gave her legal standing and rights. He emphasized it was not God's will to divorce by saying that "from the beginning it was not so" (ch 19:8).

The fourth example is the swearing of oaths. To swear an oath is "to make a declaration or affirmation with an appeal to God for confirmation" (Webster). For oaths or vows to be done in the future, we have no assurance of the future. In a court of law we swear, or solemnly affirm to tell the truth. This is certainly within our power. To forswear is to swear falsely. To swear about trivial matters is profanity, it profanes God's name. There were many variations to avoid profaning God's name in Jesus' time as there are today. Jesus' verdict

was to swear by the temple or the altar or by anything else is the same as using God's name. God Himself swore "by Himself" (Hebrews 6:13). He is certainly able to do that which He swears!

The fifth example refers to the laws of retaliation. The principle of "and eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" was not mandatory, but restrictive. It is an important principle of law today that punishment be appropriate to the offense. These laws of Moses were to prevent blood feuds. Former Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin said regarding the conflict with the Palestinians, "If we insist on an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth we will all be blind and toothless!" Rather than revenge, respond with acts of kindness.

The sixth example is similar to the fifth. The second great commandment of Moses to love one's neighbor applies even to enemies. The only way to really destroy an enemy is to make him a friend. All six examples of Jesus' teaching in reply to the Pharisees have to do with personal and social relations.

Religious observances - ch 6:1-18

Alms (charitable giving), prayers and fasting were a part of the Judaism of Jesus day, and He did not condemn them as such. He singled out the Pharisees for censure because of their ostentation. Throughout both the Old and the New Testaments, care for the poor is urged. The Pharisees assumed a superior attitude for their piety which Jesus called hypocrisy.

He condemned their prayers for the same reason. Their prayers were just a form and not from the heart. In our time also there is much praying that is just so much recitation

of words. He then gave His followers a model prayer. This prayer is a model of simplicity, brevity and completeness. There is nothing wrong with reciting “the Lord’s prayer,” but that is not what He intended. He gave this prayer to His followers, most of whom were what we would call the working poor who longed for the kingdom of heaven. The first three petitions concerned God’s will. The next three petitions were about the daily needs and relationships of the people. Daily bread was often a problem. This prayer was not given to the Church. It was given to the Jewish people to whom He was speaking who were looking for that kingdom when God’s will “would be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Although Moses established only one fast, the fast of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26), fasting was common in times of peril or mourning. The Pharisees made a public show of “fasting twice in the week” (Luke 18:12). Jesus did not establish any fast for His followers, nor did any of the apostles. Matthew 17:21 is an interpolation found in some Greek texts. Contemporary versions do not include this verse.

Attitudes of life - 6:19-

Wealth - vs 6-34

Our attitudes of life reveal who we really are. This is especially true of one’s attitude to wealth. There is nothing wrong with wealth itself, but the way we are affected by it in either its possession or lack. Jesus gives a choice, either treasure in heaven or on earth, “where your treasure is there will your heart be also.” This is a decision all must make. He then gives two examples. The first example is double vision. Double vision is a problem physically, and it is a problem spiritually. If not treated, one eye will suppress the other

affecting clarity of sight and depth perception. Spiritually it will result in carnal values. The second example is “no man can serve two masters.” The choice is God or mammon (money). Paul wrote “they who **will be rich** (desire to be) fall into temptation and a snare (I Timothy 6:9). Wealth does become a master rather than a servant. “Therefore” (verse 25), all who would serve God and not mammon must trust their heavenly Father and their “little faith” will grow. Jesus then gives two examples of God’s care for His creation: the birds of the air and “the lilies of the field.” Since God cares for wild flowers and birds will He not care about our needs? Make His will our priority and trust Him for our needs.

Judge not - ch 7:1-5

The second attitude He addresses is carping criticism. The first verse of chapter seven is, perhaps, the most misapplied and misunderstood verse in the Bible today. It is often quoted to mean “you have no right to say ‘that is wrong’.” The four following verses show what is meant by “judge not.” It concerns the vicious carping criticism of others who do not conform to ones own rules. Jesus was referring to the Pharisees and their attacks on Him and His followers. Mark 7:1-8 and Matthew 12: 1-7 are examples. The Pharisees’ rules were not from the scriptures, but from the “traditions of the elders.” The words “judge not” do not mean that the Church does not have authority to judge sin in its members, nor that individuals cannot discriminate with regard to others.

Exhortations – vs 6-23

Be discriminate – vs 6

Like any good sermon, Jesus ends this sermon with practical exhortations. The first is “give not that which is holy to the dogs.” The Gospel is primarily a proclamation, though certainly there is a place for apologetics (defending the Gospel). It is a waste of time and does no good to argue with those who are not interested in what we have to say. W J Franklin used to say; “There are Christians who have an argument and think it is a testimony.” We are to be discriminate in our testimony for the Gospel. Let our Christian life affirm our message.

Persistence in prayer – vs 7-11

The tense of the verbs ask, seek and knock means **keep on** asking, seeking and knocking. This is to be characteristic of our life in relation to our Father. Jesus told parables teaching persistence in prayer. Luke 18:1-9 is an example. Our heavenly Father cares for His children. This gives us confidence in prayer.

The Golden Rule – vs 12

This beautiful verse is to govern our behavior in personal encounters with others. The thought was not new. The Jewish Rabbis recorded a negative version: “whatever is hateful to you do not to others.” Jesus’ version is positive and beautifully said.

The narrow gate – vs 13-14

It is a fact that the people of God are always a minority. This was true in the Old Testament time, in Jesus’ day and today. The desire to be popular in the world is not a Christian attitude.

Beware! - vs 24-29

There were false prophets through out the Old Testament, in Jesus' day and today and they deceive many. He gives us a way to discern them: "by their fruits." It behooves Christians to know the life "fruits" of all claiming to preach the Gospel.

Conclusion – vs 24-29

Jesus concluded His sermon with a parable, the meaning of which is clear. This sermon was delivered to the crowd that followed Him, but it was addressed to all Israel. He presented only two options; either builds their lives on the Rock (Jesus, Himself) and escape the coming storm (the Roman siege), or build it on the contemporary religious and political world and perish in the destruction that was to come about forty years later. There is also a lesson for us Christians. Build our lives on the Rock and live worthwhile lives or build them on the world and lose all in the end (I Corinthians 3:12).

MESSIANIC SIGNS

CHAPTERS 8 – 9

“ And Jesus went teaching...and preaching...and healing” -
chapter 9:35

The Pharisees demanded that Jesus give them a sign to validate His claims (Matthew 12:38, 16;1, Mark 8:11, and Luke 11:29). Jesus' ministry was full of signs to establish His authority and who He is (John 21:25). The Pharisees would not accept them as signs because they were not what they expected of Messiah. They expected a political leader and military conqueror. In these two chapters Matthew summarized the signs of Jesus as Messiah with several examples.

Healing a leper – ch 8:1-4

The leprosy of the ancient world was not Hansen's disease that we call leprosy today. Leprosy was a general term for a number of skin disorders, some curable and some not curable but all made the patient "unclean." Leviticus chapter thirteen describes these diseases and gives instructions for the treating of lepers. As today, they were isolated from society. Moses called lepers "unclean" ritually and socially. Jesus "cleansed" him by touching him. This was probably the first time since he became a leper that anyone voluntarily touched him. Jesus told him to present himself to the priest with the appropriate sacrifice **for a testimony to them**, (the priests and Pharisees). Leprosy came to be a type for sin. Why did Jesus tell the leper "tell no man" that Jesus had healed him? The answer is Isaiah 42:2, "My servant - will not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." Jesus would not promote Himself, He would let His life and works speak for themselves.

Healing the centurion's servant- vs 5-13

The centurion was a commander of one hundred in the Roman army and evidently was stationed at Capernaum. He was friendly toward the Jews and had "built them a synagogue" (Luke 7:1-5). One of his servants, whom he loved, was "sick of the palsy," some sort of painful paralysis. The Jewish elders asked Jesus to go heal him (Luke 7:3). Knowing the Jewish rules concerning social interaction (Acts 10:28), he asked only that Jesus "speak the word" to heal his servant. Jesus highly commended him saying that He had "not found so great faith in Israel." He declared that many Gentiles would sit with the Jewish patriarchs in the Kingdom of

Heaven while many Jews would be rejected. History justifies His statement.

Healing Peter's mother-in-law and others – vs 14-17

When Jesus went to Peter's house in Capernaum He found Peter's mother-in-law sick with some kind of fever and He healed her with the touch His hand. At once she was fully recovered. That evening crowds came to be healed and He healed them all. Matthew here quotes Isaiah 53:4 to show that this was a sign of the Messiahship of Jesus. This is the sixth time He uses the phrase "that it might be fulfilled."

Discipleship – vs 18-22

These four verses show the rigor of Jesus' campaign to reach all the people of Israel with His message and challenge. The time was short and "the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (9:37). His whole earthly ministry was less than four years.

Two disciples offered their services. The first was a scribe, one learned in Old Hebrew, and also surely a Pharisee. He offered to follow Jesus wherever He went. So far as the record shows, he is the only scribe who was a disciple of Jesus. Unlike other Rabbis, Jesus was itinerant. This man had not counted the price of such service.

The other disciple asked for a leave to go and bury his father. His father was not yet dead or he would have been there for the funeral as burial had to be on the same day as the death. He did have a responsibility under the Law to his father (Exodus 20:12). Evidently he was not the only one who could discharge this duty. Jesus' point was that His time was short. By the time of the death of this man's father Jesus could

already have been crucified and risen again. For this man it was a matter of priorities.

Calming the storm – vs 23-27

The sea (lake) of Galilee lies in the great earth fault that runs from Syria down the Jordan valley and to the Red sea, then into Africa to the lake country. Mountain ridges rising two to three thousand feet surround it. This causes strong windstorms to rise suddenly, as this one did. These men were very familiar with this lake, but this storm was exceptionally fierce. That Jesus could sleep in such a tempest is remarkable. That He was so weary shows Jesus' **humanity**. When the disciples called "Lord help us," it is not clear what they expected Him to do. They were amazed when He calmed not only the wind, but also the waves. Normally the waves would continue to toss for many hours. They marveled, "what manner of man is He." He showed His **divinity** by His power over nature's forces. This still had not dawned on them.

Demons and pigs – vs 28-34

Jesus and His disciples came "to the other side" of the lake to the land of the Gergesenes. This was the south eastern shore of the lake, which was a part of the Decapolis (Mark 5:20). The Decapolis was a league of ten Gentile cities, most of which were in what today is the Kingdom of Jordan. There were many areas of Galilee that were mainly Gentile. The largest city in Galilee, Sepphoris, was non-Jewish. Modern Israeli archaeologists determine which part of the land of Israel was Jewish and what part was non-Jewish in Roman times by the presence or absence of pig bones. Whether these who were demon possessed were Jewish or not is not said, but the man published his happy deliverance throughout the

Decapolis and not Israel. If He were not Jewish, He would not be the only Gentile healed by Jesus (Matthew 15:21-28). Since this is the only thing Jesus did here, it is clear He came for this very purpose. The area of this part of the lakeshore rises precipitously from the shore for several hundred feet. The swine were feeding on the mountainside and bolted down and off a cliff like lemmings into the lake. The owners were superstitious and afraid of Jesus. This is why Jesus told the man, who wanted to follow Him, to go home and tell others his wonderful news. This he did throughout the Decapolis. Matthew's is a short summary account like the others of chapters eight and nine. We learn more about this in Mark chapter five and Luke chapter eight.

Jesus' great claim – ch 9:1-8

When Jesus returned to Peter's home in Capernaum, huge crowds came and filled the house and crowded around it. A paralyzed man, carried by four friends was brought to be healed. Since they could not enter the house because of the crowd, they went to the flat roof, removed some of the tiles and lowered him to Jesus. They were not reproved for this; in fact Jesus noted that they had faith! Luke and Mark add that among the crowd were scribes and doctors of the Law. It was for them that Jesus said, "thy sins be forgiven." He perceived their thoughts that He was blaspheming. Mark 2:7 and Luke 5:21 add, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" This was exactly Jesus' point in verse six that He the Son of Man was divine. This He demonstrated by His command "arise, take up thy bed and go to thy house." The crowd marveled "that such power was given to **men.**" They thought of Him as only a

man. They missed the point and the Pharisees rejected the point.

From Publican to Apostle – vs 9-13

From reading this passage one might think that Jesus saw Matthew by chance and called him to follow Him as a disciple and companion. This certainly isn't the case. Jesus, of course, could see in Matthew what he was and who he would become. Capernaum was not a large city, but it was prosperous. It was a town where everyone knew everyone and everything that happened. Being a publican, a tax collector for hated Rome, he was shunned by most Jews. This tax collector surely knew quite a bit about Jesus. His instant and permanent abandonment of his business is remarkable! He was certainly was one of those sinners for whom Jesus came. The quotation is from Hosea 6:6. Even under the Law, mercy was greater than the sin of the repenting one. By preparing a banquet for his associates to meet Jesus, he showed a zeal for others

The New and the Old – vs 14-17

John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament covenant. He had said, "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30). His disciples seem to have accepted many of the ways of the ways of the Pharisees, at least concerning fasting. Jesus did not follow the customs of the Pharisees and they resented that. The disciples of John seemed confused. Jesus' response was that His message was not a continuation of the ways of old, but was radically new in keeping with the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31. He illustrates this by two parables. The "age to come" was likened to a wedding feast by the Rabbis. Jesus picked up on

this to make His point. He is the bridegroom. The “friends of the bridegroom” are His disciples. You don’t fast during a feast! The time will come for fasting because of grief when He is “taken from them” (verse 15) and crucified. The second parable is about the wine bottles. These “bottles” were usually made of goatskins. The alcohol in “old wine” causes the leather to harden so it can’t stretch. “New” (fermenting) wine produces carbon dioxide gas that causes new bottles to stretch. Put new wine into old bottles and they will burst. The point of the parable is that the ways of the Old Covenant are not appropriate for the New Covenant, which is radically different. It is not about fasting. It is about feasting and joy!

The Prince of Life (Acts 3:15) -vs 18-26

Four times Jesus demonstrated His power over death; He raised the widow’s son (Luke 7:11), this “ruler’s” daughter, Lazarus (John chapter 11) and His own resurrection. This “ruler,” Jairus, was a ruler of a local synagogue (Mark 5:22). He worshiped Jesus by prostrating himself before Him. The presence of professional mourners shows that the girl was already dead. Jesus raised her to life without ceremony. The remarkable nature of all these accounts is; there is no mention of the experiences any of those while they were dead.

This mission of mercy was interrupted in a most unusual way. A woman who had long suffered hemorrhages pressed through the throng to touch His garment. Of all who crowded about Him, only she felt His power and this was because of her faith!

Son of David – vs 27-31

“Two blind men followed Him,” quite a feat! They addressed Him as Son of David. Jesus ignored them until they

were in the house. Why? The title “Son of David” was known by all to be the title of the Messiah. Isaiah 42:2 reads “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.” He would not promote Himself, but let His works reveal Him. He touched them both and healed them.

The Master of demons – vss 32-34

The Bible clearly distinguishes between disease and demon possession. When Jesus had “cast out” the demon, the man who had been unable to speak spoke freely. This and all of the preceding miracles of chapters eight and nine were evidences of Jesus’ Messianic ministry. The Pharisees not only did not accept this evidence, they said He was in league with the devil. They still demanded a sign (ch 12:38)! Israel had the priests and Pharisees who ruled over them, but Jesus said they were leaderless. He used two metaphors to describe Israel’s condition. They were scattered as “sheep having no shepherd,” quoted from Numbers 27:17. They were also a great harvest and there were few workers to bring in the harvest. The next chapter gives His solution, the commission of his twelve apostles to help in His work.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

CHAPTER TEN

The twelve – vs 1-4

This chapter is a fulfillment of Jesus’ remarks in verses 37-38 of chapter nine concerning the harvest. Jesus commissioned these twelve disciples to be His apostles and they would now broaden His own labors in the harvest field of that day. The word apostle means “one sent forth,” to be His personal representatives.

Their commission – vs 5-15

As His personal representatives, Jesus empowered them to perform the same miracle signs that He did and their message was the same as His. This was an urgent and quick campaign. That is why they were not to carry travel supplies, money, nor a change of clothes. After this campaign and under different circumstances He gave the exact opposite instructions (Luke 22:35-36).

Their mission – vs 16-22

The phrase “send (you) forth” is the verbal form of which apostle is the noun form. These verses describe their mission. To send them forth “as sheep among wolves” is an odd saying. One defends sheep from wolves. But this accurately describes the land of Israel at this time. The wolves were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians. The “lost sheep of the House of Israel” (vs 6) were being misgoverned by those wolves, and their enmity toward the Master will be directed against His apostles. Jesus accurately foretells their being arrested and brought before councils, governors and kings, all of which are recorded in the book of Acts and it only got worse over the next forty years.

The shattering of family relationships peaked during the siege of Jerusalem. Unbelieving Jews hate believing Jews today. The word “saved” in verse 22 means delivered, the only way of escaping the holocaust is to survive it. “Till the Son of Man comes”: this was recognized as a title for the Messiah and refers to Daniel 7:13. Here it means the second advent of Christ. From our viewpoint in time it is obvious that these same men will not be here when Jesus returns. As late as Acts 1:6, the Apostles were expecting the Kingdom of

God during their lifetime. This long age of the Church had not yet been revealed.

Jesus' instructions – vs -24-42

The apostles could expect to receive the same treatment that He, their Master, had received. Three times in this section He exhorts them to “fear not.” They were to boldly and fearlessly preach all that He had proclaimed. He who knows about and cares for sparrows will care for them. Just as they are His representatives on earth, He was their representative to the Father. Jesus' very presence was, and is divisive. One must be either for or against Him. This is not “gentle Jesus, meek and mild!” These are serious matters. The quotation of 35-36 is from Micah 7:6. Verse 39 is brief, but full of meaning. One may sum summarize it thus: One who is finding his satisfaction in this life will in the end lose it all, but one who sacrifices for the Lord will find all in the end. All kindnesses and effort will be duly rewarded.

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

CHAPTER ELEVEN

John's dilemma-vs 1-6

Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, imprisoned John. The reason for his being imprisoned is related in chapter fourteen. This ended John's prophetic ministry. This and the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven, which he had proclaimed did not seem to be coming to pass, must have caused deep depression and doubts. Had he been wrong? Was Jesus the Coming One? Not all of John's disciples had become disciples of Jesus. He sent some of them to Jesus to question Him about these matters, “Are you He who should come?”

Jesus did not directly answer their question, but pointed to His works as fulfillment of the scriptures concerning Him (Isaiah 35:6 and 61:1). Verse six was meant to be an encouragement to John.

Jesus' eulogy of John – vs 7-15

Turning to the crowd, Jesus asks what did you expect when you went to see and hear John? He was no reed shaken by the wind! You saw how roughly he was clothed. A prophet? Yes, and more than a prophet. He was **the** prophet foretold by Malachi (Malachi 4:8) who would be the herald of the Coming One. “He that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he” in position and privilege, not in character or holiness. From the beginning of John's preaching to the then present time those who followed Jesus and John were persecuted. John was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Jesus described His contemporaries by a simple analogy of children at play. They would not agree about which game to play. They wouldn't play wedding and they wouldn't play funeral. They just wouldn't agree. So it was with Jesus and John. John was ascetic and had a simple diet and did not use wine and wore the rough garments of the desert and he was faulted for that. Jesus came both feasting and drinking wine and was criticized for that. There was just no pleasing them.

Condemnation and invitation – vs 16-30

Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were cities on or near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had spent much time here and many of His most notable miracles occurred in this area.

His judgment was that they did not repent. Repentance was the main point of His message. Tyre and Sidon were

Canaanite (Phoenician) cities near Israel's northern border. They were idolatrous. These Jewish cities would be more severely judged than the heathen cities because they had a knowledge of God, a history of the prophets, and Jesus ministry and had rejected Him and His message. Just a few years later (Acts 21:4) Paul found disciples at Tyre! Sodom and its sister cities were heathen Canaanites in Abraham's time. God destroyed them for their gross moral depravity. Yet, Jesus called all who were ready to respond to Him individually to come unto Him (verses 28-30). They would "find rest unto their souls (Jeremiah 6:16)".

JESUS AND THE PHARISEES

CHAPTER TWELVE

Matthew selected four of the many encounters of Jesus and the Pharisees to show their increasing enmity toward Him. His message was radically different from theirs that there was no way to reconcile them. This led to the unpardonable sin of verse 32.

Working on the Sabbath – vs 1-8

Jesus and His disciples were going through a field of grain ready to harvest. This would be in the spring of the year. Barley ripened at Passover time and the wheat harvest was at Pentecost. Being hungry, they were likely traveling and they picked some heads of grain to eat on the way. This was particularly permitted (Deuteronomy 23: 25). The Pharisees did not criticize their taking the grain, but for doing so on the Sabbath because it violated their own rule of what the word "work" meant. They interpreted picking a few heads of grain and rubbing them in the hands to free the grains as reaping,

which was prohibited. Jesus directed them to I Samuel 21:6 where David and the men with him were famished and ate holy bread, that only the priests were to eat and were blameless. He also reminded them that the priests in the temple offered sacrifices on the Sabbath and were blameless. Butchering animals is certainly work! These exceptions were an accommodation of necessity by the Law, as verse 7 makes clear. The quotation is from Hosea 6:6. His claim in verse 8, to be the Lord of the Sabbath, is a claim of divinity!

Healing on the Sabbath – vs -9-13

Jesus entered a synagogue and taught. There was a man present whose hand was paralyzed. There were also Pharisees who were looking for an occasion to accuse Him of violating the Sabbath. Luke wrote (ch 6:7-8) their questioning Jesus about healing on the Sabbath was not vocal: “He knew their thoughts.” What Jesus taught is not recorded, but His great lesson about the Sabbath was demonstrated. They tried to entrap Him and He directly confronted them by calling the man to come before them all. The Law did not address the matter of healing on the Sabbath but the Pharisees did. They ruled that it was work. In healing this man Jesus did nothing but speak to Him and this was work! Again Jesus points to the exceptions to the Sabbath law. If one has opportunity and ability “to do good” on the Sabbath he is not only permitted, but also obligated to do so.

Matthew’s comments – vs14-21

The Pharisees considered Him such a threat that they made plans to murder Him. It is true that Jesus’ mission and the Kingdom of Heaven had no room for them and their tradition and they saw no need for repentance. Jesus went

about His ministry of teaching and healing those in the crowd that followed Him. Matthew explains why Jesus told them not to publish the healings by quoting Isaiah 42:1-4. He would not promote Himself, but just “go about doing good” (Acts 10:38) and even include the Gentiles.

Expelling demons on the Sabbath – vs 22-45

Demon possession had a most unusual effect on the man here described, that he was blind and could not speak. When the demon was expelled he at once saw and spoke. This greatly affected the crowd. They expressed the thought that perhaps Jesus might be the Son of David, that is, the Messiah. This put the Pharisees in a difficult position. That a miracle had been performed could not be denied. They responded that Jesus worked by the power of Satan. This was a very weak response. Satan does nothing to benefit mankind. Jesus’ “house divided” response was right to the point, “the kingdom of God has come unto you.” The “strong man” of verse 29 is Satan. Jesus came to spoil his kingdom of darkness. Jesus affirmed that they had blasphemed the Holy Spirit of God by attributing the work of God to the devil. The reason this sin is unforgivable is that they not only refused to repent, but after seeing so many evidences, they refused to accept Him. Jesus’ description is withering: evil trees, a generation of vipers, and evil men! After so great a miracle a scribe, one learned in the scriptures, asked of Him a sign! Jesus referred him to the sign of Jonah’s three days and three nights. The three days and nights in the fish is a parallel to His coming three days in the tomb. The people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba would be witnesses against them in the Day of Judgment. The parable of the unclean spirit means that reformation (by the

Pharisee's rules) is not enough. A transformation is required. To reject Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven will result in a much worse situation.

Jesus and His family – vs 46-50

Very little is recorded about Jesus' family or their family life. Joseph was a carpenter (Matthew 13:55) and Jesus followed him in that trade (Mark 6:3). Carpentry was heavy work in that day for it included masonry, heavy stonework and metalworking. That Joseph had died before this time is probable as there is no mention of his being here, and because Jesus on the cross-charged His cousin John with the care of Mary because He would not be there for her (John 19:2:55-27). There were more than one sister (chapter 13-56), and four brothers, two of whom wrote the scripture books of James and Jude. They were concerned for Him and His health because there was no let up in His ministry. None of His brothers believed on Him until after the resurrection (John 7:1-5). Then they became His followers. His brother James (later called James the Just) became a leader of the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). The point Jesus made in verses 48 and 49 was that though He loved His family, as Messiah and Savior in the Kingdom of Heaven there was now a change of relationship with them.

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A parable is a short story told to illustrate a truth, a moral or a fact. The parables of this chapter are not prophetic; they are descriptive. They reveal the response, or lack of response, to Jesus' message of proclaiming and teaching the

Kingdom of Heaven. He chose events or scenes from everyday life to make His points. In verses one and two we read that Jesus first **sat** on the shore, and as the crowd gathered He **sat** in a boat off shore. Today we stand to address a group, but in His time the Rabbinic custom was for the teacher to sit to deliver an address.

The Sower vs 3-23

Today grain is sown in rows. In Bible times the sowing was done by hand and scattered or broadcast from a basket attached to the belt of the sower. This was very inefficient and the grains were not evenly placed, some falling on the paths nearby. The soils in the land of Israel were rocky. There was also good soil that had been cleared of stones and worked for many years. This is the background of Jesus story. The point of the parable is the varied results of this sowing. Jesus final remark, “Who has ears to hear, let him hear,” means “Listen and learn.” When asked why He taught in parables Jesus’ response was to the effect that they who do not have faith would not understand but those who had faith would come to know. He was fully aware who had faith and who did not. In quoting Isaiah 6:9-10, He likened the multitude to the people of Isaiah’s day who would not respond to the prophet. This is the eighth time the phrase “is fulfilled” is used in Matthew. Jesus, Himself, interpreted the parable to the disciples in verses 18-23. This gives us a hint how to understand the rest of the parables in the chapter. The seed by the wayside was the word heard by those who came mostly for the miracles, and only listened passively. They soon forgot His words. The seed on stony places is about them who were

caught up by the excitement of the occasion but become offended by something and fell away from Him. They too had no real faith. The seed among thorns are those who let “the cares of life discourage them. None of these produced fruit! The seed on good ground represent those who had faith and produced varied results. So this story is more about the soils than the seed. In every case the seed is the same. It is the soils that differ.

Wheat and tares – vs 24-30

This parable explains a thorny problem often occurring in groups and movements of God. There are always those among the people of God who cause trouble and are not in sympathy with the group. Often they don't even have faith. There was Korah and those with him in Israel in Moses' time-(Numbers 6:15). Judas was one of the twelve apostles and no one but Jesus knew that he was a devil (John 6:70). Ananias and Sapphires (Acts chapter five) were insincere. Sometimes God does call troublemakers to justice at once, and sometimes, as with Judas, He lets them go until His time for judgment. This parable gives one reason he lets matters go on and on: to intervene at once would cause more harm than good. Again Jesus interpreted this parable in vs 36-43.

The mustard seed – vs 31-32

Mustard seed was the smallest seed known at that time. The point of this parable is its phenomenal growth, from the smallest of seeds to the largest of herbs. This plant can grow to a height of ten or more feet. Its stem is firm and the branches spread like a tree. Small birds roost on them and eat the seeds. It looks like a small tree, but is still an herb. Its life span is just one season. Jesus began by his miracles and His

very different message. Immediately the great crowds began to follow Him. But in less than three years the crowds left Him and He was crucified and gone from the scene.

Leaven – vs 33

This parable presents to us a picture from the daily home life of that time. The daily bread was baked and eaten each day. The woman took three measures of flour, the amount for an average family and leavened it so it would be ready to bake when needed. Throughout the Bible leaven always represents evil. Jesus Himself explains what He means by the symbol of leaven (ch 16:6) as the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism. The leaven of the Sadducees was liberalism. Both lacked faith. Verse thirty-five is the ninth time Matthew uses the phrase “that it might be fulfilled.” The quotation is from Psalm 78:2 to show why Jesus explained the parables only to his disciples.

The hidden treasure – vs 44

In Bible times there were no banks in which to safely keep valuables. A common practice was to dig in the floor of the home and place their treasures there and cover over by the floor. Sometimes they would bury them outside the home in the ground. If for some reason the family did not survive, the treasure was lost and should someone come upon it, the treasure was theirs. This brief parable the treasure is Israel, a small nation hidden among the nations of the world. The field is the world (verse 38). In order to claim Israel he redeemed the world.

The goodly pearl – vs 45-46

What we call the Persian Gulf has from ancient time to the late nineteenth century been the center of pearl diving and there were many pearl markets there. The man in the parable was a merchant, not a pearl diver. He went to the pearl market. The man was Christ. He gave His all to redeem His people. In John 10:16 Jesus speaks of “other sheep” than Israel that He must bring, meaning the Church. The pearl is those taken from the Gentiles to be a people for His Name (Acts 15:14), that is to say, the Church. In these two parables we have in the one His treasure and in the other His priceless pearl.

The dragnet – vs 47-50

The great dragnet is the Gospel that has gone to the whole world and the whole world has been affected by it. Every thing that has made life better in the world since Jesus time has been done by the Gospel's influence. Hospitals, education, Human rights, and standards justice and civil society are among the blessings enjoyed by believer and non-believer alike. Just as the whole world has benefited by the gospel, so will the whole world be brought to justice according to the Gospel.

The Scribe – vs 51-52

Jesus likened His disciples to a scribe learned in the scriptures. They understand truth both from the Old Covenant and in the dawning New Covenant. Indeed, they wrote the wonderful truths of the New Covenant for us! This is in contrast to the people who knew Jesus as He grew to manhood. They did not believe on Him because they thought they knew Him.

THE CRISIS OF THE KINGDOM CHAPTERS FOURTEEN - EIGHTEEN

What kind of King? - ch 14

The opposition of the Pharisees was intensifying, and they were joined by the Sadducees, and Herodians. They perceived that there was no room in Jesus' kingdom for them. Their positions of power were endangered and they were determined to stop Him. Jesus continued His ministry of healing and teaching, but He began to prepare His disciples for what was coming.

The death of John the Baptist – ch 14:1-12

John's imprisonment was mentioned in chapter four, verse twelve, but there was no reason given. Here we have an account of the matter. How long he was held in prison we are not told. Herod Antipas was very superstitious and he had feared John. He was now troubled by Jesus' fame thinking He was John resurrected. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great. He and Herod Philip were half-brothers. Herodias had been the wife of Philip, but she left him to marry Antipas. John denounced them quoting the Law that this was unlawful. It was not only adultery; it was incest. Herodias was furious and determined to kill John. This section shows how she carried out her scheme to get rid of him.

Feeding five thousand – vs 13-21

In verses thirteen and fourteen we see the humanity of Jesus. His mother Mary and John's mother Elizabeth were cousins (Luke 1:36). When He heard of the brutal murder of John He went to a secluded place to grieve, but the crowd found Him and there was no time for solitude. He had

compassion for the sick and needy. In the late afternoon the disciples expressed concern for the people and what they would eat because this place was remote from the villages and towns. Jesus challenged them: “you feed them!” In multiplying the loaves and fishes Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples as “The Lord Who Provides (Genesis 22:8,14).” There were five thousand men with women and children. This could easily have come to fifteen or twenty thousand people!

Walking on the water – vs 22-36

As night began He sent His disciples back across the lake while He went up the mountain for His delayed rest and prayer. A violent storm had descended upon the lake and though the disciples knew this lake well they were in peril. From His position on the mountain Jesus saw them “toiling and rowing” (Mark 6:48). About four o’clock in the morning he went to them, “walking on the sea.” The disciples did not recognize Him and were very frightened. When Jesus assured them Peter asked to likewise walk on the water. He did but it did not go well. This is, perhaps, the most dramatic of Jesus’ miracles and it was for the benefit of them only. They saw Him as the Master of all nature. When they reached the western shore another crowd gathered bringing their sick and diseased to be healed.

Where He found faith – ch 15

The King of Israel is rejected by His nation, but revealed to all who have faith. In the last chapter Jesus said to the boldest of His disciples “O thou of little faith!” This chapter contrasts where He did not find faith and where He did find faith.

Jesus reproves the scribes – vs 1-20

The scribes were Pharisees who were learned in the Old Hebrew language of the Old Testament. The common language in Jesus day was Aramaic, and many Jews could not read the Law and the Prophets. The scribes were learned in the Law and were the teachers of religion in the synagogues. They made many rules and judgments over the centuries to interpret and apply the Law. This “Tradition” became an important part of the Talmud after the destruction of Jerusalem. In this section Jesus shows how far this tradition was from the plain commandments of Moses. The scribes faulted Jesus and His disciples for not washing the hands before eating. This had nothing to do with hygiene, but with a rule of the Pharisees for ritual holiness. Moses did not have such a rule. Jesus countered with another of their rules. He quoted one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:17 & Deuteronomy 21:17). The commandment to honor one’s parents was not addressed to children, but to men. It was a broad commandment, including the care of aged parents. The Pharisees had ruled that one could vow his wealth to the temple to avoid that responsibility. After the deaths of the parents he could rescind the vow. Jesus quoted Isaiah 29:13, charging them with hypocrisy. He then addressed the crowd showing that purity and defilement were matters of the heart. His words “let them alone,” (vs 14) shows He had rejected them and their system of holiness. **Jesus found no faith here!**

The woman of Canaan – vs 21-28

After His encounter with the scribes Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. This was beyond the jurisdiction of

Herod Antipas who thought Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected from the dead. These were Canaanite Cities, the remnants of the Canaanites that Israel failed to conquer. The Jews called them Canaanites, the Greeks called them Phoenicians and the Romans called them Syro-Phoenicians. The fame of Jesus' healings had gone far beyond the Land of Israel. A woman approached Him requesting that He would free her daughter from a demon. She addressed Him as Son of David and He ignored her. When she persisted He told her that His mission (at this time) was only to Israel and that it was not fitting to "take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." This is what the Jews called idolatrous Gentiles. She responded, "Truth, Lord, yet the puppies eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." This was literally true for while the Jews despised dogs, the Canaanites were fond of them. They kept small dogs in their homes as pets and even had dog cemeteries. When she addressed Him just as Lord and made her plea He granted her request, a portent of the age soon to come. **Here Jesus found faith!**

Feeding four thousand – vs 29-39

From Sidon Jesus went east and crossed the Jordan, then south through the Decapolis, Gentile cities east of Jordan. This route kept Him out of the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. As He neared the Sea of Galilee a crowd began to form, so He went up a mountainside and "sat down" after the manner of teachers. He taught them and healed the sick, lame and maimed. This miracle is remarkable in that this multitude was with Him for three days! This was later in the year than His feeding the five thousand (ch 14). Then it was springtime and they sat on the grass. Here (ch 15) they

sat on the ground. In the heat of summer the grass was no longer green. Once again Jesus was the Lord the provider.

Concealing and revealing – ch 16:1-20

The sign of Jonah – vs 1-5

It has been said that politics makes strange allies. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were bitter opponents. They came together to find a way to get rid of Jesus, but “His hour” had not yet come. They demanded of Him a “sign of heaven.” They ignored all of His miracles. They had their own ideas about the “sign” of the Messiah. Jesus concealed Himself from them who had no faith. He answered them with two cryptic signs. The first sign concerned the weather (vs 2 and 3). They understood the signs of the sky for tomorrow’s weather, but did not discern the “signs of the times.” There are two words in the Greek language for time. One is the word “chronos” which means the passage of time. We have this word in our word chronology. The second word is “kairos.” This means an opportune time. They did not know the time of opportunity for Israel and the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus later lamented their approaching doom (chapter 23:37-39). The second sign was “the sign of the prophet Jonah.” He had previously given them this sign (ch 12:38-41). The people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. The Pharisees refused to repent.

Doctrinal leaven – vs 6-12

Jesus warned the disciples about interacting with the Pharisees: “leave them alone (ch 15:14)!” Now He warns them about the teaching of both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. In using the metaphor of leaven the disciples miss

His point. In the Scripture leaven always represents evil. The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism. Theirs was a system of works righteousness. The leaven of the Sadducees was religious liberalism. They rejected the Prophets as scripture and denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels. These two doctrines are present today.

Peter's great confession – vs 13-20

Caesarea Philippi, the lovely Hula valley in northeast Galilee, was built by Herod Philip, son of Herod the Great. It is here that water gushes from the foot of Mount Hermon to form the Jordan River. Jesus did not go into the city, but into the general area, somewhat remote from the crowds of people. He needed a retreat to prepare the disciples for the coming events. He asked them who people thought He was. They had various ideas, all of them wrong. When He asked the disciples the same question Peter, speaking for the group said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said this was a divine revelation. Then addressing Peter He said, "Thou art Peter (Petros) and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church." Petros and Petra are two related, but different words. Petros means a rock, a stone, perhaps a boulder. Petra means a cliff, mountain or some other mass of rock like the rock on which the wise man built his house (ch 7:24). The words "this rock" are grammatically feminine so they cannot refer to Peter, but to his great statement of faith. This is a basic doctrine on which all Christian doctrine is built. Jesus gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom of heaven, not to the Church. Keys are authority and ability to open or to admit one to enter. With the keys was the authority "to bind" and "to loose." They were common rabbinic words meaning "to forbid and to

permit.” They have to do with administration and judgment. The other apostles were included in 19:28 where Jesus said they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. All of this refers to the Age to Come.

“From that time forth” - vs 21-28

This phrase in chapter 4:17 begins Jesus’ preaching the message of the Kingdom of Heaven. Now the crisis of opposition has been reached and His emphasis is to prepare the disciples for the national rejection of Him and His Kingdom. He plainly told the disciples that He would be killed, but would rise again the third day, but they did not seem to comprehend what He was saying. When Peter vigorously protested Jesus rebuked Him. When He called Peter ‘satan’, He was not calling him the devil. In Semitic languages then and today, satan means adversary. Peter did not realize it, but his protest was contrary to God’s will and plan. Jesus, speaking to the twelve, said the price of their discipleship was to deny oneself (**not** deny **to** self) and **fully** follow Him on His terms. He who serves himself loses all in the end. He who fully serves Him will gain all in the end. Verse twenty-seven quotes Proverbs 24:12; “He shall reward everyone according to his works. Note: this is about rewards, not salvation. Jesus’ cryptic saying in verse 48 is also recorded in Mark 9:1, and Luke 9:27. In all three accounts the vision of the next chapter follows immediately. Peter later referred to the vision (2 Peter 1:16:18).

The transfiguration – ch 17:1-13

In verse forty-eight Jesus addressed the group of apostles, but He took only Peter, James and John with Him up the mountain. Why only these three we are not told.

Matthew, who wrote this account secondhand, did not show resentment for not being there for this experience. Jesus' entire ministry was supernatural when He healed all who came to Him, when He multiplied the food and walked upon the water. Jesus had said that He had come to fulfill the Law and the prophets of which Moses and Elijah were here representatives. Luke tells us (9:31) they were talking to Him about His decease. A cloud of God's glory then covered them and the voice of God was heard from the cloud. The majesty of the King of the Jews was revealed. The appearance of Elijah on the mount raised a question about the teaching of the scribes. Jesus could not be the Messiah because Elijah had not yet come. Jesus had said (ch 11:14) that John was the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6 as the herald of Messiah. But the scribes and Pharisees had rejected both John and Jesus.

Healing the lunatic – vs 14-21

When they descended the mountain and came to the rest of the apostles a crowd had gathered. A man had brought his son to the disciples to be healed. He said his son was lunatic. This word is Latin meaning “moon-struck” and directly translates the Greek word of the text. From antiquity through the Middle Ages, people thought mental illness was caused by the phases of the moon. The symptoms of the son were those of epilepsy, but Jesus perceived the cause to be demonic, so He cast out the demon and healed him. Jesus had given the power to cast out demons to the apostles (ch 10:8), but in this case they could not do so. When they asked Him why they could not heal the son Jesus said it was because of their unbelief. Then Jesus spoke, as He often did, in hyperbole: “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you

shall say to this mountain remove hence to yonder place and it shall remove.” The mustard seed was the smallest seed they knew, but it became the largest of herbs. They were also unprepared by prayer. Most Greek manuscripts do not have the clause about fasting. Contemporary versions of the Bible either omit or bracket verse twenty-one and Mark 9:29 as not being genuine. Fasting is not related to the Gospel of the New Covenant.

More about Jesus’ approaching death – vs 22-23

Again Jesus told the apostles that He would be betrayed and killed at Jerusalem and be raised again the third day. They were “exceeding sorry,” but did not seem to grasp His being raised again the third day.” The time was now short as Passover was near.

Citizens of two kingdoms – vs 24-27

This passage refers to the Temple tax established by Moses in Exodus 30:11-16 for the maintenance of the Tabernacle and later the temple. It was a yearly levy of one-half shekel for each male Israelite (now called Jews). Jesus and His disciples had been out of the country and had not paid the tax on time. Jesus did not object to paying the tax and He told Peter how to get the money showing He was omniscient knowing where the coin was and that Peter would catch the fish at once! He then used the occasion to teach an important point. Since kings, their families and nobles are exempt from taxation, He as Israel’s king would be exempt, as would His disciples. But though the Kingdom of Heaven was present in His person, it had not yet been installed, so He did not claim the exemption. Theirs was a dual citizenship of the earthly

kingdom then present and of the Kingdom of heaven. This principle is ours today.

The Great of the Kingdom – ch 18

This whole chapter is in response to the disciples question in verse one. Jesus' commendation of Peter (ch 16:17-18) and His choice of just three to accompany Him to go up the mountain (ch 17:1) seems to have caused jealousy among the group. The irony is Jesus was talking about His death and resurrection in the immediate future and they were talking politics! So far were they from His thought and purpose. Their attitude was contrary to the very spirit of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The measure of greatness – vs 1-6

Jesus called a little child to show that the attitude of the citizens of the Kingdom was not in seeking power and place; it was in humility; not in self-seeking. He said that they needed to be “converted,” that is, to be changed in thought, opinions and aspiration. A little child's attitude is of simple trust. Thus the matter of greatness should be irrelevant.

Temptations - vs 7-10

The word “offense” is the translation of the Greek word meaning “stumbling block,” something that causes one to stumble and fall. It came to mean, “to cause to sin.” Woe to the world because of its many temptations to sin. There will always be temptations from the world, but woe to the tempter! Temptations to sin also rise from oneself. When Jesus says to cut off the offending member He is again speaking in hyperbole. He is not saying we should mutilate ourselves. The Bible is against that. We must control ourselves. However, no one can deny it would be better to be

handicapped and go to heaven than not be handicapped and go to hell. He pronounces woe on anyone who causes another to sin.

The ninety and nine – vs 12-14

Twice we read the parable of the one sheep lost from the flock, here and Luke 15:1-10. The one missing sheep for which the shepherd searched is often referred to an “unsaved” person. This can be an application of these beautiful parables but it is not the meaning Jesus intended. In Matthew’s version the sheep was astray. He was still a part of the flock but was away from the shepherds care. In Luke’s version He is called a “sinner.” Jesus was addressing Pharisees who called Jews who did not observe their rules for ritual purity sinners. James (ch 5:20) uses the word sinners for one who is astray, meaning one living a sinful life like the prodigal son of Luke chapter fifteen. In each case the sinner is not an “unsaved” person, but one who is out of fellowship with the Lord. This passage shows the Lord’s value and concern is not only for the “little ones,” but also for those who are “astray” and not in fellowship with Him.

“Blessed are the peacemakers” - vs 15-20

As long as we live in human society there will be offenses given and offenses taken. Jesus tells us what to do when offenses occur. The offended one should go to the offender and “tell him his fault.” This must be done with the intent for reconciliation. Unfortunately, this is seldom done, but it would avoid much harm. If this is unsuccessful one or two others should go with him as mediators. The quotation referred to in verse sixteen is from Deuteronomy 19:15. If this does not resolve the matter it should then be taken to the

congregation and their prayerful decision will have the approval of the Lord. This is the meaning of the Jewish words “binding and loosing.” The promise of verses nineteen and twenty must be understood in this context of congregational prayer and decision for the good of all and the common cause.

Forgiving – vs 21-35

Peter’s question of how many times one must forgive another is still in the context of the quarrel of verse one. The Pharisees said three times. Peter thought that seven times was generous. In Luke chapter seventeen Jesus said seven times. To show He did not mean one should keep a record of how many times one has forgiven He said seventy times seven, meaning **always!** The subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven (and of the Church) must have a forgiving attitude. In Luke’s version (17;3-4) Jesus adds, “if he say, I repent.” This would result in reconciliation, which should be what is desired. Jesus illustrated His point by a parable. The king is like the king of the book of Esther who had seventy such servants over the provinces of the empire. In Jesus’ story one of the servants had embezzled an enormous amount of the king’s funds and was unable to repay. That the king should pardon him was most unusual. That the servant was unwilling to forgive a paltry debt of a fellow servant was despicable. The point was clear, how great is God’s forgiveness of us! We owe forgiveness to others.

THE LAST JOURNEY OF THE KING
CHAPTERS NINETEEN-TWENTY THREE
PAREA

It was early spring when Jesus “departed from Galilee.” Passover was near and people were gathering for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Many groups came together to accompany Jesus and He continued His ministry of healing. They crossed the Jordan south of the Sea of Galilee into Perea, the part of Judea east of the Jordan. They traveled south to the fords of Jericho and again crossed the Jordan. The events of this and the next chapter occurred on the way.

The Pharisees and divorce – vs 3-12

Divorce was a perennial problem in contemporary Israel in Jesus’ time and it remains so today. The Pharisees again attempt to trap Jesus on the thorny problem. There were two schools of thought among the Pharisees. The followers of Shammai held there was only one reason for divorce, infidelity. The liberal school of Hillel held a man could divorce his wife “for any reason.” They based their position on Deuteronomy 24:1. This was a distortion of Moses’ intent. His requiring the man to give the woman a “bill of divorcement” was to protect the interests of the woman giving her legal rights. Jesus went back to the beginning of marriage (Genesis 2:24). He emphasized the permanence of marriage and the tragedy of divorce. To divorce one’s wife in order to marry another is adultery. He did not say a divorced person could never remarry. The disciples themselves were confused thinking Jesus was advocating celibacy. He explained that the general thing was to marry, but there were also reasons for the single life.

Blessing little children – vs 13-15

Little children were brought to Jesus, probably by their mothers, for Jesus' prayer of blessing. The disciples seemed to think this was beneath Jesus' dignity to distract Him from His ministry. They had not learned the lesson of chapter eighteen! These little ones were models for all in their honest, trusting dependence. This is in contrast to the Pharisees' interest in divorce. Marriage normally produces children, and they are not even considered in the argument. Children are always deeply hurt by divorce. The results follow them through life!

The rich young ruler – vs 16-30

The young man's question to Jesus was "what good thing shall I **do** to have eternal life." The common belief then was that eternal life must be earned. The Law did not teach this. The Law was for this life. However, Jesus responded to him in like manner by mentioning four commandments from the second table of the Law governing behavior and the commandment concerning loving one's neighbor as one's self. The man claimed to have kept them all from his youth and asked what he lacked. Jesus showed him his lack by telling him to sell what he had and give to his poor neighbors. This he was unwilling to do, for it would change his whole life style and position in society. After he had gone, Jesus said to His disciples that it is hard for a rich man to make this sacrifice. He gave the example of the camel passing through the eye of a needle, another hyperbole, to show the difficulty faced by the rich. Of course, there were wealthy followers of Jesus as Lazarus of Bethany and his sisters. He did not tell them to divest their wealth. The problem was with

the young man's heart. Paul made the same observation in I Corinthians 1:26. Jesus then assured His disciples that with God all things are possible. When Peter asked what their reward for leaving all and following Him would be Jesus said that it would be "in the regeneration" they would share in His rule.

The laborers in the vineyard – ch 20:1-16

Viticulture was an important and seasonal industry. In Jesus parable it was harvest time and many more laborers were needed than at other seasons. The "lord of the vineyard" went to the public market at six in the morning to hire day laborers to bring in the harvest. He agreed to pay them at the current daily rate. At nine he saw he needed more workers so he went back to the market to hire more and said he would give them "whatsoever is right." He hired more at noon, at three and again at five in the afternoon. At six, the close of the twelve-hour workday, he called them all for payment. He deliberately called those first who had only worked one hour and gave them pay for a full day's work. He did the same for those who had labored three hours and those who worked six hour and those who worked nine hours. Those who worked twelve hours received the same pay as those who worked only one hour and they were angry. The lord of the vineyard told them they had received what they bargained for. This parable is introduced by the saying "the first shall be last and the last shall be first" and ends with "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." The lesson is, in the kingdom of heaven there is no right or privilege of seniority. There is **equality** for all. This principle is also for the Church and us. The newest and youngest believer has the same opportunity to hear "well

done” as the oldest and longest serving believer. This parable was the answer to Peter’s question in chapter 19:27.

JUDEA

More about His death – vs 17-19

The multitude of pilgrims had now arrived at Jericho and prepared for the strenuous climb of three thousand feet in twenty miles to Jerusalem. Again Jesus plainly tells His disciples that when they come to Jerusalem He will be crucified but will rise from the dead the third day. They still don’t seem to hear what He is saying and end up quarreling over preference and position. They **still** had not learned the lesson.

Salome’s request – vs 20-28

James and John were Jesus’ cousins. Their mother, with her two sons, came to Jesus asking Him for preference for her sons in the Kingdom of Heaven. So little did they understand Jesus’ mission. This renewed the dispute of chapter eighteen, verses one to six. Patiently He took them aside from the crowds of pilgrims to explain again that the Kingdom of Heaven was different from the kingdoms of this world. In His kingdom all of these strivings for recognition and place are irrelevant.

Two Blind men – vs 30-34

As they began the ascent to Jerusalem, two blind men cried out to Him. They addressed Him as “O Lord, Son of David,” that is Messiah. When people tried to quiet them they continued to call to Him. “Jesus stood still” and asked them what they wanted. He “had compassion” and touched their eyes. He was on the way to the cross, but stopped to hear and heal them.

JERUSALEM

The Royal Entry – ch 21:1-11

The multitude of pilgrims came to the village of Bethphage on the shoulder of Mount Olivet. Jesus sent two of His disciples into the village with instructions to bring a donkey and her colt. The owner evidently knew who “the Lord” was and let them go. The disciples did not seem to know this was Jesus’ formal entry into Jerusalem as its king. When He sat on the beast the multitude formed a procession. This was the fulfillment of Zechariah chapter nine verse nineteen. As the procession moved to the city the festive crowd threw palm branches and even their garments in the way before Him and sang “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” from Psalm 118. This is the tenth time Matthew uses the phrase “that it might be fulfilled (vs 4).” Horses were for war; donkeys were for peaceful uses. “The Prince of Peace” had come! As the procession entered Jerusalem “all the city was moved,” (vs 10) not in reception, but in hostility. Most of these pilgrims were from Galilee. “The city” were Judeans, Priests (Sadducees), Pharisees, Herodians, and “rulers of the people (Luke 23:13),” and Romans. It was not the pilgrims who later shouted, “Crucify Him.” This was “all the city.”

Cleansing the Temple – vs 12-16

Entering the city Jesus went to the temple and drove out the moneychangers and those who sold animals for sacrifice. This is the second time He did this, at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13), and at its finish (vs 12). The pilgrims who came from afar and afoot could not bring the

animals and produce required for sacrifice, so they brought money to buy them in Jerusalem as Moses had commanded (Deuteronomy 14:22-27). This was an economic boost for Jerusalem and was too profitable for the priests to ignore. They took over the business and brought it into the “court of the women” in the Temple. Since the money brought by the pilgrims had the likeness of the emperor it was banned from the temple as being idolatrous. The price of the animals and produce for sacrifice was very high and the price for the exchange of money was also unreasonably high. This amounted to extortion. Jesus disrupted it, but it continued. The references in verse thirteen are from Isaiah 56:7 And Jeremiah 7:11. The praise of Jesus by the crowd “displeased” the priests. Jesus answered their objection by quoting Psalm 8:2. Then He retired to Bethany for the night ending the first day of the week that changed the world.

The cursed fig tree – 18-22

The next morning Jesus returned to the city. There was a lone fig tree in a prominent place fully leafed out. Jesus was hungry and expected some fruit from the tree and finding none He cursed it. At first reading this seems odd, but it was an acted parable. This fig tree is commonly thought to represent Israel, cursed for rejecting Christ. The fig tree can represent prosperity and peace (Micah 4:4), but not Israel. The fig tree was cursed “forever.” Israel was **not** cursed forever (Romans 11:1, 26). In scripture, Israel is represented by the vine and the olive tree (Zechariah 4:1-7, and Romans 11:15-24). Mark 11:13 ads it was not yet time for a new crop of figs. Moses commanded that trees, grape vines and grain harvests not be reaped clean, but that a gleaning be left “for the poor and the

stranger” (Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-29). Ripe figs stay on the tree until a new crop begins to develop. Jesus was looking for the gleanings of the last harvest. The owner of this tree did not leave any gleaning fruit when he harvested. This area was a wealthy district just outside the city. He was violating the Law he claimed to be keeping. The curse was for the hypocrisy of the owner.

The King’s authority challenged – vs 23-27

On the third day of this week as Jesus entered the temple He was challenged by the chief priests and elders; “by what authority doest thou these things?” He answered them by a question that made His claim clear, “Was the baptism of John of Heaven, or of man?” John the Baptist was widely acclaimed to be a prophet. He baptized Jesus and proclaimed Him to be the Messiah. A Prophet’s authority was greater than any priest or elder, being from Heaven. This confrontation was not private; they were trying to discredit Him before the people. Either way they answered would put them on the spot before the people whom they feared.

Jesus indicts His adversaries – ch 21:28-22:14

A rebellious nation – vs 28-32

Facing a hostile crowd in the Temple Jesus charged them with rebellion against God and His prophets just as their fathers did six hundred years ago. His illustration was a man who had two sons, one of which promised to go work for him and did not go. The other refused to go, but later relented and went. Which one did his father’s will? Jesus left not doubt what He meant by this parable. The priests and others did not do God’s will while the out casts of society responded to John and repented.

A nation ripe for judgment – vs 33-46

Jesus' parable is an update of the prophet's parable in the fifth chapter of Isaiah. In that parable Israel was the vineyard. The hedge around it was the Law that separated Israel from the nations. The Lord cultivated it looking for fruits of righteousness. When He found no fruit He said He would destroy the vineyard. This happened when the Babylonians destroyed the nation of Judah.

Jesus' parable was to the same point. The householder is God. The vineyard is the land of Israel. The wall is the Law. The vine is the Jewish people. The servants were the prophets. The son is Jesus, the Son of the householder. The meaning of the parable needed no explanation. The priests and the people understood. Judgment came about forty years later when the Roman destruction was much greater and the results very much longer than the Babylonian destruction. The quotation in verse 42 is from Psalm 118:22. Jewish tradition claims this psalm was sung at the dedication of Solomon's Temple. During its construction there was an oddly shaped stone that did not fit anywhere so it was pushed aside and rejected, but when the building neared completion it became apparent it was the corner capstone. Jesus was saying by this parable He was the capstone of the corner of the House of Israel. In rejecting Him they were headed for destruction. In verse forty-three Jesus rejected them and formally rescinded His offer of the Kingdom of Heaven. It will again be offered to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This is **not** the Church! The church is not a nation. That nation will be the **reborn** nation of Israel in the coming age.

The judgment of the nation – 22:1-14

The wedding feast of this parable is not the marriage of the Lamb and His Bride. The truths of the Church had not yet been revealed. This parable concerns the union of God (in the person of Jesus Messiah) and Israel in the Kingdom of Heaven. The union of God and Israel is often described in the Old Testament as a marriage, as in the book of Hosea. Weddings are times of joy in all ages. Jewish weddings are also a celebration of life. One of the toasts of Jewish weddings is “to life!” as in the Fiddler on the Roof. The rabbis compared the “days of Messiah” to a wedding feast.

The King of the parable is God. The Son is the Messiah Jesus. Those bidden to come are the rulers and people of Israel. The servants (slaves) were the prophets. The other servants were the apostles. The word dinner is in the Greek a noon meal, a kind of reception. Those who “made light of it” were standing before Him. The armies were the Romans and the city was Jerusalem. There is a break in time between verses seven and eight (the age of the Church). The feast would begin in the evening and continue into the “darkness of night.” When the wedding feast comes in the Kingdom of Heaven, the invitation will be universal.

Jesus answers His critics – vs 15-46

The Pharisees and the Herodians -vs 15-22

The Herodians were a secular and political party favoring Rome; the Pharisees were a religious and national party. They were rivals, but they came together to Jesus in hypocritical flattery to try to entangle Him in His teaching. Roman taxation was hated by all. Many, including the Pharisees felt the image of the emperor on coins was

idolatrous. They thought however He answered their question about paying tribute to Caesar the people would be outraged. His reply was “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” This has become a proverb to this day.

They themselves bore the image of God!

The Sadducees – vs 23-33

The Sadducees then tried to discredit Jesus before the people. The Sadducees were the party of the priests. They were secular, did not believe in the existence of angels nor the resurrection (Acts 23:12). They accepted only the five books of Moses as being authoritative. They posed a most unusual problem. Moses had commanded (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) that if a married man died leaving no children, his brother should marry her to produce an heir for his brother’s inheritance. They said if this happened six times, in the resurrection whose wife would she be? Jesus told them they erred, knowing neither the scriptures nor the power of God. In the resurrection there is no marriage for they are as the angels of heaven. He then answered their question from the writings of Moses (Exodus 3:6); God said

“I **am** the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” This was over four hundred years since those patriarchs lived. Therefore, they are living!

The Pharisees, again – vs34-46

Once again a lawyer of the Pharisees tries to catch Jesus in His teaching. His question “which is the great commandment of the Law?” was not novel. The rabbis had made this point and Jesus had addressed it several times. This time He cited two commandments of equal importance. The

greatest is to wholly love God (Deuteronomy 6:5) and the second is “like unto it” (Leviticus 19:18) to love one’s neighbor as oneself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.” Then He asked them “what think ye of the Christ (Messiah), whose son is He?” They said “of David.” He then quoted Psalm 110:1, The LORD (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (Messiah), sit thou at my right hand.” How could He be David’s son (Messiah), and be his Lord? For this the lawyer had no answer.

The scribes and Pharisees denounced – ch 23

Jesus charged them with hypocrisy

All of the encounters of Jesus and His adversaries in chapters twenty-one through twenty-three were in public before the “multitude” of worshipers and priests as noted in verse one of this chapter. They were trying to discredit Him before the people and each time were themselves discredited. “Moses’ seat” was a chair on a raised platform in the synagogues. The teacher would stand to read the scripture and sit to teach. Jesus charged the Pharisees and scribes with hypocrisy in all they did. Pay attention to the scripture, but don’t live as they do, for they don’t “practice what they preach,” and they are unhelpful. He charged them with hypocrisy and ostentation. He directed His disciples to eschew all titles as Rabbi, father and master. The meaning of Christ in these verses is Messiah.

His eight point indictment - verses 13-33

Jesus charged the Pharisees with hypocrisy in an eight-point indictment:

1. For hindering people from following Him – vs 13
2. For rapacity and ostentation – vs 14

3. For zeal for their evil cause – vs 15
4. For false vows – vs 16-20
5. For scrupulous care for small matters and laxness for great matters – vs 23-24
6. For outward show and inward uncleanness vs 25-26
7. For false righteousness – vs 27-28
8. For persecuting the prophets and the Just: “like fathers, like sons” – 29-33

Jesus judgment and lament – 34-39

“Therefore **I am sending** to you prophets,” etc. With these words Jesus once again claims divinity. The tense is present. He is not referring to the Old Testament prophets, but to the apostles and others in the book of Acts. The persecutions recorded in Acts completed the guilt of the Jews who here rejected Him. Jesus groups them with those who persecuted the righteous from Abel (Genesis 4:8) to Zechariah, son of Berechiah (2 Chronicles 24:21). Second Chronicles was the last book of the Jewish scriptures in Jesus’ day, as it is in Jewish Bibles today. Jesus meant a continuous persecution from first to last. The Romans in their destruction the temple, temple, city and nation executed the judgment pronounced here. “Your House” is the temple. It had been God’s house but Jesus now repudiates it.

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

CHAPTERS TWENTY FOUR-TWENTY FIVE

Jesus pronounces judgment – chapter 24:1-3

These chapters are viewed by many to describe Christians looking for the rapture of the Church, but they rather pertain to Israel. Jesus is describing the long period of

time of Israel's Roman exile before the Kingdom of Heaven will come. Jesus had announced "Your House (temple) is left unto you desolate," that is, abandoned by God (ch 23:38). As the disciples admired the beautiful buildings of the temple Jesus foretold its destruction. His words were literally fulfilled in A. D. 70 when the temple was demolished stone by stone. This was the beginning of God's judgment of their nation for rejecting their King and Messiah. The disciples then asked Him three questions: When will these things be? What will be the sign of thy coming? And when will be the end of the age? Jesus answered these questions in the reverse order.

The nature of this age – vs 4-13

For us Christians this is the age of the Church, the age of Grace versus the age of Law in the Old Testament. This age through the unbelieving eyes of the Jews is the age of exile, anti-Semitism and their scattering among the nations. For a thousand generations, and counting, the Jews have not known peace. Jesus describes this age prophetically in these two chapters. In verses four through thirteen the general conditions of this age are given. There have been many false Messiahs from the general Bar Kochba in the second century to the Lubavicher Rabbi of Brooklyn, New York who died late in the twentieth century. There have been "war and rumors of war" constantly and always the Jews suffered most. Famines, earthquakes and pestilence have been common and often the Jews were thought to be responsible and were persecuted. Jesus said they would be "hated of all nations." Anti-Semitism began with the ancient Church Fathers and has been virulent ever since. Verse thirteen refers the great persecution

of tribulation at the end of the age of Israel's exile, called the Great Tribulation. The King James word "saved" means delivered. The only way of escape is to be a survivor.

The end of the age – vs 14-25

In these verses Jesus addresses the disciples' third question; "when shall be the end of the world (age)." In chapter 21:43 Jesus revoked the offer of the Kingdom of Heaven saying it would be given to "a **nation** bringing forth the fruits of righteousness." At the end of this age of Israel's exile a spiritually reborn nation (Isaiah 66:8) will preach the Gospel (message) of the Kingdom of Heaven. This will be during the Great Tribulation of verse 21, quoted from Daniel 9:27 and 12:1. Then will be Daniel's "abomination of desolation." For this to occur there will have to be a temple with a "Holy Place" to be desolated by "the man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), the anti-Christ. As in Jesus life there were false Christs and false prophets so will there be at this time.

The Lord's return – vs 26-37

This section answers the disciples' second question; "what shall be the sign of thy coming." This subject is a matter of confusion for many. It is widely believed and taught that the Church will continue until the "judgment day." The word "advent" is from Latin and means coming. Jesus' first advent, at His birth, was to Israel "to confirm the promises made to the fathers" (Romans 15:8) by the prophets. His second advent will also be to Israel to restore the nation and fulfill scripture (Zechariah 14:4, and Acts 1:9). Jesus coming for the Church will not be an advent in this sense because He will not at that time return to earth. I Thessalonians 4:14-18 describes His coming for the Church; we will be "caught up

together” (raptured) in the clouds. In His second advent to Israel, His coming will be like “lightning,” sudden and visible to all. It will come at the end of the Great Tribulation and will be in judgment against His enemies. There will be phenomena of nature and the “sign of the Son of Man in the heavens (Daniel 7:13 and Acts 1:9-11)”.

Parables of His coming – ch 24:32-25:46

This section answers the disciples first question, “When shall these things be,” Jesus describes that time by a series of parables, five short and three longer.

The fig tree – vs 32-35

The fig tree is the harbinger of summer being the first tree in the land of Israel to leaf out in the spring. Its leafing is “all these things” here described in parables. The point of the parable is when “all these things” occur the summer of the Kingdom of Heaven is very near.

The days of Noah – vs 36-39

Jesus takes the story of Noah and the flood as an actual event and warning. As Noah was preparing for the coming deluge his contemporaries gave no heed to his message. Their response was “life goes on” so they were totally unprepared. The point of the parable is the suddenness of judgment when it comes.

The villagers – vs 40-41

As life goes on there will be two workmen in the field and “one will be taken and the other left.” Two women shall be doing household chores and “one will be taken and the other left.” This is reminiscent of the dreaded “midnight knock on the door” of the recent holocaust. The point of the parable is the judgment will be selective.

The thief in the night – vs 42-44

A thief strikes when unexpected. The best defense is to be prepared at all times. The point of the parable is the judgment of that time will occur when security seems to be sure.

The faithful and evil servants – vs45-51

This parable is about a lord of an estate or business. The word servant means slave. Daniel was such a servant of the kings he served and was given much authority because he was faithful and dependable. We are all “servants” of the Lord. Haman of the Book of Esther was willful and unfaithful. The point of this parable is that faithfulness is required.

The virgins – vs 1-13

“Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins...” verse one. It is clear that this parable is not about the Church or Christians. Jesus had said the Kingdom would be given to a nation “bringing forth the fruits thereof” (ch 21:43). He now illustrates t time by parables. Throughout the scriptures weddings and marriage have been used to illustrate God’s dealings with His people. This one illustrates one aspect of Jesus’ second coming to Israel. This parable is not about the bride. She is not even mentioned. The Bridegroom is coming in procession with “the friends of the bridegroom” (John 3:29). The virgins, and attendants of the bride await their coming to join the procession and enter the wedding feast. These feasts were held after dark. That is why the virgins had oil lamps. The expected time of the bridegroom’s coming was uncertain and he was delayed. That is why their lamps had to be refilled. When the bridegroom

came the five foolish virgins had no oil to refill their lamps. They were unprepared for the delay. The words “I know you not” do not mean he did not know who they were. He did not recognize their right to enter to the feast because they were too late. The point of this parable is being prepared and ready.

The talents – vs 14-30

This parable is about a rich businessman who leaves his business matters in the hands of his servants while he is away. As in the other parables this man is Jesus, himself, who was going to His Father for a long time. The talent was a large sum of money. His servants are His followers. He gave them different amounts of money to administer because He knew the abilities of each. What He charged them was well within the ability of each. This is why the word talent means ability today rather than money. When He comes into His Kingdom, He will judge each according to what was done with what they had. The point of this parable is that faithfulness is required and it is faithfulness that is rewarded.

The sheep and the goats vs 31-46

Sheep and goats were important for the economy of Israel. They provided meat, milk, wool and hides. Sheep and goats are very different in their habits and personalities. God’s people are often likened to sheep in the scriptures, but never as goats. Just as important were the shepherds who cared for them. There was a shepherd who became king. Israel’s God was called the “Shepherd of Israel” (Psalm 80:1). Sheep and goats were sometimes pastured together but never put into the fold together. They were divided for the night. Jesus at His second advent to Israel will come also as the judge of the nations. All nations will be “gathered before Him” and He

will divide the sheep and the goats. The nations regarded as goats will be judged. The nations regarded as sheep will be rewarded. The standard by which the nations will be judged will be their treatment of the Jews during this time of their exile. Even during this present time of exile every nation that has persecuted the Jews has lost their empires and declined in power.

THE KING IS REJECTED

CHAPTERS TWENTY SIX-TWENTY SEVEN

“After two days is the Passover (vs two).”

This was the fourth day of the last week of our Savior’s earthly ministry. He had ended His public ministry on the third day and this was a day of rest, a lull before the storm of arrest, trial and the cross. His “hour” had come (John 2:4). The priests and Pharisees were determined to kill Him, but how to do it was a problem. Judas would solve it for them.

Dinner at Bethany – vs 6-13

Jesus spent this day with His disciples and friends, one of which was Simon the Leper who gave Him a dinner. Of him we know only that he was a friend of Jesus and Lazarus of Bethany. Mary and Martha also were there. Mary brought very expensive ointment to “pour on His head.” It was Judas who raised objection to this act of love and worship (John 12:4). Jesus accepted the gift saying she did it for His death, and wherever the Gospel is proclaimed this will be told for a memorial of her. Higher praise could not have been given. It was the only embalming His body received, for when they came to the tomb after the Sabbath with “sweet spices” He was already risen.

The betrayal – vs 14-16

Meanwhile, Judas was busy. He thought Mary's ointment poured on Jesus was wasted! That it should have been sold for three hundred pieces of silver (Mark 14:5) and given, of course, to the poor. He then betrayed Jesus for a paltry thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave (Zechariah 11:12-13)! Judas never called Jesus "Lord." He called Him Master, that is, Teacher. He was remorseful, but not repentant. The Greek word translated "repented himself" (ch 27:3) means he changed his mind, he was sorry.

The Passover – vs 17-30

The feast- - vs 17-25

"The first day of unleavened bread," was the fifth day of this awesome week. It was time to prepare for the feast of the Passover. Since Jesus withdrew from the Temple He had been staying on the Mount of Olives, but the Passover must be held in the city. He sent Peter and John (Luke 22:8) into the city to make ready a place to eat the Passover. The evidence seems to show this was the house of John Mark's mother. His "time was at hand," the time for which He came to earth. "Now when even was come," would be at sunset and as the Jewish day began at sunset it was now the sixth day of the week (our Friday) called "Preparation." During the service of the ritual meal Jesus made a startling announcement, someone present would betray Him. He had been saying this for some time, but they did not seem to grasp what He meant. Now the meaning was stark and clear. Jesus dismissed Judas (John 13:27) to do his deed of betrayal.

The Lord's Supper – vs 26-30

When Judas left Jesus instituted His memorial service with the simple foods from the Passover meal, bread and wine. This was to remember Him and “the Blood of the New Covenant.” They then closed this service by chanting the one hundred eighteenth Psalm.

Gethsemane – vs 51-46

The last walk with His disciples

“When they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives.” This was His last walk with His disciples before the cross. He warned them that they would be “offended this night because of Him.” He gave them assurance with the promise of a post resurrection meeting in Galilee. He then quoted Zechariah 13:7, “I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” John gives His final words to them in his Gospel, chapters fourteen to sixteen. Peter gave his oath of loyalty and Jesus told him how he would fail. He had to go to the cross alone!

In the garden – vs 36-46

“Gethsemane - the olive press, and why so named let Christians guess.”

Here even Jesus closest friends could not go with Him, He had to go alone. It was not that they did not want to, but because they could not share in this awful time. His soul was pressed beyond human strength. “The cup” of which He must drink was the weight of the sin of mankind for whom He would atone. Even the Father could not accompany Him (ch 27:46) when He “was made sin for us”

((2 Corinthians 5:21). That is, He was made our representative for sin, as was the sacrificial lamb of the Law (Wuest).

The arrest and trials of Jesus - 26:47-27:33

Jesus permits His apprehension – vs 47-56

Judas well knew where to find Jesus in His retreat on Olivet. He led a large, well-armed group of temple guards. Jesus calmly let Himself be arrested and this greatly confused His disciples. So many times Jesus had slipped away from His enemies. Why did He not do so now? Peter, true to his word, was ready to defend Him, but Jesus said no. Why? He assured them there were more than twelve legions of angels at His command. The answer is verse fifty-four: the scripture must be fulfilled. That scripture was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. The drama of prophetic scripture was being played out.

The Jewish trial – vs 57-75

This was not a legal trial, nor even a legitimate legal hearing. It was hastily arranged, contrary to tradition. It was held at night contrary to law. It was convened at the palace of the High Priest instead of the hall of the council in the temple as required by law. Not all of the members of the council were present as required (Edersheim). False witnesses added nothing. The High Priest “adjured” Jesus “by the living God” if He were “the Christ, the son of God.” He answered with the Aramaic expression “thou hast said,” meaning it is as thou hast said. He then referred to Daniel 7:13, claiming that He “the Son of Man” was the one in Daniel’s vision who would be the judge in due time. The High Priest got a sentence of death for blasphemy in these circumstances! There was a

problem. Rome, the occupying power, had reserved sentencing of death to itself.

Peter had said (vs 35), “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” They could not die with Him. There could be no human participation in this His atoning death for all. After the crowing of the rooster Peter remembered his boast and went out and wept bitterly. Judas was remorseful; Peter was repentant.

The Roman trial – ch 27:1-33

The priests and elders were determined to kill Jesus, but did not have authority to do it, so they referred the matter to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The Jews hated Pilate and he contemned the Jews. He had committed atrocities in putting down revolts. Now they appealed to him to execute Jesus!

Meanwhile Judas saw the enormity of his deed and that it could not be undone. The thirty pieces of silver were now a curse. When the priests would not accept them back, in despair he threw them down and left to hang himself. Matthew quotes Zechariah 11:13 to show “that it might be fulfilled.” The potter’s field (vs 7) is the same place described in Jeremiah chapters eighteen and nineteen.

The charge the Jews brought to Pilate was Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews and thus He was a threat to Rome. Pilate saw their motive in the charge (vs 18). To appease the Jews there was a custom to release a prisoner at the Passover and he attempted to use this custom to release Jesus. But the Jews would not have it. They demanded the release of Barabbas. Barabbas was a criminal, not a political prisoner. Here is an acted parable: Jesus died and the criminal,

a sinner, went free! Pilate tried to evade involvement by using the Jewish custom of washing his hands of the whole matter and this has become a proverb to this day. The Jews who demanded that Jesus be crucified are not the same people who hailed Him their king as He entered Jerusalem. They had been scattered and driven away. The cry of the Jews, “His blood be upon us, and on our children” is a curse that was fulfilled and has not been lifted to this day. Only those Jews who are believers escape the curse (vs25). The Gentile soldiers who knew nothing of Him or the matter at hand mocked and abused Him with a scarlet robe, a crown of thorns and mock worship.

The crucifixion – vs 34-56

As Jesus was led to be crucified, He fell beneath the heavy load. Simon of Cyrene was forced by the Roman soldiers to bear the cross. Simon was a Jew who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. Cyrene was the Roman name for Libya. They came to a place called Golgotha. This is an Aramaic word meaning “a skull.” The Latin word is Calvary. This was not a mountain; it was a small hill outside the city wall. It was chosen for crucifying because it was an elevated place by a busy road.

Many prophecies were fulfilled at His death. The following are some of them:

- Psalm 69:21, “They gave Him vinegar mingled with gall to drink” - vs34 and 48.
- Psalm 22:18, “They parted His garments by lot” - vs 35.
- Isaiah 53:9, “He made His grave with the wicked” - vs 38.
- Psalm 22:7, “They laughed me to scorn,” etc. - vs 39-43.

- Psalm 22:1, His cry of “My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” - vs 46.
- Psalm 22:8, “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now.” - vs 43
- Psalm 53:9, “He made His grave with the rich” - vs 57-60.

Twice the soldiers offered Jesus “vinegar mingled with gall.” This was the only act of human mercy in this whole scene. The “vinegar was a cheap, sharp wine of the Roman military. The purpose of the gall being added was to stupefy and somewhat ease the pain. Both times Jesus refused it. He would fully do His Father’s will. The title placed over His head read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” It was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. (John 23:38) All mankind was involved in His death. The passerby mocked Him saying “He saved other, He could not save Himself.” He could have called twelve legions of angels to save Him, but then He could not have saved us. According to Matthew Jesus “cried with a loud voice and breathed His last.” John records His saying “It is finished.” (John 19:30) His mission was accomplished: redemption was complete. Darkness covered the earth for three hours, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom and “many bodies of the saints which slept arose and appeared unto many.” This last phenomenon is referred to in Hebrews 11:35.

The burial – vs 57-66

Dying by crucifixion could last for several days, but Jesus died in less than three hours.

“When evening was come” Joseph of Arimathaea came to Pilate and “begged” the body of Jesus. When Pilate granted his request he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and placed it in

his own hewn rock tomb. This was hastily done so it would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath. There was no time to prepare for burial. That would be done after the Sabbath. But before they could come with the materials for burial, He was gone! The following day, the Sabbath, The chief priests and Pharisees petitioned Pilate for a guard to secure the tomb. They remembered His word that in three days He would rise to life. The tomb was sealed and the guard was placed to prevent His disciples stealing the body and claiming He was resurrected.

A NEW DAY DAWNS CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

“It is finished!” (John 19:30) The Law and the Prophets have been fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17) Redemption is completed. The covenant of the Law has ended. (Galatians 3:24-25) The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33) in the blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:28) has been established.

The resurrection – vs 1-10

Very early on the first day of the week (our Sunday) when the women came to the tomb Jesus had already risen and gone. The angel of the Lord had opened the tomb by rolling back the heavy stone that sealed it. This was not done to let Jesus out, but to let His disciples and followers in. The guards placed to secure the tomb were powerless. The message of the angel was “Come, See, Go, Tell!” As they went to tell the disciples Jesus met them. The Greek word He used to greet them means rejoice! In ten short verses the most momentous event of all time is described.

The great lie – vs 11-15

When Jesus drove the moneychangers from the Temple, as described in John 2:18-21, the Jews demanded of Him a sign of authority. He responded by saying “destroy the temple and in three days I will raise it up.” They took that to mean the building of the temple. John explained He was referring to His own body. They used this as an accusation at His trial. (Matthew 26-61) But the chief priests and the Pharisees did not misunderstand Him. They told Pilate that He claimed He would rise again after three days. They did not believe Him. They suspected a plot to steal the body and claim resurrection and asked for a guard to prevent that. By law, the guards should have been punished for not keeping the tomb secure. Instead they were handsomely rewarded to perpetuate a lie repeated even today.

His final charge – vs 16-21

Like everything else in this Gospel, Jesus’ charge to the eleven must be understood dispensationally. The subject of the whole of Matthew is King Messiah and His Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus had withdrawn His offer of the Kingdom to this generation (ch 21:43), but it would again be given to a nation “bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Even in the first chapter of Acts (ch 1:6) the disciples were expecting the coming of the Kingdom. His charge here was “Go therefore and teach all nations.” Chapter two of Isaiah tells what the result will then be. Then they will baptize in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit acknowledging the Trinity they have denied for two millennia. The apostles and disciples in Acts did not baptize in the Name of the Trinity. They baptized in the Name

of Jesus. Paul wrote (Colossians 3:17) “whatsoever you do in **word** or **deed**, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus acknowledging Him as the head of the Church.

Abundant Grace Fellowship
4535 Wadsworth Blvd.
Wheat Ridge, CO 80033

303-423-2625
agfwheatridgeco.com