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A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently, is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS⁴). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.
2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS⁴ and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

The Study Bible Commentary Series, continuing the expanding set with “The First Christian Primer: Matthew,” marks a very special time for students of the Bible everywhere. While English-language commentaries and study helps proliferate, many at reasonable cost, Bob Utley’s commentaries are specially designed to help Bible students at all levels, from new Christians with limited knowledge of the Bible to mature scholars with extensive knowledge of the original languages. This series is truly unique in providing the Bible student with five parallel paragraph divisions preceding each chapter of commentary. These divisions attempt to show the biblical author’s flow of thought and argumentation in a way, not readily seen in one translation in isolation. While paragraph divisions and literary units are not inspired *per se*, they are essential interpretive keys for those wanting to discover the exciting truths the Bible has to offer.

This volume, numbered the first in the series though it is actually the second to be released, will become an indispensable part of any library in which the gospels are read and studied. Dr. Utley’s complete series will eventually encompass the New Testament, providing Bible students with the opportunity to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Studying the Bible is a process which is essentially spiritual in nature, but likewise it is a process that requires rational methods to reap spiritual benefits. The author of this series assumes that each reader will take the time to engage the Bible on his own, using the commentary as a guide, not as an interpretive crutch. It is truly Dr. Utley’s gift to bring the student to the “threshold of interpretation,” to the point of interpreting the Bible for himself or herself. It is our hope that each new volume will enable more people to encounter the Bible first hand and experience the satisfaction of being taught by God through its study.

William G. Wells
June 23, 1997

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message

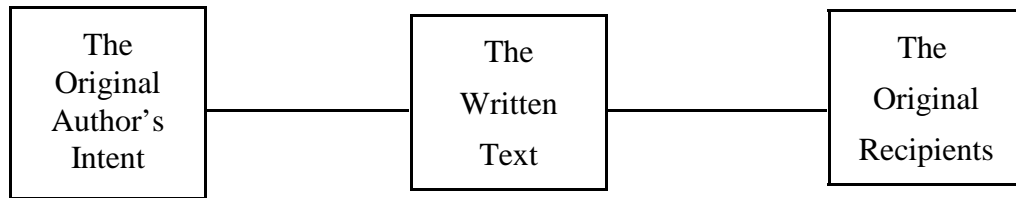
5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
6. the words chosen to present the message
7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

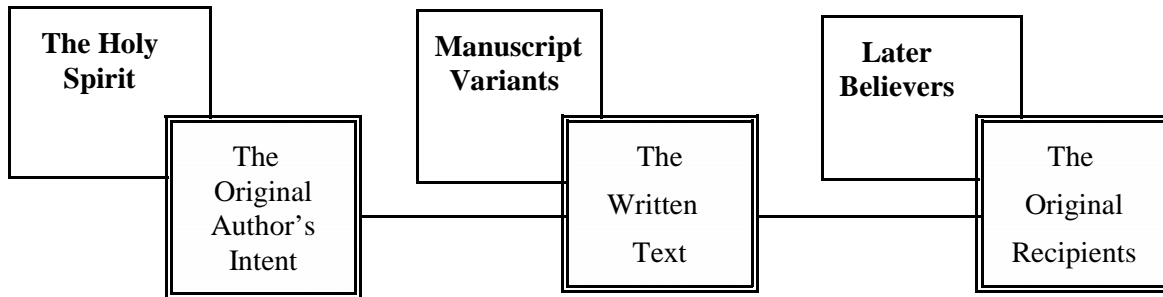
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context
2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary work usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages
 - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme
 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events
 3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.

4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
 1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
 3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) “systematic theology” books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
 5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as “understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day.”

Application must follow interpretation of the original author’s intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).

- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:
 “The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”
- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”
- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:
 “No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. Check this information after you have done “reading cycle #3.”
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS⁴)
 - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 - e. Today’s English Version (TEV)
 - f. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach, or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph-level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.
4. The notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - a. literary context
 - b. historical, cultural insights
 - c. grammatical information
 - d. word studies
 - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions
 - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”

- b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text
- a. manuscript variations
 - b. alternate word meanings
 - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 - d. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
7. At the close of each chapter, relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

**THE FIRST
CHRISTIAN PRIMER:
MATTHEW**

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

OPENING STATEMENT

- A. Until the time of the Renaissance/Reformation the Gospel of Matthew was thought to have been the first Gospel written (and still is by the Roman Catholic church).
- B. It was the most copied, most quoted, most used Gospel in catechism and in the early liturgy by the church for the first two centuries.
- C. William Barclay in *The First Three Gospels*, p. 19, said “When we turn to Matthew, we turn to the book which may well be called the most important single document of the Christian faith, for in it we have the fullest and the most systematic account of the life and the teachings of Jesus.”
This is because it developed the teachings of Jesus in a thematic way. It was used to teach new converts (both Jew and Gentile) about the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.
- D. It forms a logical bridge between the Old and New Covenants, between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. It used the Old Testament in a promise/fulfillment format as did the early sermons of Acts which are called the *kerygma*. The Old Testament is quoted over fifty times and alluded to many more. Also, many of the titles and analogies used of YHWH are applied to Jesus.
- E. Therefore, the purposes of The Gospel According to Matthew were evangelism and discipleship, the twin aspects of the Great Commission (28:19-20).
 - 1. They were to help convert Jews by informing them of Jesus’ life and teachings,
 - 2. They were to disciple both believing Jews and Gentiles into how they should live as Christians.

AUTHORSHIP

- A. Although the earliest copies of the Greek NT (A.D. 200-400) have the designation “according to Matthew,” the book itself is anonymous.
- B. The uniform tradition of the early church is that Matthew (also known as Levi, cf. Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27,29), tax-collector (cf. Matt. 9:9; 10:3) and disciple of Jesus, wrote the Gospel.
- C. Matthew, Mark and Luke are strikingly similar:
 - 1. they often agree in form on OT quotes that are not found in the Masoretic text nor the Septuagint,
 - 2. they often quote Jesus in unusual grammatical constructions, even using rare Greek words,
 - 3. they often use phrases and even sentences of exactly the same Greek words,
 - 4. obviously literary borrowing has occurred.
- D. Several theories have been advanced concerning the relationship between Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels).
 - 1. The uniform tradition of the early church is that Matthew (Levi), the tax-collector and disciple of Jesus, wrote the Gospel. The Apostle Matthew was unanimously affirmed to be the author until the Renaissance/Reformation.
 - 2. Around 1776 A. E. Lessing (and later Gieseler in 1818), theorized an oral stage in the development of the Synoptic (“to see together”) Gospels. He asserted that they were all dependent on earlier oral traditions which the writers modified for their own target audiences:
 - a. Matthew: Jews
 - b. Mark: Romans
 - c. Luke: GentilesEach was related to a separate geographical center of Christianity
 - a. Matthew: Antioch, Syria
 - b. Mark: Rome, Italy
 - c. Luke: Caesarea by the Sea, Palestine
 - d. John: Ephesus, Asia Minor

3. In the early nineteenth century J. J. Griesbach theorized that Matthew and Luke wrote separate accounts of Jesus' life, completely independent of each other. Mark wrote a brief Gospel trying to mediate between these other two accounts.
4. In the early twentieth century H. J. Holtzmann theorized that Mark was the first written Gospel and that both Matthew and Luke used his Gospel structure plus a separation document containing the sayings of Jesus called Q (German *quelle* or "source"). This was labeled the "two source" theory (also endorsed by Fredrick Schleiermacher in 1832).
5. Later B. H. Streeter theorized a modified "two source" theory called "the four source" theory which posited a "proto Luke" plus Mark plus Q.
6. The above theories of the formation of the Synoptic Gospels are only speculation. There is no historical nor actual manuscript evidence of either a "Q" source or a "proto Luke."

Modern scholarship simply does not know how the Gospels developed nor who wrote them (the same is true of the OT Law and former Prophets). However, this lack of information does not affect the Church's view of their inspiration or trustworthiness as historical as well as faith documents.

7. There are obvious similarities in structure and wording between the Synoptics, but there are also many arresting differences. Differences are common in eye witness accounts. The early church was not bothered by the divergence of these three eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life.

It may be that the target audience, the style of the author and the different languages involved (Aramaic and Greek) account for the seeming discrepancies. It must be stated that these inspired writers, editors or compilers had the freedom to select, arrange, adapt and summarize the events and teachings of Jesus' life (cf. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 113-148).

- E. There is a tradition of the early church from Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis (A.D. 130), which was recorded in Eusebius' *Historical Ecclesiasticus* 3:39:16, that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Aramaic. However, modern scholarship has rejected this tradition because
 1. the Greek of Matthew does not have the characteristics of a translation from Aramaic
 2. there are Greek word plays (cf. 6:16; 21:41; 24:30)
 3. most of the OT quotes are from the Septuagint (LXX) not the Masoretic Hebrew Texts
 It is possible that 10:3 is a hint at Matthew's authorship. It adds "tax-gatherer" after his name. This self-deprecating comment is not found in Mark. Matthew also was not a well known person in the NT or early church. Why would so much tradition have developed around his name and this first apostolic Gospel?

DATE

- A. In many ways the date of the Gospel is linked to the Synoptic problem. Which Gospel was written first and who borrowed from whom?
 1. Eusebius, in *Historical Ecclesiasticus*, 3:39:15 said Matthew used Mark as a structural guide.
 2. Augustine, however, called Mark "a camp follower" and an abbreviator of Matthew.
- B. The best approach would be to try to set the limits of possible dates
 1. It must have been written before A.D. 96 or 115
 - a. Clement of Rome (A.D. 96) made an allusion to Matthew's Gospel in his letter to the Corinthians.
 - b. Ignatius (A.D. 110-115), the Bishop of Antioch, quoted Matt. 3:15 in his letter *To the Smyrneans*, 1:1
 2. The more difficult question is how early could it have been written?
 - a. obviously after the events recorded, which would be in the mid 30's
 - b. some time would have had to pass for its need, composition, and circulation
 - c. what is chapter 24's relationship to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70? Parts of Matthew imply the sacrificial system was still in place (5:23-24; 12:5-7; 17:24-27; 26:60-61). This means a date before A.D. 70.
 - d. if Matthew and Mark were written during the time of Paul's ministry (A.D. 48-68), why does he never refer to them? Irenaeus is quoted by Eusebius in *Historical Ecclesiasticus* 5:8:2, to say that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were in Rome. Peter and Paul were both killed during Nero's reign which ended in A.D. 68
 - e. modern scholarship's earliest guess is A.D. 50
- C. Many scholars believe that the four Gospels relate more to geographical centers of Christianity than to the traditional authors. Matthew may have been written from Antioch of Syria, because of its Jewish/Gentile church issues, possibly about A.D. 60 or at least before A.D. 70.

RECIPIENTS

- A. As the authorship and date of the Gospel are uncertain, so are the recipients. It seems best to relate it to both believing Jews and Gentiles. The Church at Antioch of Syria of the first century fits this profile best.
- B. Origen is quoted by Eusebius in *Historical Ecclesiasticus* 6:25:4, that it was written for Jewish believers.

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE

- A. How is this Gospel structured? One can best find the intent of the original inspired author by analyzing the structure of the entire book.
- B. Scholarship has suggested several structures
 - 1. the geographical movements of Jesus
 - a. Galilee
 - b. north of Galilee
 - c. Perea and Judea (while traveling to Jerusalem)
 - d. in Jerusalem
 - 2. Matthew's five thematic units. They are discernable by the recurrent phrase, "and when Jesus had finished these things" (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Many scholars see these five units as Matthew's attempt to portray Jesus as the "new Moses," with each unit being analogous to one of the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
 - a. a chiastic structure which alternates between narrative and discourse sections
 - b. a theological/biographical format which picks up on the recurrent phrase, "from that time on Jesus began. . ." (cf. 4:17; 16:21), thereby dividing the book into three sections (1:1-4:16; 4:17-16:20; and 16:21-28:20)
 - c. Matthew's emphasis on OT predictive passages by use of the key term "fulfillment" (cf. 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9 and 27:35)
- C. The "gospels" are a unique literary genre. They are not biographical. They are not historical narrative. They are a selective theological, highly structured literary type. Each of the Gospel writers chose from the life events and teachings of Jesus to uniquely present Him to their target audience. The Gospels were evangelistic tracts.

READING CYCLE ONE (see p. vii)

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

- 1. Theme of entire book
- 2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (see pp. vii-viii.)

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Therefore, read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

- 1. Subject of first literary unit

2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

MATTHEW 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS *

UBS	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Genealogy of Jesus Christ	The Genealogy of Jesus Christ	Jesus' Royal Descent	The Family Record of Jesus Christ	The Ancestry of Jesus (2-6)
1:1	1:1-17	1:1	1:1	1:1-16
1:2-6a		1:2-6a	1:2-6a	(2-6)
1:6b-11		1:6b-11	1:6b-11	(6b-11)
1:12-16		1:12-16	1:12-16	(12-16)
1:17		1:17	1:17	1:17
The Birth of Jesus Christ	Christ Born to Mary	Jesus' Birth	The Birth of Jesus Christ	Joseph Adopts Jesus As his Son
1:18-25	1:18-25	1:18-25	1:18-21	1:18-25
			1:22-23	(23)
			1:24-25	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when one understands the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-25

- A. The lists of ancestors found in Matt. 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38 do not agree. There are two major theories for the discrepancies:
1. Matthew wrote primarily to a Jewish audience and recorded Joseph's lineage to satisfy Jewish legal practices, while Luke wrote to Gentiles and recorded Mary's lineage (Luther). Both trace Jesus back to David, but Luke goes further, all the way back to Adam (probably because he was writing for Gentiles).
 2. Matthew recorded the lineage of the kings of Judah succeeding David (or after the Exile, those who would have succeeded), while Luke recorded the actual ancestors.
- B. This lineage would serve the purpose of proving Jesus' tribal identity and showing the fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Gen. 49:8-12 and II Samuel 7). Fulfilled prophecy (cf. 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9,35) is strong evidence for a supernatural Bible and for God's control of history and time.
- C. Verse 17 gives the key to understanding why some ancestors are not listed. The author was using a numerically structured, three-tiered "fourteen generation" approach to Jesus' lineage.
- D. In these opening birth narratives there are four OT quotes (cf. 1:23; 2:6,15,18) which involve different types of prophecy.
1. 1:23 – Isa. 7:14 is a multiple fulfillment prophecy. A child was born in Isaiah's day, cf. vv. 15-16; however the Hebrew word in v. 14 is not "virgin" (*bethoolah*, cf. BDB 143), but "young woman of marriageable age" (*almah*, cf. BDB 761 II). I believe in only one virgin birth—Jesus!
 2. 2:6 – Micah 5:2 is a marvelous, very specific prophecy written 750 years before the event it describes. The place of Jesus' birth was not something He could alter or effect. This kind of predictive prophecy confirms (a) God's knowledge (and His control) of history and (b) the inspiration and uniqueness of the Bible. No other world religion's holy book has predictive prophecy!
 3. 2:15 – Hosea 11:1 and 2:18 – Jeremiah 31:15 are both typological prophecies. Something that happened in the life of Israel reoccurs in the life of Jesus and the NT author understands it as a prophetic sign.
- E. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (p. 175), makes a great comment about how Matthew's genealogy is structured.
1. the Patriarchs – first fourteen names
 2. Israelite kings – second fourteen names
 3. unknown ancestors – third fourteen names
- This genealogy is highly structured and selective. It is uncertain why.
1. literary technique (mnemonic)
 2. numerical symbolism
 - a. 7 x 2; Luke lists 77 ancestors
 - b. the letters of David's Hebrew name add up to 14
 3. well known or godly ancestors only
 4. women/men; Gentiles/Jews (purposeful inclusion)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1

'The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

1:1

NASB "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah,"

NKJV "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ"

NRSV "an account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah"

TEV "This is the family record of Jesus Christ"

NJB "roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ"

The genealogy (cf. Gen. 5:1 or "account," cf. Gen. 2:4) is illustrative of God's hand in history fulfilling His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. The NT is the fulfillment of the OT. In some cultures the use of genealogy is evidence for a trustworthy history.

☐ **“the son of David”** This was a title for the promised Messiah that emphasized His Jewish royal line from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:8-12). He was of the seed of woman, Gen. 3:15; the seed of Abraham, Gen. 22:18; the seed of Judah, Gen. 49:10 and the seed of David, II Sam. 7:12-14, 16. This phrase was a common Messianic designation in Matthew (cf. 9:27; 12:33; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15; 22:42).

☐ **“the son of Abraham”** Luke’s genealogy takes the line back to Adam. Luke was written for Gentiles, so it emphasizes the common human ancestry (cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18). Matthew was written for Jews, so it focuses on the beginning of the Jewish family, Abram. In Matthew’s genealogy “Abraham” and “David” are highlighted by its numerical design (i.e., three groups of 14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:2-6a

²Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. ³Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron the father of Ram. ⁴Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. ⁵Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. ⁶Jesse was the father of David the king.

1:2 “Judah” Judah was one of Jacob’s children (cf. Gen. 49:10; Deut. 33:7). Verses 2-6 follow the genealogy of I Chronicles 1-3 in a limited sense.

1:3 “Perez and Zerah” Perez and Zerah were twins (cf. Gen. 38:27-30). The Messianic line came through Perez. This section of the genealogy (vv. 3-5) follows Ruth 4:18-22.

☐ **“Tamar”** Tamar was Judah’s daughter-in-law who became pregnant by him (cf. Gen. 38:12ff). It was very unusual to include women in Jewish genealogical lists. Several are included here in Matthew to emphasize that the lineage of the Messiah was not based on nationality or meritorious effort. Three of the women listed—Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth—were Gentiles and the fourth, Bathsheba, was married to a Hittite. The Gentiles, even women, are included for an inclusive theological impact!

1:5 “Rahab” Rahab was the Canaanite prostitute who helped the spies (cf. Josh. 2:13; 6:17,23,25). In Jewish and Christian tradition Rahab was an example of the power of repentance (cf. Heb. 11:31; James 2:25).

☐ **“Ruth”** Ruth was a Moabitess (cf. Ruth 1). Moabites were forbidden from entering the congregation of Israel (cf. Deut. 23:3). She exemplified the faith of Gentiles and women and God’s inclusive love. She was the grandmother of King David.

1:6 “who had been the wife of Uriah” This referred to Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon (cf. II Samuel 11 and 12), who, like Rahab and Ruth, was not Jewish.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6b-11

^{6b}David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. ⁸Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah. ⁹Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah. ¹¹Josiah was the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

1:7-11 This section (with some differences) follows I Chr. 3:10-15.

1:7

NASB, NKJV,

TEV, NJB “Asa”
NRSV “Asaph”

This Judean king was named Asa in I Kgs. 15:9 and I Chr. 3:10. “Asa” is found in MSS L and W and fits the context. The early uncial Greek manuscripts \aleph , B, and C surprisingly have “Asaph.” This was the name of a choir director of David (cf. Psalm 50,73,83). Most textual critics assume that this is an ancient copyist error, or just a variant spelling of the name of the king.

1:8 Three Judean kings between Joram and Uzziah are omitted (1) Ahaziah (cf. II Kgs. 8,9; II Chr. 22); (2) Joash (cf. II Kgs. 11:2; 12:19-21; II Chr. 24); and (3) Amaziah (cf. II Kgs. 14; II Chr. 25).

The reason for their omission is uncertain. Two theories are: (1) Joram was married to and influenced by his wife, Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel and, therefore, his sin of idolatry was transmitted to the third generation (cf. Deut. 5:9) or (2) Matthew is structuring the genealogy into three sections of 14 ancestors each (v. 17). This would be the middle section.

1:9 “Uzziah was born to Jotham” In II Kgs. 15:1-7 and I Chr. 3:12 Uzziah is called Azariah. He was a godly king who was struck with leprosy because he offered a sacrifice in a wrong manner.

1:10 “Hezekiah” Hezekiah was one of the five godly kings of Judah (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah). His life is recorded in II Kgs. 18-20, II Chr. 29-32, and Isa. 36-39.

▣ **“Manasseh”** He was the son of Hezekiah. Manasseh was reputed to be the most evil king in Judah’s history (cf. II Kgs. 21:2-7). He also reigned the longest, fifty-five years (cf. II Kgs. 21; II Chr. 33).

▣ **“Amon”** He was the son of Manasseh and father of Josiah (cf. II Kgs. 21:18-19,23-25; I Chr. 3:14; II Chr. 33:20-25). Some early uncial Greek manuscripts, \aleph , B^c, and C, have the name, “Amos.” This manuscript problem is much like v. 7.

▣ **“Josiah”** Another godly king of Judah, Josiah was eight years old when he became king (cf. II Kgs. 22-23; II Chr. 34,35). Many scholars believe that the righteous father, the wicked son of the righteous father, and the righteous son of the wicked father in Ezekiel (cf. 18:5-9, 10-13, 14-18) were direct references to Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah.

1:11 “Jeconiah” He was also called Coniah (cf. Jer. 22:24) and Jehoiachin (cf. II Kings 24-25). The next to last Davidic king before the Babylonian captivity, Jeconiah was either 8 years old when he ascended the throne (cf. II Chr. 36:9) or 18 years old (cf. II Kgs. 24:8) and reigned only three months (cf. I Chr. 3:16-17; Jer. 24:1; 29:2). Ezekiel dates his prophecies from the year of this king’s exile by Nebuchadnezzar II in 597 B.C. (cf. 1:1,2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1,17; 33:21; 40:1).

▣ **“deportation to Babylon”** This deportation occurred under Nebuchadnezzar II. Jerusalem was captured by the army of Babylon several times—in 605, 597, 586, and 582 B.C. Several different deportations occurred.

1. deportation of Daniel and his three friends in 605 B.C.
2. the deportation of Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and ten thousand soldiers and craftsmen in 597 B.C. (cf. I Kgs. 24:10-17)
3. the deportation of most of the remaining population (the city of Jerusalem was destroyed) in 587/586 B.C., II Kings 25
4. the final invasion and deportation of Judah in 582 B.C. in retaliation for the killing of Nebuchadnezzar’s appointed governor, Gedeliah, and his Babylonian honor guard

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-16

¹²After the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel. ¹³Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor. ¹⁴Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud. ¹⁵Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. ¹⁶Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

1:12 “and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel” Zerubbabel was the leader of the Jews in the second return from Babylonian exile, the first return being under Sheshbazzar (cf. Ezra 1:8; 5:14). He was of the line of David (cf. Ezra 2-6). In I Chr. 3:16-19, his father is listed as Pedaiah and his grandfather as Shealtiel. Hebrew familial terms were fluid and could refer to several different categories of relatives. In this case, Shealtiel was an uncle. This confusion could be explained if Shealtiel adopted Zerubbabel after his father Pedaiah died (cf. Ezra 3:8; 5:2; Neh. 12:1; Hag. 1:1).

These two names also appear in the Lucan genealogy, but in a much later period.

1:13-15 The names from Zerubbabel’s son Abihud to Jacob are unknown from OT sources.

1:14 “Zadok” This was not the faithful priest of David’s day (cf. II Sam. 20:25; I Chr. 16:39) because Matthew’s Zadok is of the tribe of Judah, not Levi.

1:16 “Joseph the husband of Mary” “Begot,” which is so prominent in this listing of the other fathers, is left out! Joseph is named as the legal father and his lineage given because this was what the Jews of the first century legally required and recognized. But he was not the true biological father. Jesus was virgin born of the Spirit of God (cf. 1:23-25; Luke 1:34-35).

☐ **“who is called the Messiah”** “Christ” (NKJV) was the Greek translation of the Hebrew term *Messiah* (BDB 603, cf. I Sam. 2:10,35; II Sam. 22:51; Ps. 2:2 18:51; 89:38,51; 132:10,17; Dan. 9:24,25), meaning “an anointed one.” Jesus was YHWH’s special Servant (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7; 11:1-5; 52:13-53:12), the Coming One, who would establish the new age of righteousness (cf. Isaiah 61, 65-66). See Special Topic at 8:20.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:17

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

1:17 “generations” This was not a complete historical genealogy. The Hebrew term “generations” was ambiguous and could have meant grandfather or great-great-grandfather or ancestor.

☐ **“from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations”** There are three sections of fourteen ancestors listed (1) Abraham to David, (2) David to the Exile, and (3) the Exile to Jesus. Only thirteen names are listed in the third section, so possibly Jehoiachin is counted in both the second and third sections. The number pattern implies that some names were left out (cf. I Chronicles 1-3). Some commentators believe that these structured lists of fourteen are based on the numerical value of the consonants of David’s name in Hebrew (*daleth*, 4 + *waw*, 6 + *daleth*, 4 = 14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:18-25

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, wanted to send her away secretly. ²⁰But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” ²²Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” ²⁴And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife,²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

1:18 “the birth” There is a Greek manuscript variant between “beginning” [*genesis*] and “birth” [*gennasis*]. The term *genesis* was probably original (cf. MSS P¹, א, B, C; UBS⁴ rated it B). While both terms can mean “birth,” the first had wider connotations (creation, generation, i.e., “the new Genesis in Jesus as the second Adam, cf. Rom. 5:12-21) and could have meant “begotten.” It has been supposed that later scribes changed the first term to “birth” deliberately to counteract later Christological (gnostic) heresies (cf. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* by Bart P. Ehrman, pp. 75-77).

☐ **“betrothed to Joseph”** Betrothal was a legally binding Jewish custom, usually lasting about a year before marriage. The parties lived separately but were considered contractually married. Only death or divorce could break the betrothal arrangement.

☐

NASB	“she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit”
NKJV	“she was found with child of the Holy Spirit”
NRSV	“she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit”
TEV	“she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit”
NJB	“she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit”

This refers to the virgin birth, which was not a sexual experience for Mary or the Spirit. This was a prophetic fulfillment of Gen. 3:15 (“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”), and in a multiple fulfillment sense, of Isa. 7:14 (“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel”). Surprisingly, no apostolic sermons in Acts or the Epistles mention this, possibly because it could have been confused with Greco-Roman mythology (the Mount Olympus gods often took human women and bore children by them).

1:19 “being a righteous man” A “righteous man” meant a lawful man by the standards of the Mosaic Law and the oral traditions of his day. It does not imply sinlessness; Noah and Job were righteous in the same sense (cf. Gen. 6:9 and Job 1:1).

▣ **“to send her away secretly”** Joseph could have accomplished this through two legal procedures: (1) open renunciation in court or (2) the presentation of a written bill of divorce in front of two witnesses (cf. Deuteronomy 24). Mary had not shared the vision concerning her pregnancy with Joseph. OT Law demanded the death penalty for sexual unfaithfulness (cf. Deut. 22:20-21,23-24).

1:20 Joseph was informed about the pregnancy of his betrothed wife by an angelic messenger. In Luke 1:26 the angel is identified as Gabriel (cf. 1:19; Dan. 8:16; 9:21).

The word “dream” (*onar*) occurs five times in the first two chapters of Matthew (cf. 1:20; 2:12,13,19,22), but not again until 27:19 and no where else in the NT.

▣ **“an angel of the Lord”** This phrase is used two ways in the OT.

1. an angel (cf. Gen. 24:7,40; Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34; Num. 22:22; Jdgs. 5:23; I Sam. 24:16; I Chr. 21:15ff; Zech. 1:28)
2. as a way of referring to YHWH (cf. Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-24; 13:3-23; Zech. 3:1-2)

Matthew uses the phrase often (cf. 1:20,24; 2:13,19; 28:2), but always in the sense of #1 above. The NT does not use sense #2 except Acts 8:26 and 29, where, “an angel of the Lord” is paralleled to the Holy Spirit.

1:21 “you shall call His name Jesus” This name (Hebrew, Joshua) meant “YHWH saves,” “YHWH brings salvation,” or “YHWH is Savior” (some VERB must be supplied, cf. Luke 1:31). See Special Topic: The Name of the Lord at 18:20.

The name YHWH means

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Ps. 103).
This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.
2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
 - a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugaritic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67)

The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.

- (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah)
 - (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (names, e.g., Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
 4. As with *El*, often YHWH is combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combinations of terms, here are some.
 - a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
 - f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)

- g. *YHWH - Ro'I* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1
- h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
- i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

- A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)
 - 1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
 - 2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
 - 3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High, BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God, BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
 - 4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
 - f. “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
 - g. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - h. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
 - i. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
 - j. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
 - k. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - l. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - m. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - n. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - o. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
 - 5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)
- B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)
 - 1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
 - 2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* - Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* - Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
 - 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8

- d. Luke's Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)

C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)

1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham's family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*) is exactly like Psalm 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.

6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
 - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called "the plural of majesty," where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, which God meets with in heaven and that does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

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 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form "the One who is," or "the One who is present" (in future sense, "the One who will be")
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form "the One who causes to be"
 - g. from the Hebrew root "to live" (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning "the ever-living, only-living One"

- h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:9; 104:35)
 - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
- 3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
- 4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
 - a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
 - f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
 - g. *YHWH - Ro’I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
 - h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
 - i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“for He will save His people from their sin”** Jesus came for three distinct purposes.

1. to fully reveal the Father
2. to give humans an example to follow
3. to redeem mankind from sin

Genesis 3 affected all life on this planet (cf. Rom. 8:20-23). Jesus came to die in our place (cf. Mark 10:45; John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Isaiah 53). The promise of Gen. 3:15 is fulfilled in Him!

1:23 Matthew uses the fulfillment of OT prophecy as a major evidence for Jewish people to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

1. 1:22 – Isa. 7:14
2. 2:15 – Hos. 11:1 and Exod. 4:22-23
3. 2:23 – possibly Isa. 11:1
4. 3:15 – “fulfill all righteousness”
5. 4:14 – Isa. 9:1,2
6. 5:17 – “. . .but to fulfill”
7. 8:17 – Isa. 53:4
8. 12:17 – Isa. 42:1,2,3,4
9. 13:14 – Isa. 6:9,10
10. 13:35 – Ps. 78:2
11. 21:4 – Isa. 62:11 or Zech. 9:9
12. 27:9 – Zech. 11:12,13

▣ **“virgin”** This is a quotation of Isa. 7:14 from the Septuagint. In Isaiah the Hebrew word used was *almah* (BDB 761 II), meaning a “chaste young woman of marriageable age.” There was a special birth in Ahaz’s day (cf. Isa. 7:15-16). Only one virgin birth has ever occurred, not two; therefore, the historical fulfillment in Isaiah’s day was a sign to Ahaz, but not an impregnation by the Holy Spirit. This is an example of a multiple fulfillment of prophecy. The sign to Ahaz was the child’s name. See my commentary of Isaiah 1-39 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.



NASB, NKJV,

NJB

NRSV, TEV

JB

“Immanuel”

“Emmanuel”

“God-is-with-us”

Immanuel meant “God with us” (BDB 769). This shows that the OT passage pointed beyond its own day. Isaiah 7-12 (the Syro-Ephramitic War) ultimately referred to incarnate Deity, Jesus of Nazareth (cf. John 1:1; 5:18; 10:33; 14:9-10; Phil. 2:6). However, it must be remembered that the Jews did not expect the Messiah to be divine. They would have seen the powerful names from Isa. 9:6 as metaphors. It is not until the NT that the Messiah as God Incarnate was clearly revealed.

1:24-25 These verses reaffirm a truly supernatural virgin birth. They also imply that the couple had a normal married life after the birth of Jesus. The Textus Receptus, following the Greek uncial manuscripts C and D*, K, W add “her firstborn son,” implying other children.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Matthew have such a lengthy genealogy?
2. Why is Luke’s genealogy different from Matthew’s?
3. Did Isaiah predict a virgin birth in his own time?

MATTHEW 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Visit of the Wise Men 2:1-6	Wise Men from the East 2:1-12	The Wise Men 2:1-6	Visitors From the East 2:1-2 2:3-4 2:5-6	The Visit of the Magi 2:1-12 (6)
2:7-12		2:7-12	2:7-8 2:9-11 2:12	
The Flight to Egypt 2:13-15	The Flight Into Egypt 2:13-15	Escape to Egypt and Return 2:13-15	The Escape to Egypt 2:13 2:14-15a 2:15b	The Flight into Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocent 2:13-15 (15b)
The Slaying of the Infants 2:16-18	Massacre of the Innocents 2:16-18	2:16-18	The Killing of the Children 2:16 2:17-18	2:16-18 (18)
The Return from Egypt 2:19-23	The Home in Nazareth 2:19-23	2:19-23	2:19-21 2:22-23	From Egypt to Nazareth 2:19-23 (23c)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-6

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ²"Where is He who has been born 'King of the Jews?' For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." ³When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

**"AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;
FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL."**

2:1 "Bethlehem" The name meant "house of bread." This was the birthplace of Boaz, and later, King David (cf. Ruth 1:1 and 4:18-22). It was a small rural village of about 300 people, located 4-5 miles south of Jerusalem. There were two villages by this name; one in Judah (cf. Micah 5:2) and one in Zebulun (cf. Josh. 19:15).

☐ **"Herod the King"** Herod the Great was a jealous, paranoid Idumean (Edomite) ruler installed by the Romans. He expanded the second Temple in order to appease the Jews who were upset over a non-Jew ruling over them. He died in 4 B.C.; therefore, Jesus must have been born earlier, sometime between 6 - 4 B.C.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FAMILY OF HEROD THE GREAT

A. Herod the Great

1. King of Judea (37-4 B.C., This refers to Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.), an Idumean (from Edom), who, through political maneuvering, managed to be appointed ruler of a large part of Palestine (Canaan) by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. by means of the support of Mark Antony.)
2. Recorded in Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5
3. His sons
 - a. Antipater (son of Doris)
 - (1) born in 38 B.C.
 - (2) executed in 4 B.C. by Herod
 - b. Herod Philip I (son of Mariamne of Simon)
 - (1) first husband of Herodias (4 B.C. - A.D. 34)
 - (2) recorded in Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17
 - c. Herod Philip II (son of Cleopatra)
 - (1) Tetrarch of area north and west of the Sea of Galilee (4 B.C. - A.D. 34)
 - (2) Recorded in Luke 3:1
 - d. Herod Antipas (son of Malthace)
 - (1) Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 B.C. - A.D. 39)
 - (2) recorded in Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14,29; Luke 3:19; 9:7-9; 13:31; 23:6-12,15; Acts 4:27; 13:1
 - e. Archelaus, Herod the Ethnarch (son of Malthace)
 - (1) ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (4 B.C. - A.D. 6)
 - (2) recorded in Matt. 2:22
 - f. Aristobulus (son of Mariamne)
 - (1) recorded as father of Herod Agrippa I who was
 - (a) King of Judea (A.D. 37-44)
 - (b) recorded in Acts 12:1-24; 23:35
 - (i) his son was Herod Agrippa II
– Tetrarch of northern territory (A.D. 50-70)

- (ii) his daughter was Bernice
 - consort of her brother
 - Acts 25:13-26:32
- (iii) his daughter was Drusilla
 - wife of Felix
 - Acts 24:24

(2) executed by Herod in 6 B.C.

B. Biblical References to the Herods

1. Herod the Tetrarch who was mentioned in Matthew 14:1ff.; Luke 3:1; 9:7; 13:31, and 23:7, was the son of Herod the Great. At the death of Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided among several of his sons. The term “Tetrarch” meant “leader of the fourth part.” This Herod was known as Herod Antipas, which is the shortened form of Antipater. He controlled Galilee and Perea. This meant that much of Jesus’ ministry was in the territory of this second generation Idumean ruler.
2. Herodias was the daughter of Herod Antipas’ brother, Aristobulus. She had also been previously married to Philip, the half brother of Herod Antipas. This was not Philip the Tetrarch who controlled the area just north of Galilee, but the other brother Philip who lived in Rome. Herodias had one daughter by Philip. On Herod Antipas’ visit to Rome he met and was seduced by Herodias, who was looking for political advancement. Therefore, Herod Antipas divorced his wife, who was a Nabatean princess, and Herodias divorced Philip so that she and Herod Antipas could be married. She was also the sister of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12).
3. We learn the name of Herodias’ daughter, Salome, from Flavius Josephus in his book *The Antiquities of the Jews* 8.5.4. She must have been between the ages of twelve and seventeen at this point. She was obviously controlled and manipulated by her mother. She later married Philip the Tetrarch, but was soon widowed.
4. About ten years after the beheading of John the Baptist, Herod Antipas went to Rome at the instigation of his wife Herodias to seek the title of king because Agrippa I, her brother, had received that title. But Agrippa I wrote Rome and accused Antipas of corroboration with the Parthians, a hated enemy of Rome from the Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia). The Emperor apparently believed Agrippa I and Herod Antipas, along with his wife Herodias, was exiled to Spain.
5. It may make it easier to remember these different Herods as they are presented in the New Testament by remembering that Herod the Great killed the children in Bethlehem; Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist; Herod Agrippa I killed the Apostle James; and Herod Agrippa II heard Paul’s appeal recorded in the book of Acts.

C. Background Information on the Family of Herod the Great – for more information, consult the index of Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*.

2:1

NASB “magi”

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB “wise men”

TEV “men who studied the stars”

This type of sage probably originated in Media, but they came to be a well known group of wise men, counselors, and astrologers all over Mesopotamia. Herodotus called them Medean Priests (Herodotus I, 101). They were sometimes referred to in Babylon literature as “Chaldeans” (cf. Dan. 2:2-13).

The ones mentioned in this text were possibly Zoroastrians from Persia, but they could have been Jewish exiles like Daniel. It is unusual that Matthew, writing to Jews, included the story of the wise men (Gentiles) from the East while Luke, writing to Gentiles, included the story of the Jewish shepherds (outcast Jews).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MAGIC

In ancient times there appear to be several types of individuals and groups involved in different kinds of magic.

1. There is a priestly caste from Media involved in astrology called Chaldeans (cf. Dan. 1:20; 2:2,10,27; 4:7,9; 5:11; Matt. 2:1,7,16). Herodotus (I, 101) calls them “Medean priests.” They were involved in foretelling and controlling future events based on the movement and configuration of astral gods (i.e., planets, stars, constellations, comets).
2. There is a philosophical, mathematical counterpoint group in Greek life known as the Pythagorians.

3. Most magical groups were made up of persons who claimed to be able to manipulate the supernatural or natural forces of nature (cf. Gen. 41:8,24; Exod. 7:11,22; 8:7,19; 9:11). Often these forces (or gods) were seen to be in conflict with humanity and by taking the side of this force or that force the possessor of the knowledge could control the forces for personal gain (cf. the magical papyri of the third and fourth centuries A.D.). These individuals would
 - a. foretell future events
 - b. control future events
 - c. interpret future events and dreams
 - d. curse or protect other individuals, cities, nations, armies, etc.
4. Magicians as in Acts 8:9,11 claimed to be able to manipulate the impersonal forces of nature or the personal (demonic) forces to perform their will. This often involved magical rites and incantation.
5. “True” magicians often attacked other magicians who did not perform the rites and liturgies correctly. These were called charlatans or deceivers (cf. Acts 13:6,8; 19:13).
6. The power of the gospel is seen in Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, where former magicians converted to faith in Christ burned their expensive magic books (i.e., how to properly perform incantations, rites and liturgies, cf. Acts 19:19).
7. For further reading
 - a. Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, Fortress Press, 1989
 - b. Merrill Unger, *Biblical Demonology*, Scripture Press, 1967
 - c. Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, Herald Press, 1977
 - d. Waller Wink, *Naming the Powers*, Fortress Press, 1984
 - e. Clinton Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, Baker, 1997

▣ **“from the East”** Tradition tries to locate where they came from and how many there were, as well as their race and social status, but the Bible is silent on these issues.

2:2 “King of the Jews” This was Herod the Great’s title. This was the same title that was placed on Jesus’ cross (cf. Matt. 27:37). It was a way of referring to the Messiah (cf. I Sam. 8:7; Ps. 10:16; 29:10; 98:6).

▣

NASB, NKJV	“we have seen His star in the east”
NRSV	“we observed his star at its rising”
TEV	“We saw his star when it came up in the east”
NJB	“we saw his star as it rose”

This is literally “from the rising of the sun.” This could mean: (1) “we saw his star while we were in the East,” or (2) “we saw his star when it rose in the night sky.” It cannot mean it rose in the east because the star would have led them in the wrong direction, unless it rose in the east but moved to the western part of the sky.

The ancient world correlated the birth of important men or events with astrological occurrences. God revealed to them in a way they would understand. In a sense they represent the world seeking and finding the Jewish Messiah. This “star” may have related to the prophecy of Num. 24:17: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel.”

2:3 “he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him” Herod the Great was so cruel and unpredictable that when he was upset, everyone was afraid! A notable example of his cruelty was that when he was near death, he was afraid no one would mourn his passing, so he imprisoned many Pharisees who were to be crucified when he died. This would ensure that the day of his death would be a day of grieving. The order was not carried out, but this illustrates his character.

2:4 “all the chief priests and scribes of the people” This referred to the Sanhedrin, the highest judicial and religious court of the Jewish nation, made up of 70 leaders from the Jerusalem area. It was presided over by the High Priest (Sadducees, see Special Topic at 22:23), which was at this time a position purchased from Roman authorities. The Sanhedrin was usually referred to by the phrase “High Priests, scribes (Pharisees, see Special Topic at 22:15), and elders” (cf. 26:57; 27:41; Mark 11:27; 14:43,53; Acts 4:5). Herod had arrested and later killed many of the Jerusalem leaders several years earlier so it is uncertain if this is a reference to the official Sanhedrin.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SADDUCEES

I. Origin of the Group

- A. Most scholars believe the name comes from Zadok, one of David's high priests (cf. II Sam. 8:17; 15:24). Later, Solomon exiled Abiathar for supporting the rebellion of Adonijah (cf. I Kgs. 2:26-27) and recognized Zadok as the only High Priest (cf. I Kgs. 2:35). After the Babylonian exile this priestly line was reestablished in Joshua (cf. Hag. 1:1). This Levitical family was chosen to administer the temple. Later those who were of this priestly tradition and their supporters were called Zadokites or Sadducees.
- B. A ninth century A.D. rabbinical tradition (*Aboth* of Rabbi Nathan) says Zadok was a disciple of Antigonus of Sokho (2nd century B.C.). Zadok misunderstood a famous saying of his mentor involving "after dead rewards" and developed a theology that denied an afterlife and thereby also denied the resurrection of the body.
- C. Later within Judaism the Sadducees are identified with the Boethusians. Boethus was also a disciple of Antigonus of Sokho. He developed a theology similar to Zadok, which also denied an afterlife.
- D. The name Sadducee does not appear until the days of John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.), which is cited by Josephus (cf. *Antiquities* 13:10:5-6). In *Antiquities* 13:5:9 Josephus says there existed "three schools of thought," Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.
- E. There is a rival theory that they came from the time of the Selucid rulers' attempts to Hellenize the priesthood under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.). During the Maccabean revolt a new priesthood was started in Simon Maccabees (142- 135 B.C.) and his descendants (cf. I Macc. 14:41). These new Hasmonean high priests were the possible start of the aristocratic Sadducees. The Pharisees developed during this same time from the Hasidim (i.e., "the separated ones," cf. I Macc. 2:42; 7:5-23).
- F. There is the modern theory (i.e., T. W. Manson), that Sadducee is a transliteration of the Greek term *sundikoi*. This term referred to local authorities who interfaced with Roman authority. This may explain why some Sadducees were not aristocratic priests, but were members of the Sanhedrin.

II. Distinctive Beliefs

- A. They were the priestly conservative faction of the sects of Jewish life during the Hasmonean and Roman periods.
- B. They were especially concerned with temple procedures, protocol, rituals, and liturgy.
- C. They held to the written Torah (i.e., Genesis - Deuteronomy) as authoritative, but rejected the Oral Tradition (i.e., Talmud).
- D. They, therefore, rejected many of the cherished developed doctrines of the Pharisees
 - 1. the resurrection of the body (cf. Matt. 22:23; Mark. 12:18; Luke 20:27; Acts 4:1-2; 23:8)
 - 2. the immortality of the soul (cf. *Antiquities* 18.1.3-4; *Wars* 2.8.14)
 - 3. the existence of an elaborate hierarchy of angels (cf. Acts 23:8)
 - 4. they took the "eye-for-an-eye" (i.e., *lex talionis*) literally and supported physical punishment and the death penalty (instead of a monetary settlement)
- E. Another area of theological dispute was predestination vs. free will. Of the three groups mentioned by Josephus
 - 1. the Essenes affirmed a kind of determinism
 - 2. the Sadducees placed an emphasis on human free will (cf. *Antiquities* 13:5:9; *Wars* 2:8:14)
 - 3. the Pharisees held somewhat of a balancing position between the other two
- F. In one sense the conflicts between the two groups (i.e., Sadducees – Pharisees) mirrored the tension between priests and prophets in the OT.

Another tension arose from the fact that the Sadducees represented the social and landed gentry. They were the aristocrats (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 13:10:6; 18:1:4-5; 20:9:1), while the Pharisees and scribes were the scholars and pious among the people of the land. This tension could be characterized as the temple in Jerusalem vs. the local synagogues throughout the land.

Another tension may have represented the Sadducean rejection of the influence of Zoroastrianism on Pharisaic theology. Example: a highly developed angelology, a dualism between YHWH and Satan and an elaborate view of the afterlife in glowing physical terms. These excesses by the Essenes and Pharisees caused a reaction in the Sadducees. They return to the conservative position of Moses-only theology in an attempt to thwart the speculations of other Jewish groups.

III. Sources of Information

- A. Josephus is the chief source of information about the Sadducees. He was biased both by his commitment to the Pharisees and his interests in portraying a positive image of Jewish life to the Romans.
- B. The other source of information is the rabbinical literature. However, here, too, a strong bias is evident. The Sadducees denied the relevance and authority of the Oral Tradition of the Elders (i.e., the Talmud). These Pharisaic writings obviously describe their opponents in negative, possibly exaggerated (i.e., straw man, tactics) ways.
- C. There are no known writings of Sadducees themselves which have survived. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 all documents and influence of the priestly elite were destroyed.

They wanted to maintain regional peace and the only way to do that in the first century was to cooperate with Rome (cf. John 11:48-50).

▣ **“he inquired of them”** This is IMPERFECT TENSE meaning (1) he asked repeatedly or (2) he began to ask.

2:6 This was an allusion to Micah 5:2. It was not an exact quote from the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint. This specific prophecy gives strong evidence for the inspiration of the Bible. Micah wrote approximately 750 years before Christ’s birth yet he predicted the small village where the Messiah would unexpectedly be born. The most powerful empirical evidence for an inspired Bible is predictive prophecy which is unique to Scripture!

▣ **“Who will shepherd My people Israel”** This line from the composite quote was added from II Sam. 5:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:7-12

⁷Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found *Him*, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.” ⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood *over the place* where the Child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

2:7

NASB “determined from them the exact time the star appeared”
NKJV “determined from them what time the star appeared”
NRSV “learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared”
TEV “and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared”
NJB “He asked them the exact date on which the star appeared”

Herod was interested in the age of the child. Since it took the Magi many months to travel from Persia, Jesus was at least one or two years of age at this time.

2:9

NASB “the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them, until it came and stood over *the place* where the Child was”
NKJV “the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was”
NRSV “and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was”
TEV “and it went ahead of them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was”
NJB “the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was”

Presuppositions determine interpretation. I believe in the supernatural, although I cannot always explain why or how. The star moved and stopped! It must not have been so spectacular that many others saw it or recognized its significance. These men were trained in what to expect in the night sky. This phenomena did not fit a standard pattern. Therefore, it was not solely a natural phenomenon. This mixture of the natural and supernatural is similar to the plagues on Egypt.

The wise men did not come the same time as the shepherds. It has always surprised me that Matthew, writing to Jews, mentions Gentiles coming (saw the star) and Luke, writing to Gentiles, mentions Jewish shepherds coming (heard the angels). The theological truth is obvious—everyone is welcome to come (Gentiles, outcast Jews)!

2:10 “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” Why did they rejoice?

1. their search was over
2. the star continued to guide them
3. there is a spiritual component to their search (cf. v. 11); they found their new king and lord!

The intensive nature of this phrase leads one to option #3.

2:11 “the house” Obviously some time (up to two years) had passed from the time of the birth. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were living in their own house.

▣ **“the Child”** The Greek term (*paidion*) used here was not the usual term for “infant” (*brephos*, cf. Luke 1:41,44; 2:12,16), but “toddler” (cf. Luke 2:40; Matt. 18:2). There was a lengthy period of time between the visit of the shepherds and the wise men.

▣ **“gold, frankincense, and myrrh”** Because three gifts were presented, tradition has asserted that there were three wise men. Tertullian even went so far as to assert that they were the kings mentioned in Isa. 60:3. Much effort has been spent to interpret the significance of the gifts, but what is known definitely is that these gifts were expensive and were used by royalty. It is possible they are fulfillment of Isa. 49:23 or Ps. 72:10-12.

2:12 “having been warned by God in a dream” God spoke to these magi just as He revealed His will to Mary and Joseph in a dream (cf. 1:13,19). They were spiritually sensitive men.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:13

¹³Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.

2:13 “an angel of the Lord” See note at 1:20.

▣ **“Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him”** The folly of evil men can be clearly seen in their attempts to thwart the will of God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTRUCTION (*APOLLUMI*)

This term has a wide semantic field, which has caused great confusion in relation to the theological concepts of eternal judgment vs. annihilation. The basic literal meaning is from *apo* plus *ollumi*, to ruin, to destroy.

The problem comes in this term’s figurative usages. This can be clearly seen in Louw and Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based On Semantic Domains*, vol. 2, p. 30. It lists several meanings of this term.

1. destroy (e.g., Matt. 10:28; Luke 5:37; John 10:10; 17:12; Acts 5:37; Rom. 9:22 from vol. 1, p. 232)
2. fail to obtain (e.g., Matt. 10:42, vol. 1, p. 566)
3. lose (e.g., Luke 15:8, vol. 1, p. 566)
4. unaware of location (e.g., Luke 15:4, vol. 1, p. 330)
5. die (e.g., Matt. 10:39, vol. 1, p. 266)

Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 394, tries to delineate the different usages by listing four meanings.

1. to destroy or kill (e.g., Matt. 2:13; 27:20; Mark 3:6; 9:22; Luke 6:9; I Cor. 1:19)
2. to lose or suffer loss from (e.g., Mark 9:41; Luke 15:4,8)
3. to perish (e.g., Matt. 26:52; Mark 4:38; Luke 11:51; 13:3,5,33; 15:17; John 6:12,27; I Cor. 10:9-10)
4. to be lost (e.g., Matt. 5:29-30; Mark 2:22; Luke 15: 4,6,24,32; 21:18; Acts 27:34)

Kittel then says:

“in general we may say that #2 and #4 underlie statements relating to this world as in the Synoptics, whereas #1 and #3 underlie those relating to the next world, as in Paul and John” (p. 394).

Herein lies the confusion. The term has such a wide semantic usage that different NT authors use it in a variety of ways. I like Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 275-277. He relates the term to those humans who are morally

destroyed and waiting eternal separation from God versus those humans who know Christ and have eternal life in Him. The latter group is “saved,” while the former group is destroyed.

I personally do not think that this term denotes annihilation. The term “eternal” is used of both eternal punishment and eternal life in Matt. 25:46. To depreciate one is to depreciate both!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:14-15

¹⁴So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. ¹⁵He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.”

2:15 “Out of Egypt I called My Son” Hosea 11:1 is the source of this prophetic quote. In the OT “son” referred either to Israel, the King, or the Messiah. The plural “sons” usually referred to angels.

Hosea 11:1 in context referred to the Exodus. This then is a play on the word “son,” originally referring to Israel. Matthew alone records this incident. It is impossible to construct an exact chronology of the early life of Jesus from the Gospels. Egypt was home to a large Jewish community. Maybe this is symbolic of a second exodus or deliverance.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:16-18

¹⁶Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. ¹⁷Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled:

**¹⁸“A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH,
WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING,
RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN;
AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED,
BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE.”**

2:16 “slew all the male children. . .two years old and under” Bethlehem was a small village, so probably few babies were involved in the slaughter. The phrase “two years old and under,” reinforces the age of Jesus as a toddler, not an infant, at the time of the Magi’s visit.

2:18 “Ramah” Verse 18 is a quote from Jer. 31:15, but it relates to Gen. 48:7. Rachel, the mother of Joseph, was associated with the Northern Ten Tribes, while her other son, Benjamin, was associated with Judah. In this one mother both houses of Israel are joined. The city of Ramah (6 miles north of Jerusalem) was the collection point for the deportation of the Northern Ten Tribes under Sargon II of Assyria in 722 B.C. Symbolically Rachel is again weeping over her lost children.



NASB “weeping and great mourning”
NKJV “lamentation, weeping and great mourning”
NRSV “wailing and loud lamentation”
TEV “sound of bitter weeping”
NJB “lamentation and bitter weeping”

This is an allusion to Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel, who had children, one of whom would be part of the northern ten tribes (after the united monarchy split in 922 B.C.) and one in the southern tribes. She is depicted as weeping over the exile of her sons (cf. Jer. 31:15, referring to the exile of Israel in 722 B.C. and Judah in 586 B.C.). In this context her grief is a metaphor for the death of the children of Bethlehem by Herod.

Some uncial Greek manuscripts have one VERB, “weeping” (i.e., Ν, Β, Ζ); others add “mourning,” which comes from the LXX of Jer. 31:15 (i.e., C, D, L, W). As with so many of these manuscript variants, it makes little difference in understanding the meaning of the verse.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:19-23

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ²⁰“Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.” ²¹So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning

over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee,²³ and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

2:19 “an angel of the Lord” See note at 1:20.

2:22 “Archelaus” Archelaus was another cruel member of the Herod family whom Joseph did not trust. He ruled the southern part of Herod the Great’s territories (Judah, Samaria, and Idumea) from 4 B.C. - A.D. 6 when the Romans banished him to Gaul because of his cruelty.

2:23 “He shall be called a Nazarene” The village where Jesus grew up was called Nazareth. It is not mentioned in the OT, the Talmud, or in Josephus. It apparently was not settled until the time of John Hyrcanus (i.e., Hasmonaen), who ruled from 134-104 B.C. The presence of Joseph and Mary from this village implies that a clan of David’s line settled here.

There may be an etymological connection between the names Nazareth and the Messianic title “Branch,” which is *netzer* in Hebrew (cf. Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Rev. 5:5; 22:16). This interpretation is evidenced by the fact that no prophet ever foretold of Jesus being born or raised in Nazareth, but they did predict the coming of a special anointed Davidic king (i.e., Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7; 11:1-5; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14, see Special Topic at 8:20).

It was apparently a term of reproach because of its location far from Jerusalem in a Gentile area (cf. John 1:46 and Acts 24:5, even though this, too, was prophecy cf. Isa. 9:1). This may be why it was included on the board above Jesus on the cross (i.e., Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews).

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

There are several different Greek terms that the NT uses to precisely designate which Jesus they are addressing.

A. NT Terms

1. Nazareth - the city in Galilee (cf. Luke 1:26; 2:4,39,51; 4:16; Acts 10:38). This city is not mentioned in contemporary sources, but has been found in later inscriptions.

For Jesus to be from Nazareth was not a compliment (cf. John 1:46). The sign over Jesus’ cross which included this place name was a sign of Jewish contempt.

2. *Nazarēnos* - seems to also refer to a geographical location (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).
3. *Nazōraios* - may refer to a city, but could also be a play on the Hebrew Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*, BDB 666, and related terms, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5 [BDB 855]; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Luke uses this of Jesus in 18:37 and Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9.
4. Related to #3, *nāzir* (BDB 634) means one consecrated by means of a vow.

B. Historical usages outside the NT. This designation has other historical usages.

1. It denoted a Jewish (pre-Christian) heretical group.
2. It was used in Jewish circles to describe believers in Christ (cf. Acts 24:5,14; 28:22).
3. It became the regular term to denote believers in the Syrian (Aramaic) churches. “Christian” was used in the Greek churches to denote believers.
4. Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the Pharisees reorganized at Jamnia and instigated a formal separation between the synagogue and the church. An example of the type of curse formulas against Christians is found in “the Eighteen Benedictions” from *Berakoth* 28b-29a, which calls the believers “Nazarenes.”

“May the Nazarenes and heretics disappear in a moment; they shall be erased from the book of life and not be written with the faithful.”

C. Author’s Opinion

I am surprised by so many spellings of the term, although I know this is not unheard of in the OT as “Joshua” has several different spellings in Hebrew. Yet, because of the (1) close association with the Messianic term “Branch”; (2) combined with the negative connotation; (3) little or no contemporary attestation to the city of Nazareth in Galilee; and (4) it coming from the mouth of a demon in an eschatological sense (i.e., “Have you come to destroy us?”), I remain uncertain as to its precise meaning.

For a full bibliography of studies of this word group by scholarship see Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p. 346.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Who were the wise men? Were they Jewish?
2. What kind of star was it?
3. How old was Jesus when the Magi came?
4. How does Micah 5:2-6 relate to the validity of the Bible as a supernatural book?
5. Do these Old Testament quotes seem to be out of context? Why?

MATTHEW 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Preaching of John the Baptist 3:1-6	John the Baptist Prepares the Way 3:1-12	Activity of John the Baptist 3:1-6	The Preaching of John the Baptist 3:1-3 3:4-6	The Proclamation of John the Baptist 3:1-12 (3b)
3:7-12		3:7-10 3:11-12	3:7-12	
The Baptism of Jesus 3:13-17	John Baptizes Jesus 3:13-17	Jesus' Baptism 3:13-17	The Baptism of Jesus 3:13-14 3:15a 3:15b-17	Jesus is Baptized 3:13-15 3:16-17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO MATTHEW 3:1-17

- A. Between Matthew 2 and 3 are the silent years of Jesus' childhood. Except for one experience at the age of twelve, details about Jesus' childhood are not known. There has been much interest and speculation by believers. Several extra-canonical pseudepigraphic gospels record other specific events, which are supposed to have occurred during His adolescence, but these years are simply unrecorded in the Bible.
- B. The parallel passages for Matt. 3:1-12 are Mark 1:3-8, Luke 3:1-17, and John. 1:6-8, 19-28.
- C. The parallel passages for Matt. 3:13-17 are Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John. 1:31-34.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-6

¹Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ²"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,
"MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!"

⁴Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

3:1 "in those days" This is a transition idiom. It does not attempt to locate a specific time.

▣ **"John"** This was the shortened form of the name "Johanan," which meant "YHWH is gracious" or "gift of YHWH." His name was significant because, like all biblical names, it pointed toward God's purpose for his life. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. There had not been a prophet in Israel since Malachi, around 430 B.C. His very presence caused great spiritual excitement among the people.

▣ **"the Baptist"** Baptism was a common rite among Jews of the first and second century.

1. preparation for worship at the temple (i.e., cleansing rite)
2. the self-baptism of proselytes

If someone from a Gentile background were to become a full child of Israel, he had to accomplish three tasks:

- (a) circumcision, if male
- (b) self-baptism by immersion, in the presence of three witnesses
- (c) sacrifice in the Temple

In sectarian groups of first century Palestine, such as the Essenes, baptism was apparently a common, repeated experience. However, to mainline Judaism, John's baptism of repentance would have been humiliating for a natural child of Abraham to undergo a Gentile ritual.

Some OT precedents can be cited for ceremonial washing.

1. as a symbol of spiritual cleansing (cf. Isa. 1:16)
2. as a regular ritual performed by the priests (cf. Exod. 19:10; Lev. 15)

It should be noted that all other baptisms in first century Jewish culture were self-administered. Only John's called for him to administer this rite. Apparently John made a spiritual evaluation of the spiritual qualifications which denoted a personal repentance (cf. vv. 7-10).

▣ **"came preaching in the wilderness of Judea"** "Wilderness" was uninhabited pasture land, not an arid desert. John not only dressed like Elijah (cf. II Kgs. 1:8), he also lived in the same arid setting. John was claiming a prophetic position (cf. Zech. 13:4). His nomadic life resembled the wilderness wandering of Israel, which was an idealized time of an intimate relationship between YHWH and Israel.

Parallel passages suggest the geographical location of John's preaching was somewhere close to the city of Jericho just north of the Dead Sea, near the Jordan River.

3:2 "Repent," This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE which is an ongoing command. Without repentance, it is impossible to be saved (cf. Luke 13:3). The Hebrew equivalent meant "to change one's actions," while the Greek word meant "to change one's mind." It implied a willingness to change. Salvation requires faith in Christ and repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). John's ministry was one of spiritual preparation for the coming of Jesus the Messiah and His message.

Jesus also called on His hearers to repent (cf. 4:17; Mark 1:15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE

Repentance is a covenant requirement (along with faith) of both the Old (cf. *Nacham*, I Kgs. 8:47; *Shuv*, I Kgs. 8:48; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30; Joel 2:12-13; Zech. 1:3-4) and the New Covenants (cf. John the Baptist, Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3,8; Jesus, Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; 2:17; Luke 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3; Peter, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 11:18; II Pet. 3:9; Paul, Acts 13:24; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; II Cor. 2:9-10).

But what is repentance? Is it sorrow? Is it a cessation of sin? The best chapter in the NT for understanding the differing connotations is II Corinthians 7:8-11, where three related, but different, Greek terms are used:

1. “sorrow” (*lupeō*, cf. vv. 8[twice], 9[thrice], 10[twice], 11). It means grief or distress and has a theologically neutral connotation
2. “repentance” (*metanoēō*, cf. vv. 9,10). It is a compound from “after” and “mind,” i.e., a new mind, a new way of thinking, a new attitude toward life and God. This is true repentance.
3. “regret” (*metamelomai*, cf. vv. 8[twice], 10). It is a compound from “after” and “care.” It is used of Judas in Matt. 27:3 and Esau in Heb. 12:16-17. It implies sorrow over the consequences, not over the acts.

Repentance and faith are the required covenant acts (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21). There are some texts which imply that God gives repentance (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25). But most of the texts see this as a necessary human response to God’s offer of a free salvation.

These definitions of both the Hebrew and Greek terms are required to grasp the full meaning of repentance; the Hebrew demands “a change of action,” while the Greek demands “a change of mind.” The saved person receives a new mind and heart. He thinks differently and lives differently. Instead of “What’s in it for me?” the question is now “What is God’s will?” Repentance is not an emotion that fades, nor a total sinlessness, but a new relationship with the Holy One that transforms the believer into a holy one.

▣ **“for the kingdom of heaven”** Matthew, writing to Jews, is sensitive to their aversion to using God’s name, so he uses a circumlocution, “kingdom of heaven” (cf. 4:17), whereas the other Synoptic Gospels use “kingdom of God” (Matthew used “kingdom of heaven” 32 times and “kingdom of God” only 4).

The Kingdom of God refers, in an OT sense, to the reign of God, not to a geographical area. God is King of creation! See Special Topic at 4:17.



NASB, NKJV “is at hand”

NRSV “has come near”

TEV “is near!”

NJB “is close at hand”

This is a PERFECT TENSE VERB which describes the culmination and continuing results of a process started earlier. The nearness of the kingdom is stressed in the Gospels (cf. 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9-11; 11:20; 21:31). “Near” can be understood in one of two ways: (1) near in location or (2) near in time (cf. Matt. 12:28). This is the tension of “the already” and “not yet” of the New Age. It describes the time between the two comings of Christ. It is the overlapping of two Jewish ages.

3:3 “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS” This is a quote from Isa. 40:3 in the Septuagint (LXX). The same idea was also reflected in Isa. 57:14 and 62:10, and Mal. 3:1. John saw himself as being the preparer for the coming of the Messiah (cf. John. 1:23). This fulfilled the predictions concerning Elijah found in the Mal. 3:1 and 4:5. All four Gospels record these words of John (cf. Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23).

▣ **“MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT”** These phrases are poetic parallels. The second phrase was usually a metaphor for preparing for a royal visit. It is significant to note that in Isa. 40:3 the term “the LORD” referred to YHWH, which in this quote referred to Jesus of Nazareth. The NT authors use several literary ways to assert the Deity of Jesus.

1. OT titles for YHWH applied to Jesus
2. OT actions of YHWH seen in Jesus
3. OT quotes relating to YHWH now used of Jesus
4. both God and Jesus as the grammatical OBJECT of one VERB or one PREPOSITION

“Straight” was often used metaphorically for the character of God (similar to “right,” “righteous,” “just,” “justify”). Most of the Hebrew as well as Greek words for sin reflect a deviation from a standard or “measuring reed.” The standard is God Himself (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; Matt. 5:48; 20:7,26; I Pet. 1:16).

3:4 Compare this to the clothing and lifestyle of Elijah recorded in II Kgs. 1:8 and reflected in Mal. 4:5. Camel-hair clothes were the cheapest available. John was accustomed to living in a desert and eating the diet available there. Locusts were a food allowed by the Mosaic legislation (cf. Lev. 11:22). The term was also used of the beans of the locust, or carob, tree.

3:5 The Jewish people of Judea saw John as a prophet (cf. Matt. 21:26). This verse shows the great hunger for God of the first century Jews. Even the religious leaders came. This verse is obviously a hyperbole, but it communicates the religious fervor which John caused.

3:6 “as they confessed their sins” The Greek term “confess” [*homologeo*] meant “to say the same thing.” It implied both a public confession and a profession of faith (cf. Acts 19:18; James 5:16). The people as a whole recognized the need for spiritual renewal. OT precedents are found in Lev. 5:5 and 26:40. See special topic on confession at 10:32.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7-10

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; ⁹and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

3:7 “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them” John’s statements to these religious leaders are shocking in their intensity (i.e., “you brood of vipers,” cf. Luke 3:7; and used by Jesus in Matt. 12:34; 23:33). Several theories have been advanced about why he reacted so strongly.

1. he saw them as Satanic agents
2. he saw them as spiritually dead to the true faith
3. he saw them as fakes
4. he saw them as being manipulative leaders whose public professions did not match their attitudes and motives

It is significant that these leaders were considering baptism themselves. Possibly they wanted to identify with the multitude and thereby retain their leadership status. John recognized their true motives.

For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees see Special Topic at 22:15 and for Sadducees see Special Topic at 22:23.

▣ **“to flee from the wrath to come”** From the parallel of Mal. 3:2-3, it is clear that judgment was coming upon Israel because of her violations of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). Amos called it “the day of YHWH” (i.e., Amos 5:18), which inaugurated the New Age of Righteousness or the Messianic Kingdom. Here John confirms Malachi’s judgment motif. Note that John’s message was not national or corporate like Malachi’s, but individual (cf. Ezek. 18; 33; Jer. 31:31-34).

3:8

NASB “bear fruit in keeping with repentance”

NKJV, NRSV “bear fruit worthy of repentance”

TEV “Do the things that will show that you have turned from sins”

NJB “But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit”

Even in the OT, faith was more than simply ritual or membership in a national group (cf. Deut. 10:12, 16; Matt. 7:15-23; Rom. 2:28-29). Faith was and is both corporate and individual, both faith and works (cf. James 2:14-26)! Their lives must show their new relationship with God (cf. 7:16-20; 12:33; Luke 6:43-44; Acts 26:20). For “repentance” see full note at 4:17.

3:9 “and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’” This same dependence on national descent can be seen in John. 8:31ff. and the Talmud’s “Sanhedrin” 10:1. The Jews believed that the merit of Abraham’s faith was applied to them. However, Mal. 3:2ff. and 4:1 show that judgment would come upon the Jews for their violations of the Covenant (also note Matt. 8:11-12). Lifestyle faith, not lineage, is the way to recognize a true child of Abraham (cf. Rom. 2:28-29).

▣ **“stones. . . children”** This was a word play using the Aramaic words for “stones” (*ebnayya*) and “children” (*benyya*), which sounded similar. See G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of The Bible*, p. 48.

3:10 “the axe is already laid at the root of the trees” This judgment motif is similar to Malachi’s. A parallel can be seen in Isa. 10:33-34. One reason John the Baptist wondered whether Jesus was really the Messiah was because His message was not one primarily of judgment as John anticipated.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:11-12

¹¹As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

3:11

NASB

“I am not fit to remove His sandals”

NKJV, NRSV

“whose sandals I am not worthy to carry”

TEV

“I am not good enough even to carry his sandals”

This term may be translated two ways (1) following the usage in the Egyptian papyri, “to take off and carry a visitor’s shoes to the storage place” or (2) to “untie and remove.” Both acts were traditionally done by slaves. Not even the students of rabbis were asked to perform this task. This was an idiomatic statement of John’s understanding of the superiority of Jesus.

▣ **“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”** Only one PREPOSITION and one ARTICLE in the Greek text link the Holy Spirit and fire, implying that they are parallel (note Isa. 4:4). However, as in Luke 3:17, fire may refer to judgment, while the Holy Spirit referred to cleansing or to purity. It is possible both refer to the Pentecostal experience of Acts 2. Some have seen this as a two-fold baptism: one baptism for the righteous and one for the wicked, or Jesus baptizing as Savior or as Judge. Others have related it to conversion before Pentecost and the special endowment at Pentecost. I Corinthians 12:13 implies that Jesus is the baptizer “in,” “with,” or “by” the Spirit (cf. Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 2:33).

3:12 “but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” The metaphor Jesus used to describe the eternal judgment of God (cf. Isa. 66:24) was *Gehenna* (contraction of “the valley of the sons of Hinnom”), the garbage dump located south of Jerusalem (cf. Mark 9:48; Matt. 18:8; 24:41; Jude 7). A Canaanite fire and fertility god had been worshiped (an activity known as *molech*) at Gehenna in Israel’s past by sacrificing of children (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 21:6; 23:10). This aspect of eternal judgment is shocking to modern readers, but it was evident (rabbinical teaching) and expressive to first century Jews. Jesus did not come as judge, but all who reject Him will be judged (cf. Luke 3:16-17, John. 3:17-21). A possible OT precedent for this metaphor was Isaiah 34 which described God’s judgment on Edom.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Pro. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
8. Protection (cf. Zech. 2:5)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse depending on the context.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:13-17

¹³Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴But John tried to prevent Him, saying “I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he permitted Him. ¹⁶After being baptized,

Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, ¹⁷and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

3:13 “Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him” The Gospels differ in their early chronologies of Jesus’ ministries in Galilee and Judea. It seems that there was an early Judean ministry and a later one, but all four Gospels’ chronologies must be harmonized in order to see this early Judean visit (cf. John. 2:13-4:3).

Why Jesus was baptized has always been a concern for believers because John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. Jesus did not need forgiveness for He was sinless (cf. John 8:46; Acts 3:14; Rom. 8:3; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5). The theories have been as follows:

1. it was an example for believers to follow
2. it was His identification with believers’ need
3. it was His ordination and equipping for ministry
4. it was a symbol of His redemptive task
5. it was His approval of the ministry and message of John the Baptist
6. it was prophetic of His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

Whatever the reason, this was a defining moment in Jesus’ life. Although it does not imply that Jesus became the Messiah at this point (adoptionism, cf. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* by Bart D. Ehrman, pp. 47-118), it held great significance for Him.

3:14 “But John tried to prevent Him” This is an IMPERFECT TENSE VERB. Many commentators have struggled with why John tried again and again to prevent Jesus from being baptized. Some theories are:

1. some see this as John having previous knowledge of Jesus, but this conflicts with John 1:31,33
2. some see this as John acknowledging that Jesus was a righteous Jew, but not that He was the Messiah
3. in modern Near Eastern culture one must insist three times to be considered sincere

3:15 “But Jesus answering said to him” Verses 14-15 are found only in the Gospel of Matthew. They do not provide enough information to completely answer the question of verse 14. It is certain, however, that the baptism had meaning both for Jesus and John and that it was God’s will for both their lives.

3:16

NASB “Jesus came up immediately from the water”
NKJV “came up immediately from the water”
NRSV “just as he came up from the water”
TEV “Jesus came up out of the water”
NJB “he at once came up from the water”

This verse has been used by those who support immersion as the only biblical mode of baptism to prove that Jesus was immersed. However, it could be understood to mean that He went up on the bank out of the water (see Michael Magill, *New Testament TransLine*, p. 9, #35 and 36).

▣ **“the heavens were opened”** This is a metaphorical way of showing God’s will (cf. Isa. 22:22; Rev. 3:7). Only God can open heaven (cf. Mal. 3:10; Rev. 4:1). God opens blind eyes (i.e., 9:27-31; 12:22-23; 20:29-34; note Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7,16) and answers prayer (cf. 7:7,8).

It is surely possible that this metaphor is from Isa. 64:1.

▣ **“and he saw”** The Greek text has only the PRONOUN “he,” which could refer to either John or Jesus. Some ancient Greek uncial manuscripts (א¹, C, D, L, and W), some ancient translations (the Vulgate and Coptic), and the Greek texts used by early church fathers (Irenaeus, Eusebius, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine) imply that only Jesus saw the dove coming, in the phrase “the heavens were opened *to Him*.” However, the dove was also a sign to John to point out the true Messiah (cf. John. 1:32).

▣ **“the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him”** This is recorded in all four Gospels (Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32). Was it like a dove or was it a real dove? The question cannot be fully answered (cf. Luke 3:22). This is related to Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 48:16; 61:1. The specific form of the Spirit is not as significant as the Spirit Himself coming upon Jesus. This does not imply that before this time Jesus did not have the Holy Spirit, but that this was a special inauguration of His Messianic task.

The symbolism of the dove has been discussed a great deal as to its origin and purpose.

1. it goes back to Genesis 1, where the Spirit brooded over the waters
2. it goes back to Genesis 8, where Noah sent a dove out from the ark

3. the rabbis said that the dove was a symbol of Israel (cf. Ps. 68:13; Hos. 7:11; 11:11; The Talmud *San.* 95A and *Ber. R.* 39; II Esdras 5:26)
4. Tasker, in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series*, says that it refers to gentleness, which is to be contrasted with the fire in verse 11 (cf. Rom 11:22; Matt. 11:29; 25:40).

3:17 “a voice out of the heavens” This phrase is significant for several reasons. During the inter-biblical period, when there was no true prophet, the rabbis said that God confirmed His choice and decisions by means of a *bath kol*, which was a voice from heaven. Also, this voice was a sign from God in a cultural way these first century Jews could understand (cf. Acts 10:9-16; 11:7-9; Rev. 1:10; 4:1; 10:8; 11:12). It was apparently as meaningful to Jesus as it was to John and possibly to the crowd which observed His baptism.

The combination of the quote “My Son in whom I am delighted” links the royal Messianic, Davidic emphasis of Ps. 2:7 with the Suffering Servant motif of Isa. 42:1. Here, in this quote, the royal Messiah is linked to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.

This phrase, “My Beloved Son” (also note 17:5) is the possible origin of the phrase “Son of God,” which is found in Matt. 4:3, 6. It is significant to note that in Mark 1:11 it was translated “You are My beloved Son,” which showed that the Father directed His words to Jesus, while in Matthew 3, it was translated in such a way as to indicate that God spoke to John and the crowd. See Special Topic: Son of God at 27:54.

Verses 16-17 involve all three persons of the Trinity. The term “trinity” is not in the Bible, but the concept is surely scriptural. The fact that the Bible asserts the oneness of God (monotheism, Deut. 6:4) must be balanced with the deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit. There is one divine essence and three eternal personal manifestations. The three divine personalities are often mentioned in the same context (i.e., Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Acts 2:33-34; Rom. 8:9-10; I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Eph. 1:3-14; 4:4-6; Titus 3:4-6; I Pet. 1:2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

The term, “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

1. the Gospels
 - a. Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19
 - b. John 14:26
2. Acts - Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
3. Paul
 - a. Romans 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Corinthians 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Corinthians 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Galatians 4:4-6
 - e. Ephesians 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - f. I Thessalonians 1:2-5
 - g. II Thessalonians 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6
4. Peter - I Peter 1:2
5. Jude - vv. 20-21

It is hinted at in the OT

1. Use of plurals for God
 - a. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
 - b. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
 - c. “One” in the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 is PLURAL (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)
2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of Deity
 - a. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 - c. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - d. Zechariah 3:1-2
3. God and Spirit are separate, Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Psalm 45:6-7; 110:1; Zechariah 2:8-11; 10:9-12

5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zechariah 12:10
6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers

1. Tertullian - subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen - subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius - denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism - believed in a successive manifestation of God

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material:

1. The full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, was affirmed in 325 A.D. by the Council of Nicea.
2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381).
3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine's work *De Trinitate*.
There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Of which OT prophet does John the Baptist remind you? Why?
2. Define repentance.
3. Why does Matthew use the phrase "kingdom of heaven" and Mark and Luke use "kingdom of God"?
4. What is the significance of the quote from Isaiah 40 (v. 3)?
5. Why did the religious leaders want to be baptized? What did baptism symbolize in that day?
6. Why is the emphasis of John the Baptist's message on judgment and not on salvation?
7. Why was Jesus baptized with a baptism of repentance?
8. What is the significance of God speaking out of heaven? Identify the two OT sources of the Father's quote and explain their significance.

MATTHEW 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Temptation of Jesus 4:1-11	Satan Tempts Jesus 4:1-11	Jesus' Temptation 4:1-4 4:5-7 4:8-11	The Temptation of Jesus 4:1-3 4:4 4:5-6 4:7 4:8-9 4:10 4:11	Testing in the Wilderness 4:1-11 (4b) (6b) (7b)
The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry 4:12-16 4:17	Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry 4:12-17	Beginnings of Jesus' Activity in Galilee 4:12-17	Jesus Begins His Work in Galilee 4:12-16 4:17	Return to Galilee 4:12-17 (15-16)
The Calling of Four Fishermen 4:18-22	Four Fishermen Called as Disciples 4:18-22	4:18-22	Jesus Calls Four Fishermen 4:18-20 4:21-22	The First Four Disciples Are Called 4:18-20 4:21-22
Ministering to a Great Multitude 4:23-25	Jesus Heals a Great Multitude 4:23-25	4:23-25	Jesus Teaches, Preaches, and Heals 4:23-25	Jesus Proclaims the Message and Heals the Sick 4:23-25

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-25

- A. It is extremely significant that immediately following God's affirmation of the Messianic Sonship of Jesus, the Spirit "drives" Jesus into the desert to be tempted (cf. Mark 1:12). Temptation was in the will of God for the Son. Temptation can be defined as the enticement of a God-given desire beyond God-given bounds. Temptation is not a sin. This temptation was initiated by God. The agent was Satan (cf. II Kgs. 22:13-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3).
- B. It is also significant that in this chapter an Israel/Christ typology is developed. Jesus is seen as the "Ideal Israelite" who fulfills the task which the nation was originally given (cf. Isa. 41:8-9; 42:1,19; 43:10). Both are called "Son" (cf. Hos. 11:1). This explains some of the ambiguity which is found in the Servant Songs of Isa.41-53 in the shift from the PLURAL to the SINGULAR (Isa. 52:13-15 in the LXX). This Israel/Christ typology is similar to the Adam/Christ typology found in Rom. 5:12-21.
- C. Could Christ really have sinned? This is really the mystery of the two natures of Christ. The temptation was real. Jesus, in His human nature, could have violated the will of God. This was not a puppet show. Jesus is truly human though without a fallen nature (cf. Heb. 4:15; 7:26). In this respect He was like Adam. We see this same human nature in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed three times for another way of redemption other than the cross (cf. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42). This tendency is the essence of each one of Satan's temptations in Matthew 4. How will Jesus use His Messianic gifts to redeem mankind? Any way other than substitutionary atonement was the temptation!
- D. Jesus must have told this experience to His disciples later because He was alone in the desert. This implies that this account not only teaches us about Christ's temptation, but also helps us in our temptations.
- E. It must be remembered that the Bible is not a chronological, cause and effect, western history. Near Eastern history is selective, but not inaccurate. The Gospels are not biographies but gospel tracts written to different groups of people for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship, not just history. Often Gospel writers selected, adapted, and arranged the material for their own theological and literary purposes (cf. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 94-112, 113-134). There are several good illustrations of Matthew's tendencies to structure his Gospel.
1. He puts Jesus' teachings together in one sermon (chapters 5-7), as he does His miracles and parables.
 2. He has a numerical propensity for (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 657)
 - a. threes
 - (1) three temptations, 4:1-11
 - (2) three acts of Jewish righteousness, 6:1-18
 - (3) three healings, 8:1-15
 - (4) three "fear nots," 10:26,28,31
 - (5) three days, 12:40
 - (6) three questions, 22:15-40
 - (7) three prayers of Jesus to the Father while in Gethsemane, 26:39-44
 - (8) three days to rebuild the temple, 27:40 (#5)
 - (9) Jesus will rise in three days, 27:63 (#5,8)
 - b. sevens
 - (1) demons, 12:45
 - (2) loaves, 15:34,36
 - (3) baskets, 15:37
 - (4) forgiveness to a brother, 18:21,22 (seven, seventy-times seven)
 - (5) seven brothers, 22:25
 - (6) seven woes, 23:13,15,16,23,25,27,29
- Mark (the first written Gospel, used by Matthew and Luke) has "seven" for #2, #3, and #5, which shows the number was not a structure unique to Matthew. It is difficult to know what was part of the tradition and what part Matthew's propensity for these numbers caused his structure.
- This does not mean to imply the Gospel writers falsified or made up events or words. The differences in the Gospels does not deny inspiration. It affirms eyewitness accounts.
- F. The parallels of Jesus' temptations are found in Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-4

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” ⁴But he answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

4:1 “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” This is an extremely significant verse in that it shows that God’s will for Jesus’ life was to face temptation (Heb. 5:8). This temptation experience related to how Jesus would use His Messianic powers to redeem mankind (the use of FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in vv. 3, 6).

☐ **“was led”** In the Mark 1:12 parallel we find the phrase “was driven by the Spirit.” This experience was necessary for Jesus (cf. Heb. 5:8).

☐ **“the wilderness”** This referred to the uninhabited pasture land near Jericho. This would have been the kind of territory in which Moses (cf. Exod. 34:28), Elijah (cf. I Kgs. 19:8) and John the Baptist lived (cf. Matt. 3:1).

☐ **“tempted”** Two terms in the Greek language describe a temptation or test. One has the connotation of “to test with a view toward strengthening” [*dokimazo*] and the other “to test with a view toward destruction” [*peirasmō*]. The term used here is the one for destruction (cf. Matt. 6:13; James 1:13-14). God will never tempt us to destruction, but He often tests us, with a view toward strengthening us (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; II Chr. 32:31; I Thess. 2:4; I Pet. 1:7; 4:12-16). Satan tempts to destroy!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

There are two Greek terms which have the idea of testing someone for a purpose.

1. *Dokimazō, dokimion, dokimasia*

This term is a metallurgist term for testing the genuineness of something (i.e., metaphorically someone) by fire. The fire reveals the true metal and burns off (i.e., purifying) the dross. This physical process became a powerful idiom for God and/or God, Satan, and/or humans testing others. This term is used only in a positive sense of testing with a view towards acceptance.

It is used in the NT of testing.

- a. oxen, Luke 14:19
- b. ourselves, I Cor. 11:28
- c. our faith, James 1:3
- d. even God, Heb. 3:9

The outcomes of these tests were assumed to be positive (cf. Rom. 1:28; 14:22; 16:10; II Cor. 10:18; 13:3; Phil. 2:27; I Pet. 1:7). Therefore, the term conveys the idea of someone examined and proved to be

- a. worthwhile
- b. good
- c. genuine
- d. valuable
- e. honored

2. *Peirazō, peirasmus*

This term has the connotation of examination for the purpose of fault finding or rejection. It is often used in connection with Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.

- a. It conveys the attempt to trap Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18,35; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2; Heb. 2:18).
- b. This term (*peirazō*) is used as a title for Satan in Matt. 4:3; I Thess. 3:5.
- c. It is used by Jesus to not test God (cf. Matt. 14:7; Luke 4:12). It also denotes the attempt to do something that has failed (cf. Acts 9:20; 20:21; Heb. 11:29).
- d. It is used in connection with the temptation and trials of believers (cf. I Cor. 7:5; 10:9,13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 3:5; Heb. 2:18; James 1:2,13,14; I Pet. 4:12; II Pet. 2:9).

▣ **“the devil”** In the Old Testament the title of the angelic being who gives mankind a choice is Satan (BDB 966), the accuser (cf. Mark 1:13). In the NT he becomes *diabolos* (following the LXX) or the devil, which meant slanderer, adversary, or tempter. In the OT he was a servant of God (cf. Job 1-2; II Kgs. 22:13-23; I Chr. 21:1; Zech. 3:1,2). However, by the time of the New Testament there was an intensification of evil and he has become the arch-enemy of God. One of the best books on the development of evil in the Bible is A. B. Davidson’s *Old Testament Theology*, published by T. and T. Clark, p. 300-06. See Special Topic at 4:5.

4:2 “after He had fasted” See Special Topic: Fasting at 6:16.

▣ **“forty days and forty nights”** Here again Matthew chose a motif from the OT of (1) Moses’ forty days and forty nights on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9; 10:10) and (2) Israel wandering in the wilderness for forty years (cf. Num. 14:26-35). Matthew saw Jesus as the New Law giver and deliverer (i.e., new exodus).

The term “forty” was used often in the Bible implying it could function both literally (40 years from Egypt to Canaan) and figuratively (the flood). The Hebrews used a lunar calendar. “Forty” implied a long, indefinite period of time longer than a lunar cycle, not exactly forty twenty-four periods.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 2. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 3. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
 - a. seven candlesticks, 1:13,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, 4:5
 - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
 - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, 11:13
 - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, 15:7
 - o. seven kings, 17:10
 - p. seven vials, 21:9
 4. Ten – completeness
 - a. use in Gospels:
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
 - b. use in Revelation:
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
 - c. multiples of 10 in Revelation:
 - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x1000, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
 5. Twelve – human organization
 - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)

- b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
 - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
 - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
6. Forty – number for time
- a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
 - b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life:
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
7. Seventy – round number for people
- a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
- 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
 - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

☐ **“He then became hungry”** Fasting involved the absence of food, not water. Some commentators see this as Satan waiting until the end of Jesus’ fast when He was weak and tired before approaching Him. Others believe that Satan came during the entire fast. The first option fits the context best.

This also shows the full humanity of the Spirit-filled, Spirit-sent Jesus.

4:3 “and the tempter” This is a PRESENT PARTICIPLE used as a SUBSTANTIVE of “to tempt” as in v. 1.

☐ **“came and said to Him”** These temptations could have been either mental or physical. Based on the fact that Satan will take Him to a high mountain to view all of the kingdoms of the earth in a single instant (Luke parallel), this was probably a vision, but still a personal confrontation between Jesus and Satan.

☐ **“If You are the Son of God”** Like verse 6, this is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true, at least from the point of view of the author; therefore, it should be translated “since” (instead of “if”) for English readers. Satan is not doubting Jesus’ Messiahship (i.e., God affirmation in 3:17), but was tempting Him to misuse or abuse His Messianic powers. This

grammatical form colors the interpretation of this entire temptation experience (cf. James Stewart's *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ*).

▣ **“command that these stones become bread”** Apparently these rocks in the Judean desert were shaped like loaves of baked bread used in first century Palestine. Satan was tempting Jesus to use His Messianic powers both to meet His personal needs and to win the allegiance of humans by feeding them. In the OT the Messiah was described as feeding the poor (cf. Isa. 58:6-7,10). These temptation experiences, to some extent, continued to occur during Jesus' ministry. The feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21) and of the four thousand (Matt. 15:29-33) showed how humans would, and did, abuse God's provision of physical food. This again is parallel to the problems of Israel's wilderness experience. Matthew saw a parallel between Moses and Jesus. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to perform many of the actions of Moses.

Satan's temptation functioned on two levels. The first was the Jewish expectation of the Messiah providing food like Moses (i.e., John 6). The second was the implication that if He was truly God's Son, the Messiah, let Him prove it by “speaking” His will. This obviously refers to creation by the spoken word (Genesis 1). Satan's test was

1. provide human food as Moses did
2. show your power by speaking a miraculous event (note the quote in v. 4b)

4:4 “It is written” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This was the standard idiomatic way of introducing an inspired quotation from the OT (cf. vv. 4,7,10), in this case, from Deut. 8:3 from the Septuagint (LXX). This particular quote relates to God providing manna to the children of Israel during the wilderness period:

All of Jesus' responses to Satan's temptations were quotes from Deuteronomy. This must have been one of His favorite books.

1. He quoted repeatedly from it during His temptation by Satan in the wilderness, Matt. 4:1-16; Luke 4:1-13.
2. It is possibly the outline behind the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7.
3. Jesus quoted Deut. 6:5 as the greatest commandment, Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28.
4. Jesus quoted this section of the OT (Genesis - Deuteronomy) most often because the Jews of His day considered it the most authoritative section of the canon.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:5-7

⁵Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; and ‘ON THEIR HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’”

⁷Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

4:5 “the devil” The Greek word, *Diabolos*, is used in the NT 37 times, while *Satanas* is used 36 times; both refer to one who accuses, which was his OT task. Matthew and Luke use *diabolos* for the temptation experience, while Mark uses *Satanos*. Why the change is uncertain. See Special Topic: Personal Evil following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness.
2. The concept of a personal arch enemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or English literature (i.e., Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan (BDB 966) or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. They become the origin of evil in rabbinical theology. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e., Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28, where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) says that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. There are two high gods of Persian (Zoroastrian) dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, good and evil. This dualism developed into a Judaic limited dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis proclaim. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Lk. 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

▣ **“took Him into the holy city”** This phrase “the holy city” is unique to Matthew and was a special designation for Jerusalem (cf. 27:53; Dan. 9:24; Neh. 11:1,18; Rev. 11:2). Matthew knew the Jews would understand this immediately as an allusion from the OT (cf. Isa. 48:2; 52:10; 64:10). The order of the temptation events in Matthew and Luke are different. The reason for this is uncertain. Possibly Matthew’s account is chronological (“then”), while Luke’s account restructures the order for climactic effect (“again”).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV **“had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple”**

TEV **“set him on the highest point of the temple”**

NJB **“set him on the parapet of the Temple”**

“Parapet” or “pinnacle” may be literally translated “wing.” This term could have meant (1) the outermost part of the Temple’s southeast corner of the outer wall, which overlooked the Kidron Valley or (2) the part of Herod’s Temple which overlooked the inner court. Because of the Jewish tradition that the Messiah was to appear suddenly in the Temple (cf. Mal. 3:1), this tradition became one of Satan’s temptations of how to win people’s allegiance by performing a miracle of jumping off and floating into the Temple area, possibly during a feast day.

4:6 “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his purposes (cf. v. 3). Satan quotes Ps. 91:11-12. Some have asserted that Satan misquoted this verse. Although he left out “in all your ways,” this quotation is in line with the Apostles’ use of the OT Scripture. The problem was not that Satan was misquoting the verse, but was misapplying it.

4:7 “Jesus said to him” Verse 7 is a quote from Deut. 6:16, which referred to Israel’s testing God at Massah during the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. Exod. 17:1-7). Israel, at this point, did not trust God to provide her basic needs, but demanded a miracle. The PRONOUN “you” in the quote relates to Israel, not Satan (cf. v. 10).

☐ **“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test”** The issue is the motive for the “test” (cf. I Cor. 10:9 [Numbers 21]; Acts 5:9; 15:10). Believers are called on to actively trust God’s promises (i.e., Josh. 1:56; Isa. 7:10-13; Mal. 3:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:8-11

⁸Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” ¹¹Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him.

4:8-9 This temptation implies a vision instead of an actual event. Compare Luke 4:5 which said “in a moment of time.” In either case, it was a real and personal temptation confronting Jesus.

There has been much discussion as to what Satan meant by his claim in v. 9: (1) does it imply that he owned all of the kingdoms of the earth? or (2) does it imply that he was simply trivializing the world’s sin by showing Jesus its splendor? Satan is called the “god of this world” (cf. John. 12:31; II Cor. 4:4) and ruler of this world (cf. Eph. 2:2; I John 5:19) and yet this world is owned by God who created and sustains it! The exact extent of Satan’s influence, ownership (cf. Luke 4:6), and free will (cf. Job 1-2; Zechariah 3) is uncertain, but his power and evil are pervasive (cf. I Pet. 5:8).

4:9 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which implied probable future action. This verse shows Satan’s true desire to replace YHWH!

4:10 “Then Jesus said to him” This loosely quotes Deut. 6:13. It does not appear in this form in either the Masoretic Text (MT) or the Septuagint (LXX). Jesus added the word “only.” This verse and Deut. 6:5 affirm the needed commitment to God in heart, mind, and life.

The fact that Jesus loosely quotes a Scripture text ought to encourage us to memorize Scripture (i.e., Ps. 119:11; 37:31; 40:8), the purpose is to know its main point and live it out daily, not necessarily to quote it perfectly especially in times of temptation and trials (cf. Eph. 6:17).

☐ **“Go, Satan”** This is similar but not identical to Matt. 16:23. Some early Greek manuscripts, C², D, L, and Z, add “get behind me Satan.” Apparently early scribes added this phrase which is from Matt. 16:23. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text a “B” rating (almost certain).

4:11 “Then the devil left Him” Luke 4:13 adds the phrase “until an opportune time.” Temptation is not once-and-for-all, but ongoing. Jesus would experience temptation again. Peter’s words at Caesarea Philippi were as tempting and cutting as Satan’s words in the wilderness (cf. Matt. 16:21-23).

☐ **“angels came and began to minister to Him”** The Greek word “minister” is often associated with physical food (cf. Matt. 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Acts 2:6). This recalls I Kgs. 19:6-7, where God miraculously provided food for Elijah. God’s angels ministered to His unique Son. God provided all that Satan said he could provide.

Why the incarnate son of God would need the ministry of angels is a mystery. Angels are ministering spirits to the redeemed (cf. Heb. 2:14). Twice in Jesus’ life angels helped Him in times of His physical weakness, here and in Gethsemane (cf. Luke 22:43 in MSS N*, D and L and the Vulgate).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:12-17

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; ¹³and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

¹⁵“THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI,

BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—

¹⁶THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT,

AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH,

UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED.”

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

4:12 The specific reasons for John’s arrest are given in Matt. 14:3-5.

4:13 “and leaving Nazareth” Jesus changed His place of residence because of the city’s unbelief (cf. Luke 4:16-31). See Special Topic: Jesus the Nazarene at 2:23.

▣ **“and settled in Capernaum”** This was the hometown of Peter and John. “Capernaum” meant “village of Nahum.” Therefore, it may have been the traditional hometown of the OT prophet. It was located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

4:13c-16 Because of the concluding phrase of v. 13, this was fulfilled prophecy (cf. Isa. 9:1-2). Everyone expected the Messiah to minister primarily to Judea and Jerusalem, but the ancient prophecy of Isaiah was uniquely fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus (cf. John. 7:41). The land of Zebulun and Naphtali were the first to fall to the Assyrian invaders and the first to hear the good news.

4:15 “beyond the Jordan” This idiom usually referred to the east side of the Jordan (the trans-Jordan) but here it referred to the west (the promised land). It all depends on where the person speaking was standing (or thinking).

▣ **“Galilee of the Gentiles”** Galilee was a mixture of both Jews and Gentiles (*ethnē*, LXX Isa. 9:1), the majority being Gentiles. This Gentile area was looked down on by the Jews of Judea. God’s heart has always been for the salvation of the entire world (i.e., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:24; 25:6-9; John. 3:16; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

4:16 “The people who were sitting in darkness” This was either (1) a reference to their sin, (2) a reference to their ignorance, or (3) an idiom of derision because of their differences from the Jewish customs in Judea.

▣ **“in the land and shadow of death”** This was a metaphor for great danger (cf. Job 38:17; Ps. 23:4; Jer. 2:6).

4:17 “From that time” This phrase is used three times in Matthew (cf. 4:17; 16:21; 26:16) and seems to be a purposeful literary marker of the main divisions of Matthew’s presentation of Jesus.

▣ **“Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’”** This is similar to John the Baptist’s message (cf. 3:2). In the mouth of Jesus it takes on new significance. The kingdom is both present and future. This is the “already” but “not yet” tension of the new age (see Robert Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teachings*, pp. 75-79).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the OT YHWH was thought of as the King of Israel (cf. I Sam. 8:7; Ps. 10:16; 24:7-9; 29:10; 44:4; 89:18; 95:3; Isa. 43:15; 44:4,6) and the Messiah as the ideal king (cf. Ps. 2:6; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5). With the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (6-4 B.C.) the kingdom of God broke into human history with new power and redemption (New Covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-36). John the Baptist proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15). Jesus clearly taught that the kingdom was present in Himself and His teachings (cf. Matt. 4:17,23; 9:35; 10:7; 11:11-12; 12:28;16:19; Mark 12:34; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 12:31-32; 16:16; 17:21). Yet the kingdom is also future (cf. Matt. 16:28; 24:14; 26:29; Mark 9:1; Luke 21:31; 22:16,18).

In the Synoptic parallels in Mark and Luke we find the phrase, “the kingdom of God.” This common topic of Jesus’ teachings involved the present reign of God in human’s hearts, which one day will be consummated over all the earth. This is reflected in Jesus’ prayer in Matt. 6:10. Matthew, written to Jews, preferred the phrase that did not use the name of God (Kingdom of Heaven), while Mark and Luke, writing to Gentiles, used the common designation, employing the name of Deity.

This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus’ first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now! It is surprising that John uses this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus’ parables). In John’s gospel “eternal life” is a key metaphor.

The tension with this phrase is caused by the two comings of Christ. The OT focused only on one coming of God’s Messiah—a military, judgmental, glorious coming—but the NT shows that He came the first time as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and the humble king of Zech. 9:9. The two Jewish ages, the age of wickedness and the new age of righteousness, overlap. Jesus currently reigns in the hearts of believers, but will one day reign over all creation. He will come like the OT predicted! Believers live in “the already” versus “the not yet” of the kingdom of God (cf. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart’s *How to Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

▣ **“repent”** Repentance is crucial for a faith relationship with God (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:21). The term in Hebrew meant a change of actions (BDB 996), while in Greek it meant a change of mind. Repentance is a willingness to change from one’s self-centered existence to a life informed and directed by God. It calls for a turning from the priority and bondage of the self (cf. Genesis 3). Basically it is a new attitude, a new worldview, a new master. Repentance is God’s will for every human being, made in His image (cf. Ezek. 18:21,23,32 and II Pet. 3:9).

The NT passage that best reflects the different Greek terms for repentance is II Cor. 7:8-12.

1. *lupē*, “grief” or “sorrow” vv. 8 (twice), 9 (thrice), 10 (twice), 11
2. *metamelomai*, “after care,” vv. 8 (twice), 9
3. *metanoēō*, “repent,” “after mind,” vv. 9, 10

The contrast is false repentance [*metamelomai*] (cf. Judas, Matt. 27:3 and Esau, Heb. 12:16-17) vs. true repentance [*metanoēō*].

True repentance is theologically linked to

1. Jesus’ preaching of the conditions of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3,5)
2. the apostolic sermons in Acts [*kerygma*] (cf. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)
3. God’s sovereign gift (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18 and II Tim. 2:25)
4. perishing (cf. II Pet. 3:9)

Repentance is not optional!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:18-22

¹⁸Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. ²¹Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

4:18 “the Sea of Galilee” This fresh water lake is about 12 miles by 8 miles. It was known in the Bible by four different names.

1. the Sea of Chinnereth (cf. Num. 34:11)
2. Lake Gennesaret (cf. Luke 5:1)
3. the Sea of Tiberias (cf. John. 6:1; 21:1)
3. here, the Sea of Galilee

▣ **“He saw two brothers,”** It is uncertain if this was the first time that these men had met and heard Jesus. Apparently their immediate response reflected an earlier meeting, possibly recorded in John. 1:45-51. It must be remembered that John records an earlier Galilean and Judean ministry. John’s chronology of Jesus’ life records events in: Galilee, Judea, Galilee, and Judea.

▣ **“net”** This refers to a hand-cast, round net, but the word “net” in vv. 20 and 21 is a different word and refers to larger nets pulled by boats.

1. behind the boat or between boats
2. one end anchored at the shore, the other end taken straight out by a boat and then in a semi-circle, brought to shore.

4:19 “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” In its Jewish setting, Jesus was officially calling these men to become His disciples. There were set rules and procedures on how a rabbi did this. The terminology is a word play on their current profession of fishing and their new one as witnesses and evangelists.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:23

²³Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

4:23 “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee” This involved three specific ministries: (1) teaching; (2) preaching; and (3) healing. It is interesting to note that they responded to the third, but not always to the first and second. The third was simply a confirmation of the vitality and power of the first two. It was possible to be healed and not be saved (cf. John. 5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:24-25

²⁴The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

4:24 “The news about Him spread throughout all Syria” Syria was a Roman province which included northern Palestine. However, in this context it may refer to the whole area, which showed the wide-spread popularity of this healer from Nazareth.

▣ **“all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics”** In the Gospels, distinctions are made between physical sickness and demon possession. Although demonic forces might cause physical symptoms, the cure for each is different. Jesus healed all those who were brought to Him (see Special Topic at 19:2). We know from other accounts that healing was sometimes based on the faith of the individual, or the faith of the sick individual’s friends; and sometimes it came without much faith at all. Physical healing did not always mean or imply spiritual salvation (cf. John. 9).

▣ **“demons”** See Special Topic at 10:1.

▣ **“epileptics”** See note at 17:15.

4:25 “Large crowds followed Him” Verse 25 is a graphic description of the extent of Jesus’ popularity (cf. Mark 3:7-8; Luke 6:17). This popularity caused the Jewish leaders to be jealous and the crowds to misunderstand His mission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What was the purpose of Jesus’ temptation?
2. Who is the devil and what is his purpose?
3. Were these temptations psychological, physical or visionary?
4. Why do the Gospels emphasize the Galilean ministry of Jesus?
5. When Jesus called the disciples, had they met or heard Him before that time?
6. Does the New Testament make a distinction between demon possession and physical illness? If so, why?

MATTHEW 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Sermon on the Mount	The Beatitudes	The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:27)	The Sermon on the Mount	The Beatitudes
5:1-2	5:1-12	5:1-2	5:1-2	5:1-12
The Beatitudes		The Beatitudes	True Happiness	
5:3-12		5:3 5:4 5:5 5:6 5:7 5:8 5:9 5:10 5:11-12	5:3-10	(3-10)
Salt and Light	Believers are Salt and Light	The Witness of the Disciples	Salt and Light	Salt for the Earth and Light for the World
5:13-16	5:13-16	5:13 5:14-16	5:13 5:14-16	5:13 5:14-16
Teaching About the Law	Christ Fulfills the Law	The Relation of Jesus' Message to the Jewish Law	Teaching About the Law	The Fulfillment of the Law
5:17-20	5:17-20	5:17-20	5:17-20	5:17-19
Teaching About Anger	Murder Begins in the Heart	Illustrations of the True Understanding of the Law	Teaching About Anger	The New Standard Higher Than the Old
5:21-26	5:21-26	5:21-26	5:21-24 5:25-26	5:21-26
Teaching About Adultery	Adultery in the Heart		Teaching About Adultery	
5:27-30	5:27-30	5:27-30	5:27-20	5:27-30
Teaching About Divorce	Marriage is Sacred and Binding		Teaching About Divorce	
5:31-32	5:31-32	5:31-32	5:31-32	5:31-32
Teaching About Oaths	Jesus Forbids Oaths		Teaching About Vows	
5:33-37	5:33-37	5:33-37	5:33-37	5:33-37
Teaching About Retaliation	Go the Second Mile		Teaching About Revenge	
5:38-42	5:38-42	5:38-42	5:38-42	5:38-42

Love for Enemies	Love Your Enemies		Love for Enemies	
5:43-48	5:43-48	5:43-48	5:43-48	5:43-48

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO CHAPTERS 5-7

- A. This sermon has been called
 1. "The Ordination Address to the Twelve"
 2. "The Compendium of Christian Doctrine"
 3. "The Magna Carta of the Kingdom"
 4. "The Manifesto of the King"

The term "Sermon on the Mount" was first used by Augustine (A.D. 354-430) in his Latin Commentary on Matthew. This title came into our English Bibles through the Coverdale Bible of A.D. 1535.
- B. "The Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7 is possibly the same as "the Sermon on the Plain" in Luke 6. The difference in the contents can be explained by comparing the target audiences of the Gospels writers; Matthew's readers were Palestinian Jews and Luke's were Gentiles. However, because the differences are so great, many believe they are not the same sermon. They may be examples of often repeated themes used by Jesus in many places with differing audiences. An example of this is the parable of the lost sheep. In Matthew 18 it was directed to disciples, but in Luke 15 to sinners.
- C. Under God's inspiration, the Gospel writers were free to select from Jesus' teachings and actions and to combine them in non-chronological ways to communicate theological truth. See Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148. The Gospels are not biographies—they are evangelistic tracts and discipleship manuals. Matthew combines Jesus' teachings and miracles into thematic units, while Luke records these same teachings in different contexts throughout his Gospel.
- D. The structure of Matthew's first (of five, i.e., 5-7; 10-13; 18; 24-25) and longest discourse of Jesus is very Jewish, possibly a conscious structural parallel to the Ten Commandments. The statements are pointed gnomic sentences, often paradoxical, which attempt to summarize truth and aid memory. Thematically they are loosely related but grammatically separate.
- E. These teachings are the ultimate kingdom ethic meant to convict the lost and motivate the saved. The audience was comprised of several different groups: the disciples, the curious, the sick, the skeptical and the religious elite. Different texts were intended for the differing groups.
- F. These teachings are basically an attitude toward life or a "worldview" which is radically reoriented toward faith and obedience to God. There is an obvious play on Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

- G. A good book which describes Jesus' teaching and preaching methods is Robert H. Stein's, *The Methods and Message of Jesus' Teaching*, Westminster Press, 1978, ISBN 0-664-24216-2.
- H. The purpose is not to show the lost how to be saved, but how God expects the saved to live. The new kingdom ethic is so radical that even the most committed self-righteous legalists feel inadequate. Grace is the only hope for salvation (i.e., Isa 55:1-3) and the Spirit's power the only hope for kingdom living (i.e., Isa. 55:6-7).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 5:3-12 (the BEATITUDES)

- A. The Beatitudes form a spiritual ladder (1) from salvation to Christlikeness or (2) from mankind's sense of spiritual need to mankind's new life in Christ.
- B. Their number has been understood differently as 7, 8, 9, and even 10.
- C. The Beatitudes demand a response from the reader/hearer! They are not informational but motivational!
- D. Three helpful quotes:
1. Every moral system is a road which by self-denial, discipline, and effort, men seek to reach the goal. Christ begins with this goal, and places His disciples at once in the position to which all other teachers point as the end. . . They began by commanding, He by bestowing: because He brings good tidings of forgiveness and mercy." *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim, p. 528-529.
 2. "The Sermon on the Mount is neither an impractical ideal nor a set of fixed legal regulations. It is, instead, a statement of the principles of life essential in a normal society. . . Many of the sayings of the Sermon are metaphorical or proverbial statements and are not to be understood in a literal or legal sense. In them, Jesus was illustrating principles in concrete terms." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. vol. 4 p. 2735.
 3. "Basic Principles:
 - a. Character is the secret of happiness.
 - b. Righteousness is grounded in the inner life. Character is not something imposed from without, but a life that unfolds from within.
 - c. The inner life is a unity.
 - d. Universal love is the fundamental social law.
 - e. Character and life exist in and for fellowship with the Father. All worship and conduct look toward God.
 - f. Fulfillment is the final test of life.
 - g. Deeds and character are the only things that abide and endurance is the final test." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. vol. 4 p. 2735.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-2

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ²He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,

5:1 "When Jesus saw the crowds" People from all areas of society flocked to Jesus. These huge crowds were also present in 4:23-25 and Luke 6:17. Probably the disciples and those who were truly interested, formed an inner circle closest to Jesus with the others in the background (cf. 7:28).

▣ **"the mountain"** In Luke 6:17 the physical setting is a plain, but the content of the messages is basically the same. Luke's historical setting seems best. Jesus was praying on the mountain about His choice of the Twelve, but He came down onto the plain to receive the crowd and then moved back up the hillside a short distance so all could hear and see. The Greek term in Matthew can refer to the hill country and the term in Luke can refer to a level place in the hill country. So maybe the apparent contradiction is an English translation problem. However the two messages are different in many ways. Matthew may have described a mountain setting to parallel the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Jesus is the new law-giver (cf. 5:21-48).

The Gospel writer is purposely structuring the life of Jesus in such a way as to mimic the life of Moses (here, Exod. 19:3; 24:12). Jesus is the new and greater "law-giver"! He is the prophet that Moses said would come after him (cf. Deut. 18:14-22).

Fallen humans (both Jew and Gentile) find their salvation in Him, not in performance-based religion (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38, “the new covenant”)!

▣ **“He sat down”** This was a rabbinical idiom for an official teaching session (26:55; Mark 9:35; Luke 4:20; 5:3; John 8:2), as was “He opened His mouth” (v. 2). These phrases, as well as the standardized close at 7:28, “When Jesus had closed this address,” imply that this is presented by Matthew as one sermon. This is the first and longest of five sermons by Jesus recorded by Matthew (chapters 10, 13, 18, & 24-25).

▣ **“His disciples came to Him”** Some, assuming that Matthew and Luke are different sermons, assert that only disciples were present here. They were the object and recipients of this sermon, but the common people and the religious leaders were standing around listening (cf. 7:28). It is possible that Jesus spoke to one group and then another.

5:2 “began to teach them” This is an IMPERFECT TENSE, which can mean (1) He began to teach or (2) he continued to reiterate these things on different occasions. Matthew’s Gospel is characterized by combining Jesus’ teachings into topics. The content of Matthew 5-7 is scattered throughout many chapters in Luke.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:3

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

5:3 “Blessed” This term meant “happy” or “honored” (cf. vv. 3-11). The English word “happy” comes from the Old English “happenstance.” Believers’ God-given happiness is not based on physical circumstances, but inner joy. There are no VERBS in these statements. They are EXCLAMATORY (cf. Rev. 1:3) in form like in Aramaic or Hebrew (cf. Ps. 1:1). This blessedness is both a current attitude toward God and life as well as an eschatological hope. A blessed person was a righteous person (cf. Psalm 119:1-2).

▣ **“poor in spirit,”** Two terms in Greek were used to describe poverty; the one used here was the more severe of the two. It was often used of a beggar who was dependent on a provider. In the OT this implied hope in God alone! Matthew makes it clear that this does not refer to physical poverty, but to spiritual inadequacy. Man must recognize God’s adequacy and his own inadequacy (cf. John. 15:5; II Cor. 12:9). This is the beginning of the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:31). Possibly these first few beatitudes reflect Isa. 61:1-3, which predicted the Messianic blessings of the coming New Age.

▣ **“kingdom of heaven”** This phrase, “Kingdom of Heaven” or “Kingdom of God,” is used over 100 times in the Gospels. In Luke 6:20 it is the “kingdom of God.” Matthew was writing for people with a Jewish background who were nervous pronouncing God’s name because of Exod. 20:7. But the Gospels of Mark (cf. 10:14) and Luke were written to Gentiles. The two phrases are synonymous. See Special Topic at 4:17.

The phrase refers to the reign of God in human hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). This is possibly confirmed by Matthew alternating between PRESENT TENSE “is” in v. 3 and 10, and FUTURE TENSE “shall be” in vv. 4-9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:4

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

5:4 “mourn” This referred to “loud wailing,” which was the strongest term for mourning in the Greek language. The context implies that the mourning was for our sin. The result of seeing one’s sin (v. 3) must be repentance (v. 4). It is possible, if the OT referent is Isa. 61:1-3, that it was mourning in a corporate, societal sense.

▣ **“comforted”** See Isa. 12:1; 40:1; 49:13; 51:3,12; 52:9; 66:13. The new age has dawned in Christ. God comforts not only the OT people of God, but all who believe/trust Jesus. The OT promises to Israel have been universalized to the whole world (cf. John 3:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:5

⁵“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”

5:5 “gentle” This is literally “meek” or “humble.” Jesus used this term for Himself (cf. Matt. 11:29; 21:5). Its origin implies domesticated strength, like a trained horse. Recognizing our need for God and His provision in Christ makes believers humble

and teachable (cf. I Pet. 3:4). God wants to direct our strengths to His purposes (He gave them, cf. Psalm 139; I Corinthians 12), not break them.

☐ **“inherit the earth”** This was often associated with the Promised Land (cf. Ps.37:11), but it could be an eschatological reference for the entire earth (cf. Isa. 11:6-9). This reflects the ambiguity of the Hebrew term *erets* (BDB 75). Again God’s OT promises have been universalized.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

5:6 “hunger and thirst” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE describing the basic ongoing spiritual needs of humankind (cf. John. 4:10-15). This metaphor reflects a kingdom person’s ongoing attitude toward God (cf. Ps. 42:2; 63:1-5; Isa. 55:1; Amos 8:11-12). This is a sign that the image of God, lost in the fall, has been restored through Christ.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “for righteousness”

TEV “to do what God requires”

NJB “for uprightness”

This key theological term can mean (1) a declared (legal) or imputed (banking) right standing (cf. Romans 4) or (2) a personal kingdom ethic, which is Matthew’s use of the term (cf. 6:1 for Synagogue usage). It involves both justification and justice; both sanctification and sanctified living! This is another example of Matthew’s CIRCUMLOCUTION, a substitution of another word or phrase for the name of God (cf. vv. 7-8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness)
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness)
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaio sunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was not clear delineation between the secular (society's norms) and the sacred (God's will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as "justice" (relating to society) and "righteousness" (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father's love, mercy, and grace; the Son's life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit's wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible, from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20, is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) I Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21-31
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. I Timothy 6:11

- d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
- e. I John 3:7
- f. I Peter 2:24
- 6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects:

- 1. the gospel is a person (the Eastern Church and Calvin’s emphasis)
- 2. the gospel is truth (Augustine’s and Luther’s emphases)
- 3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

☐ **“satisfied”** Literally “gorged,” this term was used of fattening cattle for market.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:7

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

5:7 “merciful” Mercy is the result—not the grounds—of knowing God. It is the ability to put one’s self in another’s situation and act with compassion (cf. Matt. 6:12,14-15; 18:21-35; Luke 6:36-38; James 2:13).

A change occurs here in the beatitudes. The two previous ones have focused on the Kingdom person’s sense of spiritual need; the following ones, however, focus on the attitudes that motivate one’s actions. This was what was missing in Pharisaism then and legalism now.

☐ **“they shall receive mercy”** This is a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE which is literally translated “shall be mercied.” The implications of this tense are: (1) the FUTURE TENSE was used in the sense of certainty now, in this age or (2) the FUTURE blessing and forgiveness in the Last Day Judgment (eschatology) scene. The PASSIVE VOICE may be another CIRCUMLOCUTION like “kingdom of heaven,” to avoid using God’s name.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

5:8 “pure in heart” Our attitudes are crucial (cf. Titus 1:15). Priorities are equally crucial (cf. Heb. 12:14). From Ps. 24:4 and 73:1, “pure” can mean (1) single-minded, (2) focused, or (3) cleansed (cf. Heb.12:14). This term was used in the OT for ritual

washings. Notice the focus is on the heart, the center of the individual's being, not the intellect or ritual actions. The central aspect of personhood in the OT was the "heart," while in Greek thought it was the "mind."

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *leb* (BDB 523). It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Corinthians 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind's spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
 - c. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Romans 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Ephesians 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Peter 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
3. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
4. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
5. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
6. the heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms.
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart" (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
 - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

▣ **"shall see God"** To the pure in heart, God can be seen in all creation and in every situation. Purity opens the spiritual eyes. In the OT to see God meant to die (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 20:19; 33:20; Jdgs. 6:22, 23; 13:22; Isa. 6:5). This statement, therefore, would probably refer to an eschatological setting.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:9

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

5:9 "peacemakers" This compound word appears only here. It refers to reconciliation between God and humanity, which results in peace between persons. However, this is not a peace at any price, but peace through repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; Rom. 5:1). God has not changed, humanity has (i.e., Genesis 3; Rom. 3:9-19; Gal. 3:22), but in Christ the original mindset has been restored.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE AND WAR

I. Introduction

- A. The Bible, our sole source for faith and practice, has no definitive passage on peace. In fact, it is paradoxical in its presentation. The OT may be alluded to as an approach to peace which is militaristic. The NT, however, puts the conflict into spiritual terms of light and darkness.
- B. Biblical faith, as well as world religions of the past and present, sought and still expect, a golden age of prosperity which is absent from conflict.
 1. Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 32:15-18; 51:3; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:3
 2. Biblical faith prophesies the personal agency of the Messiah, Isa. 9:6-7
- C. However, how do we live in a world of conflict? There have been several Christian responses which have developed chronologically between the death of the Apostles and the Middle Ages.
 1. Pacifism, although rare in antiquity, it was the early church's response to the Roman military society.

2. Just War, after the conversion of Constantine (313 A.D.) the church began to rationalize the military support of a “Christian state” in response to successive Barbarian invasions. This was basically the classical Greek position. This position was first articulated by Ambrose and expanded and developed by Augustine.
3. Crusade, this is similar to the Holy War concept of the OT. It developed in the Middle Ages in response to the Muslim advances in the “Holy Land” and ancient Christian territories such as North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Eastern Roman Empire. It was not on behalf of the state, but on behalf of the Church and under its auspices.
4. All three of these views developed in a Christian context with differing views on how Christians should relate to a fallen world system. Each emphasized certain Bible texts to the exclusion of others. Pacifism tended to separate itself from the world. The “Just War” response has advocated the power of the state to control an evil world (Martin Luther). The Crusade position has advocated that the Church attack the fallen world system so as to control it.
5. Roland H. Bainton, in his book, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, published by Abingdon, page 15, says,

“The Reformation precipitated wars of religion, in which the three historic positions reappeared: the just war among the Lutherans and the Anglicans, the crusade in the Reformed Churches, and pacifism among the Anabaptists and later the Quakers. The eighteenth century in theory and in practice resuscitated the humanist peace ideals of the Renaissance. The nineteenth century was an age of comparative peace and great agitation for the elimination of war. The twentieth century has seen two world wars. In this period again, the three historic positions have recurred. The churches in the United States particularly took a crusading attitude toward the First World War; pacifism was prevalent between the two wars; the mood of the Second World War approximated that of the just war.”

D. The exact definition of “peace” has been disputed.

1. For the Greeks it seems to refer to a society of order and coherence.
2. For the Romans it was the absence of conflict brought about through the power of the state.
3. For the Hebrews peace was a gift of YHWH based on mankind’s proper response to Him. It was usually put in agricultural terms (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). Not only prosperity, but divine security and protection are included.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Holy War is a basic concept of the OT. The phrase “kill not” of Exod. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17 in Hebrew refers to premeditated murder (BDB 953), not death by accident or passion or war. YHWH is even seen as a warrior on behalf of His people (cf. Joshua - Judges and Isa. 59:17, alluded to in Eph. 6:14).
2. God even uses war as a means of punishing His wayward people—Assyria exiles Israel (A.D. 722); Neo-Babylon exiles Judah (586 B.C.).
3. It is shocking, in such a militaristic atmosphere, to read of the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53, which can be classified as redemptive pacifism.

B. New Testament

1. In the Gospels soldiers are mentioned without condemnation. The Roman “centurions” are mentioned often and almost always in a noble sense.
2. Even believing soldiers are not commanded to give up their vocation (early church).
3. The New Testament does not advocate a detailed answer to social evils in terms of political theory or action, but in spiritual redemption. The focus is not on physical battles, but on the spiritual battle between light and dark, goodness and evil, love and hate, God and Satan (Eph. 6:10-17).
4. Peace is an attitude of the heart amidst the problems of the world. It is related solely to our relationship with Christ (Rom. 5:1; John 14:27), not the state. The peacemakers of Matt. 5:9 are not political, but proclaimers of the gospel! Fellowship, not strife, should characterize the Church life, both to itself and to a lost world.

▣ **“sons of God”** In the OT this phrase usually referred to angels. It is a Hebrew idiom reflecting God’s character. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19), which is the restoration of the image of God in mankind lost in the Fall of Genesis 3. See Special Topic at 27:54.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:10

¹⁰“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

5:10 “those who have been persecuted” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. It speaks to those who have been and continue to be persecuted by an outside agent (i.e., Satan, demonic, unbelievers). The persecution of believers is a real possibility, even an expected reality, for God’s children in a fallen world (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; I Pet.3:14; 4:12-19; Rev. 11:7; 13:7). Notice the suffering is occurring because of the godly lifestyle and witness of believers. God uses it to make believers like Christ (cf. Heb. 5:8).

This verse is a needed balance to the modern American (health, wealth and prosperity, see Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health Wealth Gospel*) overemphasis on the covenant promises of Deuteronomy 27-29 applied directly and unconditionally (i.e., ignoring the curses for disobedience) to all believers. Health, wealth, and prosperity promises must be balanced by the repeated acknowledgment of the suffering of believers, because they are people of faith in a fallen, godless world. Jesus suffered, the Apostles suffered, the early Christians suffered, so shall believers in every age! With this truth in mind it is also probable that the church will go through the tribulation period (no secret rapture)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:11-12

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

5:11-12 A new paragraph should start with v. 11 (cf. NRSV & TEV). The PRONOUNS in these verses change from the THIRD PERSON to the SECOND. Luke 6:22-23 has an even stronger wording.

5:11 “insult you and persecute you” These are both AORIST SUBJUNCTIVES which denoted a contingency but with a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL structure which showed it was potential (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-19). Persecution may be common, but it is not to be desired or pursued (as did many of the early church fathers). In the OT, problems and persecution were often interpreted as a sign of God’s displeasure because of sin (cf. Job, Psalm 73, and Habakkuk deal with the subject). The righteous do suffer. But Jesus went one step further. Those who live and witness for Him will suffer rejection and persecution from a fallen world as He did (cf. John. 15:20; Acts 14:22; II Tim. 3:12).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “and falsely say all kinds of evil against you”

TEV “and tell all kinds of evil lies against you”

NJB “and speak all kinds of calumny against you”

There is some manuscript doubt about the PRESENT PARTICIPLE “falsely.” It is missing in the western uncial manuscript D, the Diatesseron, and the Greek texts used by Origen, Tertullian, and Eusebius. It is included in the early Greek uncial manuscripts N, B, C, W, and the Vulgate and Coptic translations. It does reflect the historical situation of the early church. The early Christians were accused of incest, cannibalism, treason, and atheism. All of these accusations were related to misunderstandings about Christian terms and worship practices (cf. I Pet. 2:12,15; 3:16). The UBS⁴ gives its inclusion a C rating (difficulty in deciding).

☐ **“because of Me”** This is linked to v. 10. The persecution discussed is specifically related to being an active follower of Christ (cf. I Pet. 4:12-16).

5:12 “Rejoice and be glad” These are two PRESENT IMPERATIVES (cf. Acts 5:41; 16:25). Rejoicing comes from being counted worthy to suffer for/with Christ and being rewarded (cf. Rom. 8:17). Be careful of self pity. Nothing “just happens” to God’s children (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; James 1:2-4, see Hannah Whithall Smith’s *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*). Suffering has a purpose in the plan of God.

☐ **“for your reward in heaven is great”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

- A. Appropriate and inappropriate response to God is based on knowledge. The less knowledge one has the less responsible one is. The opposite is also true.
- B. Knowledge of God comes in two basic ways.
1. creation (cf. Psalm 19; Romans 1-2)
 2. Scripture (cf. Psalm 19, 119; the gospel)
- C. OT evidence
1. rewards
 - a. Gen. 15:1 (usually associated with earthly reward, land, and sons)
 - b. Deuteronomy 27-28 (covenant obedience brings blessing)
 - c. Dan. 12:3
 2. punishment
 - a. Deuteronomy 27-28 (covenant disobedience brings cursing)
 3. The OT pattern of reward for personal, covenantal righteousness is modified because of human sin. This modification is seen in Job and Psalm 73. The NT changes the focus from this world to the next (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).
- D. NT evidence
1. rewards (beyond salvation)
 - a. Mark 9:41
 - b. Matt. 5:12,46; 6:1-4,5-6,6-18; 10:41-42; 16:27; 25:14-23
 - c. Luke 6:23,35
 2. punishment
 - a. Mark 12:38-40
 - b. Luke 10:12; 12:47-48; 20:47
 - c. Matthew 5:22,29,30; 7:19; 10:15,28; 11:22-24; 13:49-50; 18:6; 25:14-30
 - d. James 3:1
- E. For me the only analogy that makes sense is from the opera. I do not attend opera presentations so I do not understand them. If I knew of the difficulty and intricateness of the plot, music, and dance I would appreciate the performance much more. I believe heaven will fill our cups, but I think our earthly service determines the size of the cup.
- Therefore, knowledge and a response to that knowledge results in rewards and punishments (cf. Matt. 16:7; I Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17,18; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14). There is a spiritual principle—we reap what we sow! Some sow more and reap more (cf. Matt. 13:8,23).
- F. “The crown of righteousness” is ours in the finished work of Jesus Christ (cf. II Tim. 4:8), but notice, “the crown of life” is connected to perseverance under trial (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:10-11). The “crown of glory” for Christian leaders is connected to their lifestyle (cf. I Pet. 5:1-4). Paul knows he has an imperishable crown, but he exercises extreme self-control (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).
- The mystery of the Christian life is that the gospel is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but as we must respond to God’s offer in Christ, we must also respond to God’s empowerment for Christian living. The Christian life is as supernatural as is salvation, yet we must receive it and hold on to it. The free-and-cost-everything paradox is the mystery of rewards and sowing/reaping.
- We are not saved by good works, but for good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Good works are the evidence that we have met Him (cf. Matthew 7). Human merit in the area of salvation leads to destruction, but godly living which results from salvation is rewarded.

☐ **“the prophets”** This was a veiled reference to Christ’s Deity. As the prophets of the OT suffered because of their relationship with and service to YHWH, so too, the Christian will suffer because of his relationship with and service to Christ.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:13

¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”

5:13 “You are the salt of the earth” Because of the extreme value of salt in the ancient world (1) for healing and cleansing; (2) for preserving food; (3) for flavoring food; and (4) for sustaining moisture in humans in very dry climates, salt was a prized possession. It was often used to pay soldiers’ wages. Christians are called the “salt of the earth” because of their penetrating and preserving power in a lost world. “You” is PLURAL and emphatic like v. 14. Believers are salt (cf. Mark 9:50). It is not an option. The only choice is what kind of salt will they be. Salt can become adulterated and useless (cf. Luke 14:34-35). Lost people are watching.

▣ **“if salt has become tasteless”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant potential action. Literally salt cannot lose its strength but when mixed with impurities the salt can leach away and, thereby, the salt content is diluted. Christians can lose and/or damage their testimonies!

The term “tasteless” was normally used in the sense of “foolish” (cf. Rom. 1:27; I Cor. 1:20).

▣ **“It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men”** Salt that was unusable as a preservative or flavor enhancer was absolutely useless. It was thrown on the footpaths or roof tops to form a hard top seal. Salt taken from the Dead Sea had many impurities. The people in this part of the world were accustomed to unusable salt.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:14-16

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

5:14 “You are the light of the world” Light has always been a biblical metaphor of truth and healing. It was used by Jesus to describe Himself (cf. John. 9:5). The question is not, “Will you be the light of the world?” As a believer, you are the light of the world (cf. Phil. 2:15). The only real question is, “What kind of light will you be?” All that some people know about God, they know from you and your life! “You” is PLURAL and emphatic like v. 13.

▣ **“a city”** This was a generic reference either to (1) the location of a city in plain view or (2) its white limestone which gleamed in the sun. Those who try to relate it to an eschatological Jerusalem are hard pressed to explain the absence of the DEFINITE ARTICLE. Cities, like lights, are not designed or intended to be hidden.

5:15

NASB, NKJV “a basket”

NRSV “the bushel basket”

TEV “a bowl”

NJB “a tub”

This referred to an earthen pot used for measuring grain.

▣ **“lampstand”** There was a small protrusion from the wall in ancient Palestinian homes on which a small oil lamp was placed which gave light to the whole room (cf. Mark 4:21-22; Luke 8:16-17).

5:16 Believers’ lifestyles must bring glory and honor to God (i.e., “sons of God” in v. 9, cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:8-10). It is possible that the thrust of this verse related to the exclusivism and cloistering of groups like the Essenes. Believers must stay engaged with an evil society, but not become part of it (cf. John. 17:15-18).

▣ **“Father”** The normal posture for Jewish prayer was standing with the eyes open and the head and arms lifted upward. They prayed as if in dialogue with God.

Jesus’ use of the title Father to describe YHWH is one of the unique aspects of His teachings. Matthew records Jesus’ use of the title for God over forty times.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHER

The OT introduces the intimate familial metaphor of God as Father

1. the nation of Israel is often described as YHWH’s “son” (cf. Hos. 11:1; Mal. 3:17)
2. even earlier in Deuteronomy the analogy of God as Father is used (Deut. 1:31)
3. in Deuteronomy 32 Israel is called “his children” and God is called “your father”
4. this analogy is stated in Ps. 103:13 and developed in Ps. 68:5 (the father of orphans)

5. it was common in the prophets (cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:8; Israel as son, God as Father, 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4,19; 31:9).

Jesus spoke Aramaic, which means that many of the places where “Father” appears as the Greek, *Pater*, it may reflect the Aramaic *Abba* (cf. 14:36). This familial term “Daddy” or “Papa” reflects Jesus’ intimacy with the Father; His revealing this to His followers also encourages our own intimacy with the Father. The term “Father” was used in the OT only for YHWH, but Jesus uses it often and pervasively. It is a major revelation of our new relationship with God through Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. To whom are these statements directed?
2. Can anyone meet these standards?
3. Why do Matthew and Luke record the same sermon differently?
4. Why are these statements so paradoxical?
5. How do the Beatitudes relate to each other?
6. What is the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount?
7. Write the central truth of each paragraph in your own words and then summarize the whole.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 5:17-48

- A. To understand 5:17-20 one must realize that Jesus rejected the Jewish oral tradition (Talmud) which attempted to interpret the written Old Testament. Jesus elevated the OT in strong and definitive statements (i.e., 5:17-19), then showed Himself to be its true fulfillment and ultimate interpreter (i.e., 5:21-48). This can be seen in the fact that Jesus used the phrase “you have heard” not “it is written.” This is a powerful Christological passage, in light of the Jews’ respect for the written and oral Law.
- B. This section is not exhaustive of the misinterpretations of first century Judaism but representative. The entire sermon, chapters 5-7, is an attitude check for humble believers and a pride killer for self-righteous legalists. Jesus placed the mind alongside the hand as the source of sin and rebellion against God’s law. He addressed the inner man as well as the outer. Sin begins in the thought life.
- C. God’s standard of judgment is so different from man’s (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). Believers’ righteousness is both an initial gift and a developing Christlikeness, both a forensic, legal position and a spirit directed progressive sanctification. This section focused on the latter.
- D. If these verses were spoken in the historical context of modern conservative Christianity, we would all be shocked at how God views our religiosity!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:17-19

¹⁷“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

5:17 “Do not think” This is a NEGATIVE AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE which was a grammatical construction that meant “do not ever start!”

▣ **“that I came to abolish the Law”** The context of vv. 17-20 is a statement affirming the inspiration and eternity of the Old Covenant. Jesus acted in a sense as the second Moses, the new Law-giver. Jesus Himself was the fulfillment of the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a person, not a set of required rules. The two covenants are radically different, not in purpose but in the means of accomplishing that purpose. The thrust here is not on the inability of the Old Covenant to make man right with God as in Galatians 3, but rather on the rabbis’ incomplete and improper interpretation of the biblical texts by means of their Socratic or dialectical method of interpretation.

Jesus, in effect, expanded the scope of the Law from overt actions to mental thoughts. This takes the difficulty of true righteousness through the Old Covenant to a level of utter impossibility (cf. Gal. 3:10,21-22). This impossibility will be met by Christ Himself and given back to the repentant/believing faith community through imputed righteousness or justification by faith (cf. Rom. 4:6; 10:4). Mankind’s religious life is a result of a relationship with God, not a means to that relationship.

▣ **“the Law or the Prophets”** This was an idiom referring to two of the three divisions of the Hebrew Canon: Law, Prophets, and Writings. It was a way of designating the entire Old Testament. It also showed that Jesus’ understanding of Scripture was closer to the theology of the Pharisees than of the Sadducees, who only accepted the Torah, or Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy) as authoritative.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “but to fulfill”

TEV “but to make their teachings come true”

NJB “to complete”

This was a common term (*pleroō*) which was used in several senses. In this context it meant to consummate or to come to a designated completion (cf. Rom. 10:4). The Mosaic Covenant has been fulfilled and surpassed by the New Covenant. This is the main truth of the book of Hebrews and Galatians 3!

5:18 **“truly”** This is literally “Amen.” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” (BDB 53) is from a Hebrew word for truth (*emeth*) or truthfulness (*emun, emunah*) and faith or faithfulness.
- B. Its etymology is from a physical stable stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67) or stumbling. From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages
 1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
 4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
 5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Pro. 12:22
 6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
 1. *bathach*, trust (BDB 105, Deut. 28:52)
 2. *yra*, fear, respect, worship (BDB 431, Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 70:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind’s faithfulness, but YHWH’s (cf. Exod. 34:6; Duet. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity’s only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is history and a record of God restoring His image in mankind.

NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word “amen” as a liturgical affirmation of the trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43).
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 and II Cor. 1:20 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as trust, faith, believe.

☐ **“heaven and earth”** In the OT these two permanent entities were used as the two required witnesses to confirm YHWH’s statements (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). They are aspects of our world that will remain as long as this age remains. This statement was like an oath from YHWH.



NASB “not the smallest letter or stroke”
NKJV “one jot or one tittle”
NRSV “not one letter, not one stroke of a letter”
TEV “not a letter, not a dot”
NJB “not one dot, not one little stroke”

This referred to

1. the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *yodh*, paralleled in the smallest letter in Greek alphabet, *iota*
2. the ornamental additions to squared Hebrew script, similar to serifs in modern calligraphy
3. a small stroke that distinguishes between two similar Hebrew letters

The point is that the OT is significant in all its parts; even its most seemingly insignificant parts were from God. Yet the OT was completely fulfilled in the person, work, and teachings of Christ.



NASB “shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished”
NKJV “will by no means pass. . .till all is fulfilled”
NRSV “will pass. . .until all is accomplished”
TEV “will not be done away with—not until the end of all things”
NJB “is to disappear. . .until all its purpose is achieved”

The first term usually referred to destroying something by pulling it down, like a wall. The second term was used in 1:22 to fulfill, as in accomplishing its declared function. Although this term had several other meanings in other parts of the NT, here it speaks of the OT finding its completion in Christ. Jesus’ teachings are like the new wine that cannot be contained in the old wine skins (cf. Matt. 9:16-17).

This fulfillment referred to Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, second coming, judgment, and eternal reign, which are, in some sense, incipient in the Old Testament. The OT points to Christ and His work. The Apostles interpreted it in a typological or Christological sense!

5:19 This verse is not a threat directed toward modern interpreters and teachers, but a rejection of Pharisaic traditional legalism, spiritual arrogance, and sectarian dogmatism. Jesus Himself clearly set aside the Oral Tradition (Talmud), but also parts of the written Law! Two examples would be (1) the concept of divorce in Deut. 24:1-4 rejected in vv. 31-32 (cf. Mark 7:15,19-23) and (2) the food laws of Leviticus 11 rejected in Mark 7:15-23.

The use of “least” and “greatest” may be evidence for some type of gradation within the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 12:47-48; I Cor. 3:10-15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:20

²⁰“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

5:20 This was a shocking statement to sincere, legalistic religionists. Self-righteousness is a common plague of religious mankind (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). Neither correct doctrine (James 2:19) nor religious actions (Matt. 7:21-23) replace the need for a personal repentance/faith relationship (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; Phil. 3:8-9; Rom. 10:3-4). This verse and verse 48, are keys to interpreting the whole Sermon on the Mount.

For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees, see Special Topic at 22:15.



NASB “will not”
NKJV “by no means”
NRSV, NJB “will never”

This is the doubling of two Greek terms for negation. One functions with the INDICATIVE MOOD and the second with the other Greek MOODS. It was a very emphatic way to negate a statement (cf. 5:18,26; 10:23,42; 13:14; 15:6; 16:22,28; 18:3; 23:39; 24:2,21,34,35; 25:9; 26:29,35).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:21-26

²¹“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell.* ²³Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. ²⁵Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.”

5:21 “You have heard that the ancients were told” This could be understood as “to the ancients” or “by the ancients.” The first part of this verse is from the Ten Commandments, but the second part is harder to identify and may be a quote from the rabbinical schools (Shammai, the conservative, or Hillel, the liberal). This implied a rejection of Pharisaic scribal interpretation while at the same time asserting the inspiration of the OT.

☐ **“murder”** This is a quote from the Septuagint (LXX) of Exod. 20:13 or Deut. 5:12. It is a FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE used as an IMPERATIVE. The KJV has “kill,” but this rendering is too broad in scope. The NKJV has “murder.” A more accurate translation would be “nonlegal premeditated murder.” In the OT there was a legal premeditated murder—the “Blood Avenger” (cf. Deuteronomy 19; Numbers 35; Joshua 20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MURDER (EXODUS 20:13)

I. Context

- A. It needs to be remembered that even the commands that seem to be of a social nature are really religious. God’s sovereignty over creation and redemption are shadowed in these commands. The command not to murder is, in proper focus, a word about the image of God in every human being and God’s care and concern for human life.
- B. It needs to be remembered that each command focused on the believing community. Its implications are as wide as humanity!

II. Word Study of Significant Terms

- A. “Murder”
 - 1. This term *rasah*, רצח, BDB 953, means taking a life. It is used only forty six times in the OT. There are several other overlapping Hebrew terms used hundreds of times.
 - 2. The term (*rasah*) seems to have an original limited meaning and an expanded meaning.
 - a. Originally it related to taking the life of a covenant partner in a legal, premeditated way, often associated with “the kinsman redeemer” or *go’el*. This usage involved premeditation, but in a sense of legal revenge (cf. Num. 35:30-34; Lev. 24:13-23). In reality the Lex Talionis, “eye for eye,” (cf. Gen. 9:5-6) was a way to limit revenge. Later, the cities of refuge (Deut. 4:41; Josh. 20:3) were established so that a covenant member who accidentally or passionately killed another member of the community could flee the wrath of the victim’s family.

- b. Later the term came to refer to the motive or attitude behind the taking of a life. The concept of “intentionality” becomes uppermost (cf. Exod. 21:12-14; Num. 35:11,22; Deut. 28:24).
- c. This distinction becomes significant in this command. It seems in context to refer only to others within the covenant community. It is related to the kinsman redeemer, or blood revenge. However, the term is used in later passages which reflect the Decalog, Hosea 4:2 and Jer. 8:9, to refer to a murderer. This word relates not only to the law, but to the motive. It expands from neighbor to fellow human being.
- 3. This term certainly does not relate to our modern ethical issue of capital punishment or war. The Jews never had a problem with community execution or holy war (or, for that matter, unholy war!).
- 4. The best translation for our modern culture would be “premeditated murder.”

III. Contextual Insights

- A. The sixth, seventh, and eighth commands are made up of only two Hebrew words. They are very short and to the point.
- B. Life, like all of creation, is related to God. How we treat others reflects our thoughts about God.

IV. New Testament Parallels

- A. Jesus
 - 1. His expansion of this commandment in Matt. 5:21-26 gives us the proper orientation for our modern discussion about how to apply this text to our day.
 - 2. Jesus obviously moved the Decalog from the realm of actions into the realm of motives. We are what we think! “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” The thought life is more relevant and significant than we normally give it credit.
- B. John
 - 1. In John 3:5, this same concept of hate being considered murder is stated.
 - 2. The Greek terms used in Matt. 5:21ff and I John 3:5 are different, but the meaning is essentially the same.
 - 3. Note the positive aspect in I John 4:19-21.

V. Application

- A. Even though an unintentional murderer can escape the blood avenger by fleeing to a city of refuge (Numbers 35; Joshua 20), he has to pay the penalty of confinement in that city until the death of the High Priest. The consequences of his act still remain.
- B. Although this verse does not directly relate to suicide, as the ancients probably never thought of this event, the text still gives a spiritual principle concerning the sanctity of human life and God’s sovereignty and purpose for human life made in His image. This text speaks a strong word to our day in this area!
- C. This text does not, however, speak a decisive word to the modern question of (1) capital punishment or (2) war. For Israel, these were not evil things in themselves. The Israelites were involved in both of these acts. Still, the principle of the significance of life made in God’s image and under His control is an important truth in this area.
- D. This text does speak a needed word about the dignity and sanctity of human life! We in the believing community are stewards, not only of our own actions, but of our society. The gift of life is both individual and corporate.

We are as responsible for the physical, social, and psychological abuse of our own bodies as we are the physical, social, and psychological abuse of others in our community. This is especially true in a culture like ours where we are allowed to speak to and, thereby, change the system. We are our brothers’ keeper!

5:22 “But I say to you” Jesus’ teaching was radically different from the rabbis of His day, whose authority was found in quoting previous Jewish teachers as their authority (cf. Matt. 7:28-29; Mark 1:22). Jesus’ authority lay in Himself. He is the true revealer of the meaning of the Old Testament. Jesus is Lord of Scripture. The “I” is emphatic—“I myself and no other” or “myself (as the Son of God who knows the mind of God.)”

☐ **“everyone who is angry”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This was the Greek term for a settled, nurtured, non-forgiving, long term anger. This person continued to be intensely angry.

☐ **“with his brother”** The KJV adds “without cause.” This is a Greek manuscript variation. The addition is not in the early Greek manuscripts P⁶⁷, N^{*}, B, or the Vulgate. However, it is in the uncial manuscripts N^c, D, K, L, W, the Diatesseron, and the early Syrian and Coptic translations. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text a B rating (almost certain). The addition weakens the strong thrust of the passage.

It might be helpful at this point to explain the superscripts: the * means the oldest copy of the manuscript type that is available; the ° means the later correctors of copyists. This is often represented by ^{1,2,3}, etc, if there is a series of correctors; the number after P refers to the papyrus manuscript. Uncial Greek manuscripts are designated by capital letters while papyrus manuscripts are designated by numbers. For additional information on Textual Criticism, see Appendix Three.



NASB “You fool”
NKJV “Raca”
NRSV “if you insult”
TEV “You good-for-nothing”
NJB “Fool”

Raca was Aramaic for “an empty-headed person incapable of life.” This section is not dealing with what specific titles one can or cannot call another person, but with a supposed believer’s attitude toward others, especially covenant brothers.

The Greek term, *mōros*, translated “fool,” was meant to reflect the Aramaic term *raca*. However, Jesus’ word play was not to the Greek word *mōros*, but the primarily Hebrew word *mōreh*, BDB 598, which meant “rebel against God” (cf. Num. 20:10; Deut. 21:18,20; see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 42). Jesus called the Pharisees by this very term in 23:17. Not only our actions, but our motives, attitudes, and purposes determine sin against our fellow human. Murder, as far as God is concerned, can be a thought! Hatred of our brother or sister clearly shows that we do not know God (cf. I John. 2:9-11; 3:15, and 4:20). Socially speaking, a hateful thought is better than a death, but remember that this section of Scripture is meant to shatter all self-righteousness and pride in one’s own goodness. It is possible that this three-fold expression was a sarcastic play on scribal interpretation methods.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR FOOLISH PEOPLE

There is a precedent of using this response to falsehood in the OT Hebrew:

1. *kesil* - which implies a self-confidence in Wisdom Literature (e.g., Proverbs. 17 and 26; Ecclesiastes 7)
2. *evil* - which implies a mental competence also used mostly in Wisdom Literature (e.g., Isa. 29:11; 35:8; Hos. 9:7)
3. *nabal* - which implies an empty headed person (e.g., Deut. 32:6,21; II Sam. 3:33; 13:13; Ps. 14:1; 53:1; Jer. 12:11)
4. *sakal* - which implies a thickheaded person (e.g., I Sam. 26:21; Eccl. 2:19; 10:3,14)

Jesus used three words to describe foolish people.

1. *aphrōn*, Luke 11:40; 12:20
2. *anoētos*, Luke 24:25
3. *mōros*, Matt. 5:22; 23:17,19

The strongest statement by Jesus in regard to the use of a characterization of one person by another is in Matt. 5:22, where *mōros* reflects the Aramaic word *raca*, which means incapable of life.

Paul follows the OT and Jesus in using several terms to describe foolish people.

1. *aphrōn*, I Cor. 15:36; II Cor. 11:16,19; 12:6,11
2. *mōros*, I Cor. 3:18; 4:10 and a related form in Rom. 1:22

People who claim to know God, but think and act in inappropriate ways, are often characterized as poor thinkers! Paul’s sarcastic comments, so frequent in I and II Corinthians, reveal this type of person. They were so confident that they possessed knowledge that they could not see nor recognize true knowledge!



NASB “fiery hell”
NKJV, NJB “hell fire”
NRSV “the hell of fire”
TEV “fire of hell”

This is the Greek contraction *Gehenna*. See Special Topic below, II. D.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *She'ol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *She'ol* characterized
 - 1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 - 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 - 3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), but also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 - 4. associated with "the Pit" (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 - 5. wicked descend alive into *She'ol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 - 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
 - 7. people there are called *Shades*, Isa. 14:9-11

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *She'ol* is translated by the LXX as *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
 - 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 - 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 - 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 - 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
 - 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
 - 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
 - 1. Reflects the OT phrase, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom" (cf. Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Isa. 31:9; 66:24, south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped through child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.
 - 2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
 - 3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
 - 4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *She'ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as "sons of hell," Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *She'ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *She'ol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
 - 1. originally all humans went to *She'ol/Hades*

2. their experience there (good or bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).
3. only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She'ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.
 1. human souls exist before their physical life
 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to a pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah had a physical body at the transfiguration, Matt. 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 3. the place of God’s throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (parallel to the third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife. Probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again. However, this may be metaphorical (e.g., heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! Believers know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Dr. M. Rawlings, *Beyond Death’s Door*

5:23 This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which means probable action.

▣ **“presenting your offering at the altar”** This strongly implies that Matthew wrote before the destruction of the Temple by the Roman general Titus in A.D. 70. Lifestyle love precedes religious acts! Relationships take precedence over ritual. People are the top priority with God. Only people are eternal.

5:24 “be reconciled to your brother” This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. Personal relationships are more significant than (1) periodic ritual (v. 24) or (2) judicial decisions (v. 25).

5:26 “Truly” See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ **“until you have paid the last cent”** “Cent” is the smallest Roman coin, *quadrans* (see Special Topic at 17:24). Judgment extracts the full penalty. Mercy and love forgive all!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:27-30

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

5:27 “adultery” Here the term is *moichaomai*. It is a quote from the Ten Commandments found in Exod. 20:14 and Deut. 5:18. The Greek term from the Septuagint is *porneia*. This word usually referred to extramarital intercourse, but it also had the added connotation of any improper extramarital sexual activity, such as homosexuality or bestiality. In the OT adultery was a sexual affair involving a married person. Jesus redefined sexual sin as an attitude of the heart. Sex is a gift of God, a good and wholesome thing. But God has also put boundaries on its expression for our well-being and long term enjoyment. Proudful, self-centered humans always want to go beyond the God-given bounds. These words of Jesus by inference would also refer to premarital sexual activity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ADULTERY (EXODUS 20:14)

I. Context

- A. It is obvious that the commandment is related to one’s respect for God which is seen in respect for one’s neighbor’s life, wife, and property (cf. Jer. 5:8). This is verified by the different order of these commands in the Septuagint.
- B. The Deuteronomic parallel shows the appropriateness of adopting this ancient truth to our culture.
- C. As respect for parents was seen as a key to a stable society, so too, is this command.
- D. This command also implies God’s ownership and control of our sexual and family lives.
- E. This command seems to have been based on Gen. 2:24, as command number four was based on Gen. 2:1-3.

II. Word Study

- A. The major term in this text is “adultery” (זָנָה, BDB 610). It is crucial that one understand this term in light of ancient Hebrew culture.
 1. This term is distinct in an OT context from “fornication.” Adultery relates to at least one party in the sexual relationship being married. The term “fornication” implies both parties are not married (cf. Pro. 29:3; 31:3). The distinction is lost in the NT Greek terms.
 2. This possibility explains the reason for the emphasis on marital status because it relates to the importance of inheritance rights, which were involved in God’s promise of “the land.” Every fifty years (Jubilee) all land was to revert to the original tribal owners.
 3. Adultery was culturally condemned before the Mosaic legislation (cf. Gen. 12:10ff; 26:7ff; 39:9).
 4. Adultery was seen as a sin against
 - a. neighbor - Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18
 - b. marriage - Lev. 18:20
 - c. God - Gen. 20:2-13; 26:7-11
 5. It was punishable by death for both parties
 - a. Lev. 20:10
 - b. Deut. 22:22-24
 - c. Ezek. 16:40 (metaphor)
 - d. strict warnings are found in Proverbs 1-9

III. Relation to New Testament

- A. Jesus used Lev. 19:18 as a summary of the Old Revelation (cf. Luke 10:27). This confirms that the Ten Commandments are related to our treatment of others.
- B. Jesus intensifies the commands in Matt. 5:28. He places the emphasis on motive rather than action. The Jews saw the mind as the seed bed of the soul. What one thought was what one really was (Pro. 23:7). This makes the Ten Words almost impossible to keep—that is the purpose! (cf. Gal. 2:15-3:29).

IV. Modern Application

- A. Marriage is possibly the best modern analogy of a lifelong faith commitment in God’s name. It is our best chance to understand the realities of OT covenant concepts (Mal. 2:14). Our respect for our mate in all aspects, including human sexuality, helps us comprehend the thrust of this verse.

- B. Marriage stability and loyalty, like respect for parents, is a major pillar of societal strength and longevity.
- C. It needs to be emphasized that human sexuality is a gift from God. It was His idea and will for mankind. The guidelines are not meant to thwart mankind's freedom or joy, but to give some godly guidelines for fallen humanity. The bounds are revealed for our long-term benefit and happiness. Although mankind has abused sexuality, as they have all of God's gifts, it is still a powerful drive within humankind which must be under God's control and guidance.
- D. Sex must be guarded so that the sacredness of the human person (female or male) is respected because they are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27). Our fallen focus on "me" is all too obvious in this area.

5:28 "heart" See Special Topic at 5:8.

5:29-30 This is obviously hyperbolic for emotional impact! Sin is dangerous and its consequences eternal!

5:29 "if" These are FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which were assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Humans have been affected by Genesis 3. We are not what we were created to be.



NASB "makes you stumble"

NKJV, NRSV,

TEV "causes you to sin"

NJB "should be your downfall"

This term was used of the baited, triggering mechanism of an animal trap. See the parallel in Mark 9:43-48 and Jesus' second mention of this subject in Matt. 18:8-9. Since all humans are affected by sin (different ones for different individuals), we must take personal responsibility to remove ourselves from places/things/occasions of temptation (i.e., Proverbs 1-9; Eph. 4:27; 6:10-18; James 4:7; I Pet. 5:8-9). We will not be able to blame Satan, or heredity, or circumstances for our sins when we all stand before God and give an account of the gift of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15). We are free moral agents made in God's image, accountable to Him for our lives!

☐ "lose" This term is in both vv. 29 and 30. See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 2:13.

5:29,30 "hell" There is an eternal hell and sin is the ticket to get in! See Special Topic at 5:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:31-32

³¹"It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce';³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

5:31 "sends his wife away" Verses 27-32 and 19:3-12 deal with the same issue. Be careful not to read your preconceived cultural notions into these passages! In context, Jesus was showing the ways that one commits adultery other than those taught by the Scribes: (1) mental lust and (2) putting away one's spouse except for sexual unfaithfulness (cf. Deut. 24:1). Jesus shows Himself to be Scripture's proper interpreter (i.e., 5:17-19,21-48).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "a certificate of divorce"

TEV "notice of divorce"

NJB "a writ of dismissal"

This is a quote from Deut. 24:1-4. Moses did this to protect the wife who had no rights or resources at all in that day and culture. Remarriage was assumed. However, Jesus asserted that was a concession to their fallenness, not God's ideal. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin, but it is a failure which affects societal stability.

5:32

NASB, NRSV "except for the reason of unchastity"

NKJV "for any reason except sexual immorality"

TEV "she has not been unfaithful"

NJB "except for the cause of an illicit marriage"

This “exception clause” is unique to Matthew’s Gospel. Probably because it related to Jewish views of inheritance rights given by God which Gentiles would not comprehend.

“Unchastity” is the term *porneia*, as in v. 27. This referred to any kind of sexual misconduct. This was often interpreted as “fornication” or “unfaithfulness.” There were two rabbinical schools of interpretation: (1) Shammai, who allowed divorce for inappropriate sexual activity only (“some indecency,” Deut. 24:1) and (2) Hillel, who allowed divorce for any reason (i.e., “she finds no favor in his eyes,” Deut. 24:1). Divorce had become a major problem within Judaism. Some scholars see this term related not to sexual intercourse, but to incest (cf. Leviticus 18; I Cor. 5:1). Still others think it relates to the issue of virginity discussed in Deut. 22:13-21. In the OT adultery affected family inheritance, which was sacred and given by God (Joshua 12-24). The “Year of Jubilee” is an illustration of this concern.

▣ **“makes her commit adultery”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE. The PASSIVE VOICE is crucial in a proper interpretation of “causes her to commit adultery.” The very act of divorcing a wife caused the woman to be stigmatized by the community as an adulteress whether or not she was guilty. The one remarrying her also became stigmatized. This is not a dogmatic statement referring to remarriage as being adultery (cf. A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1 p. 155).

It needs to be stated that this difficult subject of divorce must be dealt with in context. Here it is a message to disciples while in Matt. 19:1-9 and Mark 10:2-12 the setting is Pharisaic trick questions. We must guard against forming our theology on divorce by merging these contexts and claiming to have Jesus’ neutral theological views on the subject.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:33-37

³³Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ ³⁴But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ³⁶Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.”

5:33 “vows” This was an allusion to several OT texts. This did not mean cursing, but God’s name being brought into a conversation to assure the truth of one’s statements (cf. Matt. 23:16-22; James 5:12). Vows or oaths in the OT could refer to (1) worship (cf. Deut. 6:15); (2) legal proceedings (cf. Exod. 20:7; Lev. 19:12); or (3) affirmations of doing something (cf. Lev. 27; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-22). Jesus was involved in an oath in Matt. 26:63-64. Paul made oaths in II Cor. 1:23, Gal. 1:20, Phil. 1:8, and I Thess. 2:5. Another oath is found in Heb. 6:16. The focus is not on oath taking, but on failing to perform the vow!

5:34-36 This showed how elaborately the rabbis had developed binding and unbinding oaths (cf. 23:16-22). It was a way to appear to be telling the truth by associating one’s statement with Deity, but all the time knowing that one’s oath, expressed in certain ways, was not legally binding.

5:34 “make no oath” Jesus testified under oath in Matt. 26:63-64. Paul often confirmed his words by oaths in God’s name (cf. II Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; I Thess. 2:5,10). The issue is truthfulness, not restricting oaths (cf. James 5:12).

5:37 “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’” Jesus was concerned with truthfulness, not form! Others who claim to know God should be honest and trustworthy, not tricky.



NASB	“evil”
NKJV, NRSV	“the evil one”
TEV, NJB	“the Evil One”

The inflected form of the term in Greek can either be NEUTER, “evil” or MASCULINE, “the evil one” (see special Topic at 4:5). This same ambiguity occurs in 6:13; 13:19,38; John. 17:15; II Thess. 3:3; I John. 2:13,14; 3:12; 5:18-19.

Evil has several forms.

1. a fallen world system, Genesis 3; Eph. 2:2; James 4:4
2. personal evil, Eph. 2:2
3. fallen individuals, Eph. 2:3; James 4:1-2

Evil looks for an opportunity to kill, steal, and destroy. Only the mercy of God, His Son, and His Spirit can enable us to live happy, purposeful, contented lives!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:38-42

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek to him also. ⁴⁰If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴¹Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴²Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”

5:38 “an eye for an eye” This is an allusion to Exod. 21:24, Lev. 24:20, and Deut. 19:21. This law, like divorce certificates, was originally intended to deal with a societal problem by attempting to limit personal revenge. It did not allow individuals or families to take revenge, but was a guideline for the court. It was often reduced to monetary equivalents by the Jewish judges. However, the principle of limited personal revenge remains.

5:39-42 This was a series of five examples of Jesus’ new ethics concerning our attitude toward others, both insiders and outsiders. These are historically conditioned examples. They advocate an attitude, not a hard and fast rule for every society or age. It is the spirit of the believing offended party which should issue in positive actions of love. This should not be interpreted as covering inappropriate or repeated requests from tricky or lazy people.

5:39 “an evil person” This could, in context, refer to the first century legal system in the sense that it is better to endure additional insults than take a covenant brother to an unbelieving judge. If “evil” relates to v. 37, it could refer to the Evil One. The Charles B. Williams Translation, *The New Testament in the Language of the People*, gives a third option, “the one who injures you.”

5:40 “shirt. . .coat” The first item of clothing refers to an under garment and the second to an outer garment. This is a hyperbolic statement. Jesus is not advocating nudity! This is an allusion to Exod. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:10-13. The central truth of this entire section is that Christians should go beyond what others expect of them. The purpose is to encourage unbelievers to be attracted to God by His people’s actions (cf. 5:16; I Pet. 2:12).

5:41 This is historically conditioned to a time when one nation militarily occupied another. The word “force” was of Persian derivation, originally referring to a postal carrier. It came to be the term used for forced labor of any kind by an occupying military or civil government. An example of this is Matt. 27:32. Christians are to go beyond even what is demanded or expected.

5:42 This was not meant to be taken as a hard and fast rule about lending, but an attitude of love and openness toward others, especially the poor, needy, and outcast (cf. Exod. 22:25; Deut. 15:7-11; Pro. 19:17).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:43-48

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

5:43 The quote referred to by Jesus is a composite.

1. “You shall love your neighbor” is from Lev. 19:18. Jesus seems to see this as a crucial text, even listed with the Ten Commandments in Matt. 19:18-19. In Mark 12:31, it is the second greatest commandment after Deut. 6:4-5, and in a similar way in Luke 10:25-28. Paul uses this text as a summary of the entire Law in Rom. 13:8-10.
2. “And hate your enemy” is not a quote from the OT, but a commonly drawn inference by Jewish, exclusivistic religionists (i.e., Sadducees, Pharisee, Essenes).

How different is the new Kingdom ethic from the fallen world model of “self,” “more for me at any cost,” “what’s in it for me”! Knowing God changes everything (cf. 5:20,48)!

5:44 The KJV adds a phrase from Luke 6:27-28. It does not appear in ancient Greek uncial manuscripts \aleph or B or several other geographically separated early manuscripts.

In verse 44 there are two PRESENT IMPERATIVES: “keep on loving and praying” and one PRESENT PARTICIPLE, “the one who keeps on persecuting.” These PRESENTS speak of ongoing commands both of loving and forgiving on the part of the believer as well as the possibility of ongoing persecution.

The Kingdom is radically different from the current world order!

5:45 “that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” Believers’ lifestyles clearly reveal whose family they belong to: God’s or Satan’s. Children act like their fathers (cf. Lev. 19:2).

5:46-47 The actions of believers must go beyond the expected social acts of unbelievers. These verses contain two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which implied probable future action.

5:46 “rewards” This was a recurrent theme in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. 6:1,2,4,6). See Special Topic at 5:12.

5:48

NASB “you are to be perfect,”

NKJV “you shall be perfect”

NRSV “be perfect”

TEV, NJB “you must be perfect”

This is an allusion to Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7,26. This term literally meant “mature” or “fully equipped.” This is a strong statement that God’s ultimate standard of righteousness is Himself (cf. Deut. 18:13). Humans cannot achieve perfection except in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21). However, believers must strive for it in their daily lives. There must be a theological balance between (1) salvation being accepted as a free gift of God through Christ, which is called positional sanctification and (2) striving toward Christlikeness, which is called progressive sanctification.

Some interpreters see this verse as a summary of the immediate paragraph only. If so, it would focus on the inclusive love of God that His children should emulate.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Romans 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

Initial Response

Acts 20:23; 26:18

Romans 15:16

I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11

II Thessalonians 2:13

Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12

I Peter 1:12

A Progressive Christlikeness

Romans 6:19

II Corinthians 7:1

Ephesians 1:4; 2:10

I Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23

I Timothy 2:15

II Timothy 2:21

Hebrews 12:14

I Peter 1:15-16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Did Jesus reinterpret the OT or change it?
2. What does “fulfill” mean in vv. 17 and 18?
3. Can one lose his salvation for calling another person a derogatory name (v.22)?
4. What do vv. 23-24 say to our modern worship practices?
5. Is remarriage adultery?
6. Is swearing in court a sin?
7. Explain how vv. 17-20 and 48 frame the rest of the verses.

MATTHEW 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Teaching About Almsgiving	Do Good to Please God	Teachings in Practical Piety	Teaching About Charity	Almsgiving in Secret
6:1	6:1-4	6:1	6:1	6:1-4
6:2-4		6:2-4	6:2-4	
Teaching About Prayer	The Model Prayer		Teaching About Prayer	Prayer in Secret
6:5-15	6:5-15	6:5-6	6:5-6	6:5-6
				How to Pray The Lord's Prayer
		6:7-8	6:7-13	6:7-15
		6:9-15		(9-13)
			6:14-15	
Teaching About Fasting	Fasting to be Seen Only by God		Teaching About Fasting	Fasting in Secret
6:16-18	6:16-18	6:16-18	6:16-18	6:16-18
Treasures in Heaven	Lay Up Treasures in Heaven		Riches in Heaven	True Treasures
6:19-21	6:19-21	6:19-21	6:19-21	6:19-21
The Light of the Body	The Lamp of the Body		The Light of the Body	The Eye, the Lamp of the Body
6:22-23	6:22-23	6:22-23	6:22-23	6:22-23
God and Mammon	You Cannot Serve God and Riches		God and Possessions	God and Money
6:24	6:24	6:24	6:24	6:24
Care and Anxiety	Do Not Worry			Trust in Providence
6:25-34	6:25-34	6:25-33	6:25-27	6:25-34
			6:28-34	
		6:34		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-8 AND 16-18

- A. Chapter 5 describes the characteristics of God’s new people and God’s view of true righteousness. Chapter 6 relates to the Jews’ traditional view of what constituted righteousness (i.e., almsgiving, prayer, fasting).
- B. These are not so much specific rules, but an attitude check for believers. For a true definition of righteousness, see 5:20, 48. This can only be ours as a gift of God in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21). However, our gratitude moves us toward Christlikeness.
- C. The radical commitment that is required for disciples is clearly presented, not in concrete rules but in spiritual principles.
- D. There is both a positive and negative purpose of the Sermon on the Mount.
 1. to show us the kind of life God has a right to expect His people to live, the pattern for a Spirit-filled life
 2. to show man’s inability to keep God’s commandments.
 It shows us our sinfulness, much like the Ten Commandments (cf. Gal. 3:15-29). No one can stand in its searchlight.
- E. It is possible that vv. 5 and 6 address Jewish problems in prayer, while 7 and 8 address pagan problems in prayer.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-4

1“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. **2**So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. **3**But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4**so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

6:1

NASB, NRSV “Beware of practicing”
NKJV “take heed that you do not do”
TEV “Be careful not to perform”
NJB “Be careful not to parade”

“Beware” is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is literally “think constantly.” God looks at the heart (motive) before the hand (action)!

▣ **“your righteousness”** This passage deals with three aspects of first century Jewish religious practices which were thought to make one right with YHWH: (1) almsgiving (vv. 2-4); (2) prayer (vv. 5-15); and (3) fasting (vv. 16-18). Beware of religious exhibitionism (cf. 5:20). Many things can be good or evil depending on our attitude, motive, and purpose!

“Righteousness” stood for almsgiving in Jesus’ day. Almsgiving was a weekly Jewish system of free will offerings to help the poor and needy.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING

- I. The term itself
 - A. This term developed within Judaism (i.e., the Septuagint period).
 - B. It refers to giving to the poor and/or needy
 - C. The English word, almsgiving, comes from a contraction of the Greek term *eleēmosunē*.
- II. Old Testament concept
 - A. The concept of helping the poor was expressed early in the Torah
 1. typical context, Deut. 15:7-11
 2. “gleaning,” leaving part of the harvest for the poor, Lev. 19:9; 23:22; Deut. 24:20

3. "sabbath year," allowing the poor to eat the produce of the seventh, fallow year, Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:2-7.
- B. The concept was developed in Wisdom Literature (selected examples)
1. Job 5:8-16; 29:12-17 (the wicked described in 24:1-12)
 2. the Psalms, 11:7
 3. Proverbs 11:4; 14:21,31; 16:6; 21:3,13

III. Development in Judaism

- A. The first division of the Mishnah deals with how to treat the poor, needy, and local Levites.
- B. Selected quotes
1. Ecclesiasticus (also known as the Wisdom of Ben Sirach) 3:30, "as water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin" (NRSV)
 2. Ecclesiasticus 29:12, "store up almsgiving in your treasury and it will rescue you from every disaster" (NRSV)
 3. Tobit 4:6-11, "for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practice righteousness^b give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. ⁸If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. ⁹So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. ¹⁰For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. ¹¹Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High." (NRSV)
 4. Tobit 12:8-9, "⁸Prayer and fasting^d is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing^e. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. ⁹For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life." (NRSV)
- C. The last quote from Tobit 12:8-9 shows the problem developing. Human actions/human merits were seen as the mechanism for both forgiveness and abundance.

This concept developed further in the Septuagint, where the Greek term for "almsgiving" (*eleēmosunē*) became a synonym for "righteousness" (*dikaionē*). They could be substituted for each other in translating the Hebrew "righteousness" (BDB 842, God's covenant love and loyalty, cf. Deut. 6:25; 24:13; Isa. 1:27; 28:17; 59:16; Dan. 4:27).

- D. Human acts of compassion became a goal in themselves to achieve one's personal abundance here and salvation at death. The act itself, instead of the motive behind the act, became theologically preeminent. God looks at the heart, then judges the work of the hand. This was the teaching of the rabbis, but it somehow got lost in individual self-righteousness (cf. Micah 6:8).

IV. New Testament reaction

- A. The term is found in
1. Matt. 6:1-4
 2. Luke 11:41; 12:33
 3. Acts 3:2-3,10; 10:2,4,31; 24:17
- B. Jesus addresses the traditional understanding of righteousness as (cf. II Clement 16:4)
1. almsgiving
 2. fasting
 3. prayer
- C. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7): Some Jews were trusting in their actions. These actions are meant to flow out of a love for God, His word and covenant brothers and sisters, not self-interest or self-righteousness! Humility and secrecy become guidelines for proper actions. The heart is crucial. The heart is desperately wicked. God must change the heart. The new heart emulates God!

▣ **"before men"** There are some things that believers should do "before men."

1. let your light shine, 5:16
2. confess Christ, 10:32

▣ **"to be noticed by them"** The English term "theatrical" is derived from this Greek word (*theamai*), which meant "to behold attentively." The term "hypocrites" in v. 2 also has a theatrical etymology. The Pharisees were play-acting religion (cf. 5:20).

▣ **“reward”** This term is found in vv. 1,2,5,16 and means “to receive a full payment” (cf. Phil. 4:18). The Bible teaches rewards, but on the basis of believers’ attitude, not their actions alone (i.e., 7:21-23). A similar phrase in v. 2 was an idiom for “a signed and received receipt.” See Special Topic at 5:12.

6:2 “give to the poor” Almsgiving was a means of helping the poor on a weekly basis. The rabbis even thought of it as having saving qualities (cf. Tobit 12:8-9; Ecclesiasticus 3:30; 29:11-12).

▣ **“do not sound a trumpet before you”** This has often been interpreted as alluding to the thirteen metal, trumpet-shaped receptacles in the Temple where money was placed (cf. Luke 21:2). Each container had a different designated purpose. However, no clear historical evidence has been found in Jewish literature for these receptacles. Therefore, it is probably a figure of speech of someone calling attention to their religious acts.

▣ **“hypocrites”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HYPOCRITES

This compound term is literally translated “to judge under.” It could have meant (1) a theatrical word for speaking from behind a mask or (2) its earlier usage was “to over interpret.” In this context it referred to religious play-acting.

Pharisees acted out religious rites and rituals in order to be praised by other humans, not in order to please God (although I am sure that was one of several motives):

1. gave alms, not only to help the poor, but to be praised by humans, Matt. 6:2
2. prayed in the synagogue and in public to be seen by others, Matt. 6:5
3. when they fasted they looked disheveled so others would be impressed with their spirituality, Matt. 6:16
4. they tithed the kitchen supplies, but missed the weighty matters of the Law, Matt. 23:23
5. they cleaned the outside of the cup, but not the inside, Matt. 23:25 (cf. Mark 7:1-8)
6. they were self-righteous, Matt. 23:29-30
7. they prevented others from entering the Kingdom, Matt. 23:13-15
8. they tried to trap Jesus with tricky questions, not a search for true wisdom, Matt. 22:15-22
9. they have a special place in hell, Matt. 24:51
10. they were a whitewashed tomb full of uncleanness, Matt. 23:27 (cf. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, p. 415)

▣
NASB “that they may be honored by men”
NKJV “that they may have glory from men”
NRSV “so that they may be praised by others”
TEV “so that people will praise them”
NJB “to win human admiration”

God looks at the heart (cf. I Sam. 16:7; Pro. 21:2; Luke 16:15; John. 12:43; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23).

▣
NASB “Truly I say to you,”
NKJV “Assuredly, I say to you”
NRSV “Truly, I tell you”
TEV “remember this”
JB “I tell you solemnly”
NJB “In truth I tell you”

Literally “amen, amen” (cf. vv. 2, 5, 16), this was used exclusively by Jesus to introduce significant statements. The OT root of “amen” is faithfulness, loyalty, or dependability. This had the connotation of, “I am making a faithful statement, listen clearly.” See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ **“they have their reward in full”** This word “reward” found in the Egyptian papyri (see James Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 413) denoted a wage or earnings. This word occurs in 5:12,46; 6:1,2,5,16.

6:3 This was an idiom for secrecy. It was not meant to be taken literally. It was a reaction to and guard against religious exhibitionism.

6:4 “your Father who sees what is done in secret” The significance of private personal faith is found in the believer’s personal trust in God. Believers show their personal relationship to God in unobserved activity more than any other way (cf. vv. 6, 18). Attitude, not secrecy, is the key (cf. 5:16). Often monetary stewardship can be a great witness, e.g., J. C. Penney and R. G. Letourneau.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
 - A. Physical body parts
 1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
 4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 5. face – Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
 6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 3:3-22
 - B. Physical actions
 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
 3. closing the door of Noah’s ark – Gen. 7:16
 4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
 5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
 6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6
 - C. Human emotions (some examples)
 1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
 2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
 3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
 4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19
 - D. Family terms (some examples)
 1. Father
 - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
 - b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
 - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
 2. Parent – Hosea 11:1-4
 3. Mother – Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13
 4. Young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3
- II. Reasons for the use of this type of language
 - A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
 - B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
 - C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
 - D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

▣ **“will reward you”** The Greek term “openly” is found in the NKJV in vv. 4,6, and 18. The early Greek uncial manuscripts K, L, & W, and the Greek text used by Chrysostom add “openly” here and in vv. 6 and 18. This word does not occur in the major

ancient Greek manuscripts \aleph , B, D, Z; nor the Greek texts used by Origen, Cyprian, Jerome, or Augustine. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text a “B” rating (almost certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:5-15

⁵“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. ⁷And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. ⁹Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’

¹⁴For if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

6:5 “for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues” The common posture for Jewish prayer was standing with arms and face lifted to heaven with the eyes open. The issue is not the position of the body, but the exhibitionist attitude of the heart.

▣ **“and on the street corners”** The Jews in Jerusalem during Jesus’ time prayed at three specific times during the day. Two of these times were 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. when certain sacrifices (the continual) were being offered in the Temple; to these times they added high noon. Some self-righteous leaders would arrange to find themselves in public, crowded places at these set times, so that all could see their piety.

▣ **“so that they may be seen by men”** This is literally “to shine before men.” Believers are admonished to let their lights shine before people, but the purpose is that God, not themselves, be glorified (cf. v. 2; 5:16 and John. 12:43; Phil 2:15). See Special Topic: Hypocrites at 6:2.

▣ **“Truly”** See Special Topic at 5:18.

6:6

NASB “go into your inner room”

NKJV, NRSV “go into your room”

TEV “go to your room”

NJB “go to your private room”

This referred to a storeroom (cf. Luke 12:24). This was from a Greek term that etymologically meant “to cut,” which implied a separate or partitioned room (cf. 24:26; Luke 12:3). This would have been the only room with a door.

SPECIAL TOPIC: USE OF THE WORD “DOOR” IN THE NT

The NT uses “door” in several senses.

1. literal
 - a. of homes, Matt. 6:6; Mark 1:33; 2:2; 11:7, upper room, John 20:19,26
 - b. of the temple, Acts 3:2; 21:30
 - c. of a prison, Acts 5:19,23; 12:6; 16:26-27
 - d. of a tomb, Matt. 27:60; 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3
 - e. of a sheepfold, John 10:1,2
 - f. of a courtyard, John 18:16; Acts 12:13

2. metaphorical
 - a. nearness of time, Matt. 24:33; Mark 13:29; Acts 5:9; James 5:9
 - b. restriction on entrance to true faith, Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; Rev. 3:20
 - c. opportunity of saving faith lost, Matt. 25:10; Luke 13:25; Rev. 3:7
 - d. opportunity of saving faith, Acts 14:27; Rev. 3:7
 - e. opportunity for ministry, I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; Rev. 3:8
 - f. revelation, Rev. 4:1; 19:11
3. title for Jesus, John 10:7,9

6:7

NASB	“meaningless repetition”
NKJV	“vain repetitions”
NRSV	“heap up empty phrases”
TEV	“a lot of meaningless words”
NJB	“babble”

This word is used only here in the NT. Its meaning is uncertain. Notice the variety with which English versions translate this term! Jesus and Paul repeated prayers (cf. Matt. 26:44; II Cor. 12:8). Possibly the translation “meaningless phrases” is best. For possible biblical examples of the use of liturgical prayers, see I Kgs. 8:26 and Acts 19:34. The issue is not the number of times a person repeats a phrase, but the faithful/trusting/believing heart of the speaker.

6:8 “you” In context this EMPHATIC PRONOUN is in contrast to two groups: (1) the pagans of v. 7 or (2) the legalistic Pharisees of v. 5.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 9-15

- A. This sample prayer was first entitled “The Lord’s Prayer” by Cyprian, A.D. 250. However, the prayer was for Jesus’ disciples; the title, “The Model Prayer,” is a better characterization.
- B. The Model Prayer is made up of seven phrases. The first three relate to God. The last four relate to a person’s need.
- C. This prayer was possibly Jesus’ reapplication of the Ten Commandments to His day. The Beatitudes also possibly relate to the Ten Commandments (Decalogue). Matthew depicted Jesus as the second Moses. Paul used the same type of OT analogy by referring to Jesus as the second Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; I Corinthians 15; Phil. 2:6-11).
- D. The Model Prayer is stated in IMPERATIVES. They are examples of ENTREATY IMPERATIVES of request. We do not command God.
- E. Luke’s version is much shorter. It is found in chapter 11:2-4 and not in the Sermon on the Plain, chapter 6, which is the parallel to Matthew 5-7. The textually-controversial doxology of Matt. 6:13b is also missing from Luke’s version.

6:9

NASB, NRSV	“Pray, then, in this way”
NKJV	“in this manner, therefore, pray”
TEV	“This, then, is how you should pray”
NJB	“So you should pray like this”

“Pray” is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE which is a lifestyle command that denotes continuous, habitual action. This prayer was meant to be an example, not necessarily a set form. The scope and attitude of the prayer are far more important than the specific words. This can be illustrated by the fact that Luke’s version in 11:2-4 is different. Jesus may have taught this prayer often but in slightly different forms.

▣ **“our”** This prayer is for the gathered community, as well as private prayer. We are a family with one *Abba*, Father! In light of this, vv. 14-15 make much more sense.

▣ **“Father”** Father does not refer to sexual generation or chronological sequence, but the intimate personal relationships within a Jewish home. The OT background is Deut. 32:6, Ps. 103:13, Isa. 63:16, Mal. 2:10, and 3:17. This concept of God as Father was not a major theme in the OT nor in the rabbinical writings. It is astonishing that believers can call YHWH “Father” (cf. Rom. 8:15) through their faith relationship with Jesus! See Special Topic at 5:16.

6:9-10 “hallowed. . .come. . .done” These are all AORIST IMPERATIVES. Also they are all placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis. The PLACEMENT, the TENSE, and the MOOD all speak of urgency and emphasis. This is how believers should reverence God. The phrase “on earth as it is in heaven” refers to all three of these VERBS.

▣ **“Hallowed”** This term is from the root “holy” (cf. Heb. 10:29) and meant “honored,” “respected,” or “held in high esteem.” The VERB comes first in the Greek sentence for emphasis. This VERB is found in the Synoptic Gospels only four times (cf. Matt. 6:9; 23:17,19; Luke 11:2).

6:9 “name” This stood for the character and personality of God (cf. Ezek. 36:22; Joel 2:32). His name is to be made known in this fallen world by the obedience of His children (cf. Isa. 29:23).

6:10 “Your kingdom come” God was invoked in His capacity as King. This was a prayer for God’s control of earth as He has of heaven. God’s kingdom was expressed in the NT as both (1) present reality (cf. Matt. 4:17; 12:28; Luke 17:21) and (2) a future consummation (cf. Matt. 6:10; 13:2ff.; Luke 11:2; John. 18:36). This statement expresses the paradox of God’s rule which will be consummated with the Second Coming, but present now in the lives of true disciples. See Special Topic at 4:17.

6:11 “Give us” As the first three petitions dealt with how believers are to respect God, the next four deal with how they want God to treat them.

▣ **“this day”** God wants His children to live by faith in Him daily. One OT example was that the manna was given daily (cf. Exod. 16:13-21). In the Middle East bread is baked early every day and either eaten or dried hard by nightfall. Today’s bread will not do for tomorrow.

▣ **“daily”** This was a rare Greek word. It was used

1. in the Egyptian papyri of a master giving a slave enough food to accomplish an assigned task
2. possibly a Greek idiom “for necessary food for today” (“bread of our necessity”)
3. the Tyndale *Commentary on Matthew* has “Give us the necessary strength so that life’s trials do not become for us occasions of spiritual temptations,” p. 74.

Tertullian translated it “daily.” The word was used in the NT only here and in the parallel in Luke 11:3.

▣ **“bread”** Several possibilities of how “bread” should be understood.

1. literal bread
2. the Lord’s Supper (cf. Acts 2:46)
3. the Word of God, the Bible (cf. 4:4; Luke 4:4)
4. the Living Word, Jesus (cf. John 6:41,48,51,55)
5. the Messianic banquet (cf. Luke 14:15)

Option one fits the context best. However, metaphorically it represented God’s provision for all of life’s needs.

6:12

NASB, NRSV,

NJB “have forgiven”

NKJV, TEV, “forgive”

There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point related to the TENSE of the second use of the verb, “forgive.” The AORIST is found in MSS \aleph^* , B, Z, the Vulgate, and Peshitta. All other Greek MSS and ancient versions have the PRESENT. The term meant “to send away” or “to wipe away,” both of which express OT metaphors relating to forgiveness.

▣ **“debts”** The parallel in Luke 11:4 has “sins.” First century Judaism used “debts” (*opheilēmata*) as an idiom for “sins” (*hamartias*). In 6:14-15 another term is used, “trespasses” (*paraptōmata*). All of these refer to rebellion against God. Sin puts us in rebellion against the God of righteousness and holiness. There is a price to be paid for rebellion!

▣ **“as we also have forgiven our debtors”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. As God forgives believers they are able to forgive others (cf. 18:35)! One sign of our personal relationship with God through Christ is that we begin to emulate His actions.

6:13

NASB, NKJV “do not lead us into temptation”

NRSV “do not bring us to the time of trial”

TEV “do not bring us to hard testing”

NJB “do not put us to the test”

This is a NEGATIVE AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. This grammatical construction meant “do not ever begin an action.” There has been much discussion about this verse as compared with James 1:13, concerning God’s agency in testing. There is a play on the connotation of two Greek words translated “test” or “try.” The one here and in James 1:13 has the connotation of testing for the purpose of destroying [*peirasmō*]; the other has a connotation of testing for the purpose of strengthening [*dokimazo*]. God does not test believers so as to destroy, but to strengthen. See Special Topic at 4:1.

Possibly this referred to the intense governmental and legal trials of that day (cf. 26:41; Mark 13:8). C. C. Torrey in *The Four Gospels*, pp. 12, 143. translates it as “keep us from failing under trial” (cf. Luke 22:40).

☐
NASB “from evil”
NKJV, NRSV, JB “from the evil one”
TEV, NJB “from the Evil One”

It is impossible grammatically to determine whether this term was MASCULINE (see Special Topic at 4:5) or NEUTER. This same form referred to Satan in 5:37, 13:38, and John. 17:15. This same ambiguous form appears in 5:37; 6:13; 13:19,38; John. 17:15; II Thess. 3:3; I John. 2:13,14; 3:12; 5:18-19.

☐ The Doxology of verse 13b is not found in (1) the parallel of Luke 11:2-4; (2) the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts \aleph , B, D, or (3) the commentaries of Origen, Cyprian, Jerome, or Augustine. There are several forms of this doxology in the different Greek manuscripts of Matthew. It probably was added from I Chr. 29:11-13 as the Lord’s prayer began to be used in liturgical ways by the early Church. It was not original. Roman Catholic liturgy omits it because it is not in the Vulgate. A. T. Robertson commented on this text in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, “The Doxology is placed in the margin of the Revised Version. It is wanting in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts. The earliest forms vary much, some shorter, some longer than the one in the Authorized Version. The use of a doxology arose when this prayer began to be used as a liturgy to be recited or to be chanted in public worship. It was not an original part of the Model Prayer as given by Jesus,” p. 55. The UBS⁴ rates the omission as “A” (certain).

6:14-15 Verses 14-15 are the conclusion to the Model Prayer. They do not assert that our actions earn our salvation, but they should give evidence of our salvation (two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES). They are not the basis, but the results (cf. Matt. 5:7; 18:35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:36-37; James 2:13; 5:9). As we pray this prayer, “our Father,” we must live out this familial truth in our dealings with covenant brothers.

6:14 “transgressions” This is literally “to fall to one side.” This meant, as do most of the words for sin in Hebrew and in Greek, a deviation from a standard, which is the character of God. It implied a conscious act of crossing a set boundary.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:16-18

¹⁶Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ¹⁷But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face ¹⁸so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

6:16-18 These are additional examples of religious exhibitionism. See Special Topic: Hypocrites at 6:2.

6:16 “fast” There was only one fast specifically mentioned in the OT, the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16), which was observed in the seventh month. The Jewish leaders appointed additional fast days to remember specific times of stress in Israel’s national history (cf. Zech. 7:3-5; 8:19).

In addition, the rabbis increased the times of fasting to twice a week, on Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:12); Thursday because that was the day when they said Moses went up on Mt. Sinai and Monday because that was the day when he came down. They used these fasts as a means to flaunt their spirituality.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING

Fasting, though never commanded in the NT, was expected at the appropriate time for Jesus’ disciples (cf. 2:19; Matt. 6:16,17; 9:15; Luke 5:35). Proper fasting is described in Isaiah 58. Jesus set the precedent Himself (cf. Matt. 4:2). The early church fasted (cf. Acts 13:2-3; 14:23; II Cor. 6:5; 11:27). The motive and manner are crucial; the length and frequency are optional. OT fasting is not a requirement for NT believers (cf. Acts 15:6-29). Fasting is not a way of showing off one’s spirituality, but of drawing closer to God and seeking His guidance. It can be spiritually helpful.

The early church's tendencies toward asceticism caused scribes to insert "fasting" in several passages (i.e., Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30; I Cor. 7:5). For further information consult Bruce Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* published by United Bible Societies on these questionable texts.

▣ "gloomy face" This term occurs only here and Luke 24:17.

▣ "Truly" See Special Topic at 5:18.

6:17 This is the same truth as verse 6. The context is religious exhibitionism. Our spiritual lives are to be seen primarily by God! We seek His approval, not the approval of men.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus choose these three areas of abuse (almsgiving, prayer, and fasting) to condemn?
2. What areas do we use in our day in the same way?
3. Why is one's attitude more important than one's actions?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 19-24

- A. The truths of this section are repeated in the Gospel of Luke, but in different settings.
 1. humans must store up treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33-34)
 2. the eye is the lamp of the body (Luke 11:34-36)
 3. humans cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13)
 4. God's provision for nature serves as an example of God's provision for people (Luke 12:22-31)
Jesus repeated His teachings for different groups and used the same analogies in different settings.
- B. Jesus used nature to teach about God: (1) all things belong to God and (2) humans are more important than things or animals.
- C. This section must be understood not in literal terms, but in contrasts. Earthly possessions are not evil, but the misplaced priority of material things can be evil (cf. I Tim. 6:10). Mankind's undue anxiety about the normal needs of life shows a lack of faith in the care and provision of God (cf. Phil. 4:6). Trust is the key issue.
- D. This section of Scripture can be broken into three related contexts: (1) vv. 19-21; (2) vv. 22-24; and (3) vv. 25-34. This is similar to what the rabbis call "pearls on a string," which meant several unrelated subjects are dealt with in close proximity.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:19-23

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal; ²¹for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²²The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

6:19 “do not store up” This is literally “stop treasuring up treasures.” This same word play is also found in v. 20. This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act that is already in progress. The desire of fallen humanity is to try to provide, by means of their own resources, all that is needed for a happy life. The grammatical construction here shows that this is also a temptation for redeemed humanity. True happiness and success are found only in dependence on God and contentment in what He has provided (cf. Ecclesiastes 1-2; 2:24-25; 3:12,22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9; Phil. 4:11-12).

▣ **“treasures”** In the ancient world wealth emanated from three sources: (1) clothing, (2) food stuffs, and (3) precious metals or jewels. Each of these items may either be destroyed or stolen. Moths will attack clothing. Rust is from the root “to eat” or metaphorically “eat away” or “corrode” and was used of vermin eating food. Stealing referred to robbery of precious metals, jewels or the other two items. Basically this means that all of our worldly possessions are vulnerable. If one’s happiness depends on possessions, one could lose them at any moment. The false concept that contentment and happiness are found in physical things is stated in Luke 12:15.

▣ **“destroy”** The term meant “disfigure” (6:16), “to cause to disappear” (cf. 6:20, Acts 13:41; James 4:14).

▣ **“thieves break in and steal”** The term “break in” literally was “dig through.” Many homes of this period had mud walls. In the Greek language, the word for “robber” was from the compound term “mud digger.”

6:20 “but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, essentially referring to spiritual attitudes and actions. I Timothy 6:17-19 beautifully expresses the same concept. God Himself protects our heavenly treasure (cf. I Pet. 1:4-5).

The VERB in verse 20 is from the same root as the noun (COGNATE ACCUSATIVE). Literally this word play would have been “treasure up for yourselves treasure in heaven.”

6:21 “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” It is significant that the PLURAL PRONOUN which has been used in the previous verses now changes to the SINGULAR. This section teaches the transitoriness of earthly things and the eternity of spiritual things. It also emphasizes that where one puts one’s interest, resources, and energy truly reveals one’s priorities. The heart (a Hebrew idiom) is the center of the person. It expresses the totality of one’s self.

6:22 “The eye is the lamp of the body” The background of this statement was the Jewish concept of the eye being the window of the soul. What one allows into his thought-life determines who he is. Thought produces desire, desire produces action, action reveals the person.

6:22-23 These two verses are obviously antithetical. The antithesis was expressed in the terms: “good” versus “bad”; “singular” versus “double”; “generous” versus “stingy”; or “healthy” versus “diseased.” The eye was used because of the singleness that healthy vision provides versus the double or blurred vision which disease causes.

These verses contain three CONDITIONAL SENTENCES (“ifs”). The first two are THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL which speak of probable action. There are those who clearly see spiritual truths and there are those who are spiritually blind.

The last “if” is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which characterizes the blind who think they see!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GENEROUS/SINCERE (*HAPLOTES*)

This term (*haplotes*) had two connotations, “generous” or “sincere.” It was a metaphor related to vision. In the OT the eye was used as a metaphor for motive in two ways.

1. evil eye (stingy, cf. Deut. 15:9 and Ps. 23:6)
2. good eye (generous, cf. Pro. 22:9)

Jesus followed this usage (cf. Matt. 6:22-23; 20:15). Paul uses this term in two senses.

1. “simplicity, sincerity, purity” (cf. II Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22)
2. “liberality” (cf. Rom. 12:8; II Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:24

²⁴“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

6:24 “No one can serve two masters” This puts the world in stark reality. This is the reduction of true life to one simple choice. Humans are not really free. They serve one of two masters (cf. I John. 2:15-17).

☐ **“he will hate the one and love the other, or”** These are in a parallel relationship. The Hebrew terms “hate” and “love” were idioms of comparison (cf. Gen. 29:30, 31, 33; Mal. 1:2-3; Matt. 21:15; Luke 14:26; John. 12:25, and Rom. 9:13). It does not refer to hate in the traditional sense, but one’s priority.



NASB, NRSV “You cannot serve God and wealth”

NKJV “You cannot serve God and mammon”

TEV “You cannot serve both God and money”

NJB “You cannot be the slave both of God and of money”

The term “wealth” was from the Hebrew root “to store up” or “to entrust.” It was used originally to denote a person putting his trust in another by investing money with him. It came to mean “that in which one trusted.” It seems to emphasize the object on which one bases his security. A. T. Robertson asserted that this term was used by the Syrians for the name of a money god. Although this has been denied by more recent scholarship, it would seem to be a logical analogy. William Barclay, in his *Daily Study Bible*, on Matthew, vol. 1 p. 252, asserts that in the ancient Mediterranean world mammon came to be spelled with a capital “M,” a way to designate deity.

Money itself is not the problem, but the priority of money (cf. I Tim. 6:10). The tragedy of money is that we never have enough and soon it possesses us instead of us possessing it. The more we have, the more we are worried about losing it, and thereby, we are consumed with protecting it. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

- I. Perspective of the Old Testament as a whole
 - A. God is the owner of all things
 1. Genesis 1-2
 2. I Chronicles 29:11
 3. Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11
 4. Isaiah 66:2
 - B. Humans are stewards of wealth for God’s purposes
 1. Deuteronomy 8:11-20
 2. Leviticus 19:9-18
 3. Job 31:16-33
 4. Isaiah 58:6-10
 - C. Wealth is a part of worship
 1. the two tithes
 - a. Numbers 18:21-29; Deut. 12:6-7; 14:22-27
 - b. Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15
 2. Proverbs 3:9
 - D. Wealth is seen as a gift from God for covenant fidelity
 1. Deuteronomy 27-28
 2. Proverbs 3:10; 8:20-21; 10:22; 15:6
 - E. Warning against wealth at the expense of others
 1. Proverbs 21:6
 2. Jeremiah 5:26-29
 3. Hosea 12:6-8
 4. Micah 6:9-12
 - F. Wealth is not sinful in itself unless it is priority
 1. Psalm 52:7; 62:10; 73:3-9
 2. Proverbs 11:28; 23:4-5; 27:24; 28:20-22
 3. Job 31:24-28

II. Unique perspective of Proverbs

A. Wealth placed in arena of personal effort

1. slothfulness and laziness condemned—Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4-5,26; 12:24,27; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4,13; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16
2. hard work advocated—Proverbs 12:11,14; 13:11

B. Poverty versus riches used to illustrate righteousness versus wickedness—Proverbs 10:1ff; 11:27-28; 13:7; 15:16-17; 28:6,19-20

C. Wisdom (knowing God and His Word and living this knowledge) is better than riches—Proverbs 3:13-15; 8:9-11,18-21; 13:18

D. Warnings and admonitions

1. warnings
 - a. beware of guarantying a neighbor's loan (surety)—Proverbs 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26-27; 27:13
 - b. beware of getting rich through evil means—Proverbs 1:19; 10:2,15; 11:1; 13:11; 16:11; 20:10,23; 21:6; 22:16,22; 28:8
 - c. beware of borrowing—Proverbs 22:7
 - d. beware of fleetingness of wealth—Proverbs 23:4-5
 - e. wealth will not help on judgment day—Proverbs 11:4
 - f. wealth has many "friends"—Proverbs 14:20; 19:4
2. admonitions
 - a. generosity advocated—Proverbs 11:24-26; 14:31; 17:5; 19:17; 22:9,22-23; 23:10-11; 28:27
 - b. righteousness better than wealth—Proverbs 16:8; 28:6,8,20-22
 - c. prayer for need, not abundance—Proverbs 30:7-9
 - d. giving to the poor is giving to God—Proverbs 14:31

III. Perspective of the New Testament

A. Jesus

1. wealth forms a unique temptation to trust in ourselves and our resources instead of God and His resources
 - a. Matthew 6:24; 13:22; 19:23
 - b. Mark 10:23-31
 - c. Luke 12:15-21,33-34
 - d. Revelation 3:17-19
2. God will provide our physical needs
 - a. Matthew 6:19-34
 - b. Luke 12:29-32
3. sowing is related to reaping (spiritual as well as physical)
 - a. Mark 4:24
 - b. Luke 6:36-38
 - c. Matthew 6:14; 18:35
4. repentance affects wealth
 - a. Luke 19:2-10
 - b. Leviticus 5:16
5. economic exploitation condemned
 - a. Matthew 23:25
 - b. Mark 12:38-40
6. end-time judgment is related to our use of wealth—Matthew 25:31-46

B. Paul

1. practical view like Proverbs (work)
 - a. Ephesians 4:28
 - b. I Thessalonians 4:11-12

- c. II Thessalonians 3:8,11-12
- d. I Timothy 5:8
- 2. spiritual view like Jesus (things are fleeting, be content)
 - a. I Timothy 6:6-10 (contentment)
 - b. Philippians 4:11-12 (contentment)
 - c. Hebrews 13:5 (contentment)
 - d. I Timothy 6:17-19 (generosity and trust in God, not riches)
 - e. I Corinthians 7:30-31 (transformation of things)

IV. Conclusions

- A. There is no systematic biblical theology concerning wealth.
- B. There is no definitive passage on this subject, therefore, insights much be gleaned from different passages. Take care not to read your views into these isolated texts.
- C. Proverbs, which was written by the wise men (sages), has a different perspective than other types of biblical genre. Proverbs is practical and individually focused. It balances and must be balanced by other Scripture (cf. Jer. 18:18).
- D. Our day needs to analyze its views and practices concerning wealth in light of the Bible. Our priorities are misplaced if capitalism or communism are our only guide. Why and how one succeeds are more important questions than how much one has accumulated.
- E. Accumulation of wealth must be balanced with true worship and responsible stewardship (cf. II Cor. 8-9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:25-33

²⁵"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor do they reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! ³¹Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

6:25 "For this reason I say to you" This shows the logical connection with vv. 19-24.

☐ **"do not be worried about your life"** This is another PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which meant to stop an act that is already in progress. For a parallel passage, see Phil. 4:6. Verse 25 states a general principle in light of the previous verses. The KJV translation, "take no thought for," is unfortunate because it implies, in our day, that any planning about the future is inappropriate. This is surely not the case (cf. I Tim. 5:8). The key thought is "worry" (cf. vv. 25, 27, 28, 31, and 34).

☐ **"Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing"** Physical life is important but it is not ultimate. This world is simply the training ground for a fuller and more intimate fellowship with God. The biblical truth is that God does care for His children and that He will provide for their basic needs.

6:26, 28 "the birds of the air. . .the lilies of the field" The translation "wild birds" and "wild flowers" is appropriate because the text does not specify a particular kind of bird or flower but simply common ones. Because the setting was the Sermon on the Mount, perhaps Jesus pointed to a flock of wild birds or to the wild flowers nearby. This was a rabbinical hermeneutical argument from the lesser to the greater.

6:26 "Are you not worth much more than they" This is a rabbinical-type comparison of the lesser to the greater. The Bible is clear that God created and loves animals. But animals cannot fellowship with God as humans made in His image can. Be careful of making the lives of animals more valuable than the lives of humans. Animals were given for food and service after the Fall. They are not eternal, humans are! Evangelism is more important than "animal rights"! Most of the animal life which was created has gone out of existence. Some groups care more for animals than people! What a warped worldview. Animal rights groups care more for insects than unborn humans!

Just one more word, cruelty to animals says a lot about an uncaring, unfeeling person. God created animals with pain sensors just like us. Animals were part of the original creation of Genesis 1 and will be part of the new creation (cf. Isa. 11:6-9).

6:27

NASB “can add a *single* hour to his life”
NKJV “can add one cubit to his stature”
NRSV “add a single hour to your span of life”
TEV “live a bit longer”
NJB “add a single cubit to his span of life”

This is literally the Hebrew term “cubit.” Cubit referred to the length between a man’s elbow and his longest finger. It was an OT measurement used in construction and was normally about eighteen inches. However, there was a royal cubit used in the Temple which measured twenty-one inches. In the New Testament it was used either for height or time: of height in Luke 19:3 (also LXX of Ezek. 13:18) and of time in John. 9:21,23 and Heb. 11:11. Because it is ridiculous for a person to be able to physically grow over a foot taller, it is either (1) a metaphor for aging or (2) an oriental overstatement (hyperbole).

6:30 “But if God” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the perspective of the speaker or for his literary purposes. God does provide for His creation.

▣ **“which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace”** A common use for dry grass was to start the fire in small ovens used for baking bread. This was a metaphor for the transience of life, not an eschatological judgment. Believers are worth much more than beautiful wild grasses.

▣ **“You of little faith”** This phrase occurs several times in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Jesus’ teaching was designed to increase believers’ faith.

6:31 “Do not worry then” This is a NEGATIVE AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE, which meant “do not begin worrying” (cf. Phil. 4:6). An unhealthy emphasis on how one will provide for his basic needs shows a lack of trust in the God who has promised to provide for believers.

6:32

NASB “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things”
NKJV “For after all these things the Gentiles seek”
NRSV “For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things”
TEV “These are the things the pagans are always concerned about”
NJB “It is the gentiles who set their hearts on all these things”

One of the characteristics of fallen mankind is their insatiable desire for things. God knows believers need the things of this world to live. He will provide their needs, not always their wants.

6:33

NASB, NKJV “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness”
NRSV “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness”
TEV “Be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God”
NJB “Set your heart on his kingdom first, and on God’s saving justice”

This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE which speaks of a habitual command. The truth is that God must be the priority in believers’ lives. The phrase “His righteousness” was used here in an ethical sense, not in a legal (forensic) sense as in Paul’s writings. This ethical sense can be seen in Matt. 5:6,10,20, 6:1, Deut. 6:25, Isa. 1:27-28, and Dan. 4:27. This is not a call to works righteousness; rather, it suggests that once one knows Him, his life will be characterized by good works (cf. Eph. 2:10). Positional, imputed righteousness should be reflected in Christlike living. See Special Topics: Kingdom of God at 4:17 and Righteousness at 5:6.

The phrase “His Kingdom” was the concept of God’s current reign in human hearts that will one day be consummated over all the earth (cf. 6:10). It was the central focus of Jesus’ preaching. This kingdom ethic must be the highest priority. The early Greek manuscripts (א & B) do not have the GENITIVE PHRASE “of God” (cf. NRSV and TEV).

The term “first” is used by Jesus several times to illustrate the radical newness of the “new age” of the Spirit, which He inaugurated.

1. Matt. 5:24, be reconciled to your brother before worship
2. Matt. 6:33, seek the kingdom of God before personal needs/desires
3. Matt. 7:5, before judging others evaluate your own faults
4. Matt. 23:26, clean the whole life, inner and outer

▣ **“and all these things will be added to you”** This referred to the physical and normal needs of life. God will not leave believers stranded. This is a general principle, which cannot always answer the specific questions of why this individual or that individual suffers loss or is in need. Sometimes God will provide a time of need in order for believers to trust Him, turn to Him, or to improve their character. This statement is much like the book of Proverbs in the sense that it states general principles. They are not meant to explain every individual, particular occurrence.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:34

³⁴So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

6:34 This verse breaks the train of thought. The Christian life is a daily walk in a fallen world. Bad things that happen to the unbelieving person often happen to the believing person. This does not mean that God does not care. It simply means that believers are caught in a fallen world system. Do not let the problems of life trick you into thinking God does not care. See Hannah Whithall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How do verses 19-34 relate to the over all presentation of the Sermon on the Mount?
2. Were the people who were listening to Jesus storing up riches on earth? How does this relate to our modern emphasis on savings accounts, insurance, or planning for retirement?
3. How does one store up riches in heaven? What do these heavenly riches comprise?
4. Explain the spiritual truths of vv. 22-24 in your own words and from your own experience.
5. Is money evil?
6. Is worry a sin (v. 31)?
7. Does verse 33 teach works righteousness?
8. Explain why Christians suffer.

MATTHEW 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judging Others	Do Not Judge	Illustrations of Practical Meaning Of Jesus' Message	Judging Others	Do Not Judge
7:1-6	7:1-6	7:1-5	7:1-5	7:1-5
				Do Not Profane Sacred Things
		7:6	7:6	7:6
Ask, Seek, Knock	Keep Asking, Seeking, Knocking		Ask, Seek, Knock	Effectual Prayer
7:7-12	7:7-12	7:7-11	7:7-11	7:7-11
				The Golden Rule
		7:12	7:12	7:12
The Narrow Gate	The Narrow Way		The Narrow Way	The Two Ways
7:13-14	7:13-14	7:13-14	7:13-14	7:13-14
A Tree Known By Its Fruit	You Will Know Them By Their Fruits		A Tree and Its Fruit	False Prophets
7:15-20	7:15-20	7:15-20	7:15-20	7:15-20
I Never Knew You	I Never Knew You		I Never Knew You	The True Disciple
7:21-23	7:21-23	7:21-23	7:21-23	7:21-23
The Two Foundations	Build on the Rock		The Two House Builders	
7:24-27	7:24-27	7:24-27	7:24-25	7:24-27
			7:26-27	
			The Authority of Jesus	The Amazement of the Crowds
7:28-29	7:28-29	7:28-29	7:28-29	7:28-29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 7:1-29

- A. The Lucan parallel starts the same section with a positive statement “Be merciful as. . .” Luke 6:36-38, 41-42. Usually Luke’s accounts of Jesus’ sermons are briefer than Matthew’s, but here Luke records more of Jesus’ words.
- B. This chapter has several *asyndetons* (lack of linking particles, which was very unusual in Greek), vv. 1,6,7,13,15. It was a grammatical way of highlighting individual truths. It is presuppositional to assume that Jesus’ sermon had a unifying theme or structured outline. He may have been following the common rabbinical teaching technique called “pearls on a string,” which links unrelated topics together. Although some of the individual subjects at first seem unrelated to their surrounding contextual units, it is the best hermeneutical approach to interpret them in light of (1) context and (2) their usage in other Gospel parallels. The author of Matthew did have a unified theme and structured outline determining which of Jesus’ teachings to record and in what order to record them.
- C. It is possible to relate verses 1-12 to the preceding context in the following manner:
1. vv. 1-5 show the danger of 5:20 and 48
 2. v. 6 shows the danger of sentimental, nondiscerning love
 3. vv. 7-11, prayer is the believer’s key to proper discernment
 4. v. 12 is a summary of the great truth which should characterize all kingdom people
- D. This section, like all of the Sermon on the Mount, paints life in black and white. An excellent discussion of the relation between vv. 1-5 and 6 is found in William Hendricksen’s commentary on Matthew, “The Lord has been admonishing his listeners to abstain from judging others (vv. 1-5), yet also to judge (v. 6); not to be hypercritical, yet to be critical; to be humble and patient, yet not too patient,” p. 360.
- E. Remember this is not a presentation of the gospel, but an ethical message about life in the Messianic kingdom. Its three major truths are
1. the sin of religiosity
 2. the supremacy of Jesus’ teaching about God
 3. our response to Jesus and His teachings and God’s judgment of our response
- F. The Sermon on the Mount ends with three or four invitations and warnings related to the two choices facing mankind (7:13-27): (1) two ways, (2) two fruits, (3) two professions, and (4) two foundations. They all relate to the end-time judgment based on now-time actions.
- G. Verse 28 is a summary statement by Matthew. Matthew concludes all five of Jesus’ teaching sections with a summary statement. They may have formed his structure for the Gospel.
1. 7:28
 2. 11:1
 3. 13:53
 4. 19:1
 5. 26:1
- H. It must be remembered that at this early stage of Jesus’ preaching/teaching the full gospel was not yet known. The hearers, even the disciples, did not fully realize who Jesus was and the price discipleship would require to follow Him in persecution, rejection, and death.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-5

¹Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold,

the log is in your eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

7:1 "Do not" This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE meaning to stop an act already in process. Christians have a tendency to be critical of one another. This verse is often quoted to prove that Christians should not judge each other at all. But, vv. 5,6,15, I Cor. 5:1-12, and I John. 4:1-6 show that Jesus was assuming that believers evaluate one another spiritually. One's attitude and motives are the keys (cf. Gal. 6:1; Rom. 2:1-11; 14:1-23; James 4:11-12).

▣ **"judge"** This Greek word is the etymological source for our English word "critic." Another form of this same root in v. 5 is translated "hypocrite." It seems to imply a critical, judgmental, self-righteous spirit which judges others more severely than it does itself. It emphasizes one set of sins over another set of sins. It excuses one's own faults, but will not excuse the faults of others (cf. II Sam. 12:1-9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

This issue must be dealt with in two ways.

1. believers are admonished not to judge one another (cf. Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37,42; Rom. 2:1-11; James 4:11-12)
2. believers are admonished to evaluate leaders (cf. Matt. 7:6,15-16; I Cor. 14:29; I Thess. 5:21; I Tim. 3:1-13; and I John 4:1-6)

Some criteria for proper evaluation may be helpful.

1. evaluation should be for the purpose of affirmation (cf. I John 4:1 – "test" with a view toward approval)
2. evaluation should be done in humility and gentleness (cf. Gal. 6:1)
3. evaluation must not focus on personal preference issues (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33)
4. evaluation should identify those leaders who have "no handle for criticism" from within the church or the community (cf. I Timothy 3).

▣ **"so that you will not be judged"** This PASSIVE VOICE VERB was a way of referring to God. It was one of the common CIRCUMLOCUTIONS of Matthew. Christians still sin (cf. Rom. 7:1-25; I John. 1:9-2:1). It becomes foolish to be severely critical of others since the same deadly tendency abides in all believers, even if not in the same area.

7:2 The Greek text of v. 2 appears in a rhythmical, poetic form. This may have been a well-known proverb. The fact that this statement was used in the other Gospels in different settings backs up this interpretation.

This verse contains a significant truth which was repeated quite often in the NT (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 18:35; Mark 11:25; James 2:13, and 5:9). How believers act toward others is a reflection of how God has acted toward them. This is not meant to destroy the biblical truth of justification by faith. It is meant to emphasize the appropriate attitude and lifestyle of those who have been so freely forgiven.

7:3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye" "Speck" was used by classical Greek writers for the material that made up a bird's nest. Therefore, we are talking about bits of plant material and similar insignificant, small items.

▣ **"but do not notice the log that is in your own eye"** This was an Oriental overstatement. The "log" referred to some large piece of lumber, a building timber or rafter. Jesus often used this literary form of HYPERBOLE to communicate spiritual truths (cf. Matt. 5:29-30; 19:24 and 23:24).

7:5 "You hypocrite" This compound word came from the theatrical world and was used for an actor performing behind a mask. It came from two Greek words, "to judge" and "under." It described a person acting in one way but being another (Luke 18:9). A good example of this kind of activity can be seen in the life of David (cf. II Sam. 12:1-9). Jesus used this term for the self-righteous Pharisees in 5:20; 6:2,5,16; 15:1,7; 23:13.

This verse implies the appropriateness of believers' concern for other Christians when it is not done in a condescending, self-righteous manner. Galatians 6:1 is helpful regarding the proper attitude and motive for Christians' exhorting and correcting one another. The Church has always had to spiritually examine and exhort its leadership and membership.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:6

“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

7:6 “Do not give what is holy to dogs” This is an AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implied “never think of doing this activity.” The *Didache*, an extra-canonical book used by the early Church, applied this verse to unbaptized people being excluded from the Lord’s Supper (*Didache* 9:5 and Tertullian, *Depraesc.* 41). The real questions have always been: (1) What are the “holy things?” and (2) To whom do the terms “dog” and “hog” refer? The “holy things” must be taken in context of the entire Sermon on the Mount, which would be the teachings about God embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Or, to put it another way, the gospel.

Jesus’ reference to some human beings as “dogs” (cf. 15:26,27) or “swine” has caused great consternation among commentators. Both of these animals were vicious and repulsive in the society to which He spoke. There has been much discussion as to whom these terms refer. In the life of Jesus, it could have referred to the self-righteous Jewish leaders, as well as the apathetic and indifferent people of Palestine. This may be a prophetic reference to Jesus’ rejection and death by the Jewish leadership and the Jerusalem crowd. However, in the life of the Church, it is not so obvious to whom these terms refer. William Hendricksen, wrote in his commentary on Matthew, “This means, for example, that Christ’s disciples must not endlessly continue to bring the gospel message to those who scorn it” (p. 359). An example of this is recorded in Matt. 10:14, “shake the dust off your feet” (cf. Acts 13:51 and 18:5-6.) It is used of Jews in Phil. 3:2-3. It is used in Rev. 22:15 for unbelievers excluded from heaven.

▣ **“pearls”** These were very valuable in the ancient world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:7-11

⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

7:7 “ask. . . seek. . . knock” These are all PRESENT IMPERATIVES which speak of habitual, lifestyle commands (cf. Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:13). It is important that one balance human persistence with God’s responsive character. Believers cannot force God to do that which is not good for them. However, at the same time, they can bring any need to their heavenly Father. Jesus prayed the same prayer in Gethsemane three times (cf. Mark 15:36,39,41; Matt. 26:39,42,44). Paul also prayed three times about his thorn in the flesh (cf. II Cor. 12:8). But the great thing about prayer is not that one receives a specific answer to his request, but that he has spent time with the Father. See Special Topic: Prayer, Unlimited Yet Limited at 18:19.

7:8-10 Persistence is important (cf. Luke 18:2-8). However, it does not coerce a reluctant God but reveals the level of interest and concern of the person. Neither one’s many words nor his repeated prayers will motivate the Father to give that which is not in one’s best interest. The best thing believers get in prayer is a growing relationship and dependence on God.

7:9-10 Jesus used the analogy of a father and son to describe the mystery of prayer. Matthew gives two examples while Luke gives three (cf. Luke 11:12). The whole point of the illustrations was that God will give believers the “good things.” Luke defines this “good” as “the Holy Spirit” (cf. Luke 11:13). Often the worst thing our Father could do for us is answer our inappropriate, selfish prayers! All three examples are a play on things that look alike: stone as bread, fish as eel, and egg as a coiled, pale scorpion.

The questions of vv. 9 and 10 expect a “no” answer (like v. 16).

7:11 “If you then” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. In rather an oblique way this is an affirmation of the sinfulness of all men (cf. Rom. 3:9,23). The contrast is between evil human beings and a loving God. God shows His character by the analogy of the human family.

▣ **“give what is good to those who ask Him”** The parallel in Luke 11:13 has “Holy Spirit” in place of “good.” There is no ARTICLE in Luke; therefore, it could mean “the gifts” given by the Holy Spirit. This cannot be used as a proof text that one must ask God for the Holy Spirit, for the thrust of Scripture is that the Holy Spirit indwells believers at salvation (cf. Rom. 8:9 and Gal. 3:2,3,5,14). Yet there is a sense in which the filling of the Spirit is repeatable based on believers’ volition (cf. Eph. 5:18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:12

¹²"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

7:12 This has often been called the Golden Rule (cf. Luke 6:31). This summary statement was based on the assumption that believers are kingdom people with a new heart. This is not an egocentric fallen human response.

Jesus was the only One who put this proverb in a positive form, although the negative form was known from the rabbinical writings (cf. *Tobit* 4:15 and Rabbi Hillel, found in the Talmud, *b Shabbath* 31a, and Philo of Alexandria). This is not an emphasis on inappropriate self-worth, but it is a good word about knowing who believers are in Christ and projecting that sense of peace and goodness onto one's fellow human in Jesus' name. It requires that people do what is good and right, which is far more than refraining from doing wrong.

▣ **"for this is the Law and the Prophets"** The Law and the Prophets are the names of two of the three divisions of the Hebrew canon. This was an abbreviated Hebrew idiom referring to the entire OT (cf. 5:17).

It was significant that Jesus made a summary statement summing up all that the OT requires (cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34). This would have been extremely controversial to a first century Jew (cf. Rom. 13:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:13-14

¹³"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it. ¹⁴For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

7:13 Does this verse imply (1) entering a gate and then walking on a path; or (2) walking on a path which leads to a gate; or (3) is it an example of Hebrew parallelism? The fact that the gate appears first and then a way implies that this is referring to one's coming to know God in a personal way through Jesus' teachings and then living a new kingdom life. Some of the confusion here can be attributed to the threefold aspect of biblical salvation: (1) initial faith and repentance; (2) lifestyle Christlikeness; and (3) eschatological culmination. This parable is paralleled in Luke 13:23-27. See Special Topic: Use of "Door" in the NT at 6:6.

▣ **"the narrow gate"** This type of proverbial truth has traditionally been known as "the two ways" (cf. Deut. 30:15, 19; Ps. 1; Pro. 4:10-19; Isa. 1:19-20 and Jer. 21:8). It is hard to identify to whom Jesus was speaking: (1) to disciples, (2) to Pharisees, or (3) to the crowd. The general context would imply that the verse relates to 5:20 and 5:48. If so, then this would imply that the restricted nature of the gate was not rules, like Pharisaic legalism, but lifestyle love flowing out of a relationship with Christ. Christ does have rules (cf. Matt. 11:29-30), but they flow from a changed heart! If we place this verse in relation to a Jewish-Gentile context (cf. 6:7, 32), then it relates to belief in Jesus as Savior (gate) and Lord (way).

Starting with vv. 13-27 there is a series of contrasts related to religious people.

1. the two ways of performing religious duties (vv. 13-14)
2. the two types of religious leaders (vv. 15-23)
3. the two foundations of a religious life (vv. 24-27)

The question is not to which group of religious people Jesus referred, but to how religious people respond to their understanding of God's will. Some use religion as a guise to gain immediate praise and rewards from men. It is a "me" and "now" focused lifestyle (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23). True disciples order their lives in light of Jesus' words about the present and coming Kingdom of God.

▣ **"for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction"** "Way" can be (1) a metaphor for lifestyle and (2) the earliest title of the church (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; 18:25-26). This verse implies that salvation is not an easy decision which fits in with the mainstream of culture, but a decisive change of life which issues in obedience to the principles of God. The fact that one way leads to destruction shows the ultimate outcome of those who live lives independent of God. Often they seem very religious (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 7:21-23; Col. 2:23)!

This phrase has a typical Greek manuscript variable. In the first of the verse it says, "enter by the narrow gate," but in the second half "the gate" is omitted in the uncial manuscript \aleph^* , some old Latin manuscripts, some Vulgate manuscripts, the Diatessaron, and the Greek texts used by Clement and Eusebius. It is present in the uncials \aleph^1 , B, C, L, W, and some old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts. So the question is, "Was it inserted for balance" or "fell out by accident?" The UBS⁴ gives the longer text (i.e., its inclusion) a "B" rating (almost certain). However, its inclusion or exclusion does not change the meaning of the text. This is true of the vast majority of the NT variations in the 5,300 Greek New Testaments in existence today! See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 19.

7:14 In a day of “easy-believeism” this is a needed balance! This is not saying that Christianity is dependent on human effort, but rather that the life of faith will be filled with persecution. “Narrow” in this verse shares the same root word as “tribulation” or “persecution” in other NT passages. This emphasis is the exact opposite of Matt. 11:29-30. These two verses could be characterized as the “gate” and the “way.” We come to God through Jesus as a free gift of God (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9), but once we know Him, it is the pearl of great price for which we sell all that we have to follow Him. Salvation is absolutely free, but it costs everything that we are and have.

The phrase “few they are that find it” should be compared with Matt. 7:13 and Luke 13:23-24. The question is “are more going to be lost than saved?” Is the verse teaching this numerical distinction?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:15-20

¹⁵Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰So then, you will know them by their fruits.

7:15 “Beware of the false prophets” This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE. Jesus often spoke of false prophets (cf. Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 23-24; Mark 13:22). It is always difficult to identify false proclaimers because they usually have an element of truth in their message, and one is not always certain of their motives. Therefore, it becomes a crucial question as to how believers ascertain who are false proclaimers. There are several elements which must be brought into the evaluation.

1. Deut. 13:1-3 and 18:22
2. Titus 1:16 and I John. 4:7-11
3. I John. 4:1-3, Based on these criteria, Christians are able to make their evaluation.

Verses 15-20 deal with the issue of fruit inspection, while vv. 21-23 deal with people who bear seemingly good fruit, but have no personal relationship with God. There is both “a gate” and “a road”; both an initial faith and a life of faith!

▣ **“who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves”** The wolf is the traditional enemy of the sheep (cf. Matt. 10:16; Acts 20:29). This may mean that one of the difficult aspects of the road that leads to life is that there are people who try to detour us by means of a false message (cf. Eph. 4:14). Usually this message will have some personal advantage for the false prophets. They look so religious! Verses 21-23 show how wolves can look like sheep!

7:16 “You will know them by their fruits” This parable is unique to Matthew. This is a FUTURE INDICATIVE used as a PRESENT IMPERATIVE (see also v. 20). The question expected a “no” answer (like v. 10). “Know” is emphatic, implying that believers can and must recognize false proclaimers. We can know them by their lifestyle priorities and their doctrinal teachings. It has often been questioned as to which of these make up one’s fruit, when actually, both do.

1. their teachings (cf. Deut. 13:1-3; 18:22; Luke 6:45; I John. 4:1-3)
 2. their actions (cf. Luke 3:8-14; 6:43-46; John 15:8-10; Eph. 5:9-12; Col. 1:10; Tit. 1:16; James 3:17-18; I John. 4:7-11)
- How people live reflects
1. their true selves
 2. their relationship with God

It is difficult to hold together the twin truths of an absolutely free invitation to a free salvation, with the demand of Christlikeness. Yet both are true! A good brief discussion of this is in Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture*, pp. 104-116.

7:19 Because of John the Baptist’s use of this same phrasing in 3:10, many believe this was a common proverbial saying.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:21-23

²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²²Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE which speaks of continuing action. They said these words again and again.

▣ **“Lord, Lord”** The rabbis said that the doubling of a name shows affection (cf. Gen. 22:11).

The Greek word *kurios* was used in several distinct ways in the first century. It could simply mean (1) “sir”; (2) “master”; (3) “owner”; or (4) “husband.” But, in theological contexts, it is usually interpreted with its full meaning derived from the OT translation of the name YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14). In this context these men were making a theological statement about Jesus, but did not have a personal relationship with Him. It is difficult at this early stage in Jesus’ ministry to know how much theological weight to attach to this term. Peter also used it early as a theological title for Jesus (cf. Luke 5:8), as did Luke 6:46, where Jesus links one’s verbal affirmations with obedience. However, in this context the scene is eschatological—these false prophets will be judged at the Second Coming.

Were they saved and fell away or were they never saved?

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, the Septuagint of Exod.32:32; Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

- I. Old Testament
 - A. Korah, Numbers 16
 - B. Eli’s sons, I Samuel 2, 4
 - C. Saul, I Samuel 11-31
 - D. False prophets (examples)
 1. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 18:19-22
 2. Jeremiah 28
 3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
 - E. False prophetesses
 1. Ezekiel 13:17
 2. Nehemiah 6:14
 - F. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4

2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

- A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:3,9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus' words in the Parable of the Soils found in Luke 8:13. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture immature believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

1. Judas, John 17:12
2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
3. those spoken of in Matt. 7:21-23
4. those spoken of in Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10
5. the Jews of John 8:31-59
6. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
7. those of I Tim. 6:21
8. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
9. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
10. apparent believers of Heb. 3:16-10
11. false teachers, II Peter 2:19-21; Jude 12-19
12. antichrists, I John 2:18-19

C. Fruitless faith

1. Matthew 7:13-23
2. I Corinthians 3:10-15
3. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural, or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out not to be in the People of God (e.g., Rom. 9:6).

▣ **“will enter the kingdom of heaven”** This is a FUTURE INDICATIVE. The Kingdom was the central focus of the preaching of Jesus. It paralleled the phrase “the kingdom of God” used in Mark and Luke. Matthew, writing to Jews, used “heaven” as a CIRCUMLOCUTION for “God.” This verse implies a future orientation, while Matt. 3:2 implies a present orientation. The kingdom of heaven is the reign of God in human hearts now which one day will be consummated over all the earth. Jesus, in His model prayer of Matt. 6:10, was praying for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.

▣ **“but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The real focus of the next few verses is on those people who say they are kingdom people but live in ways that reveal they are not. This can be seen in the concluding portion of v. 23, and in vv. 24 and 26. The stated will of God is that one believe on His Son (cf. John. 6:29, 39-40). This personal relationship was what these religious, false prophets lacked (cf. v. 23).

This dialectic or paradoxical structure is so characteristic of biblical truth. God's will is both an initial decision (gate) and a continuing lifestyle (way).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

JOHN'S GOSPEL

- Jesus came to do the Father's will (cf. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38)
- to raise up on the last day all whom the Father gave the Son (cf. 6:39)
- that all believe in the Son (cf. 6:29,40)
- answered prayer related to doing God's will (cf. 9:31 and I John 5:14)

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- doing God's will is crucial (cf. Matt. 7:21)
- doing God's will makes one brother and sister with Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:50; Mark 3:35)
- it is not God's will for any to perish (cf. Matt. 18:14; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)
- Calvary was the Father's will for Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:42; Luke 22:42)

PAUL'S LETTERS

- the maturity and service of all believers (cf. Rom. 12:1-2)
- believers delivered from this evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4)
- God's will was His redemptive plan (cf. Eph. 1:5,9,11)
- believers experiencing and living the Spirit-filled life (cf. Eph. 5:17-18)
- believers filled with the knowledge of God (cf. Col. 1:9)
- believers made perfect and complete (cf. Col. 4:12)
- believers sanctified (cf. I Thess. 4:3)
- believers giving thanks in all things (cf. I Thess. 5:18)

PETER'S LETTERS

- believers doing right (i.e., submitting to civil authority) and, thereby, silencing foolish men (cf. I Pet. 2:15)
- believers suffering (cf. I Pet. 3:17; 4:19)
- believers not living self-centered lives (cf. I Pet. 4:2)

JOHN'S LETTERS

- believers abiding forever (cf. I John 2:17)
- believers key to answered prayer (cf. I John 5:14)

7:22 “Many will say to Me on that day” The structure of this Greek question expected a “yes” answer. The phrase “that day” referred to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This is often called Resurrection Day or Judgment Day, depending on whether you know Him personally or not.

▣ **“in Your name. . .in Your name. . .in Your name”** This phrase implied “in your authority” or “as your disciple.” It is obvious from v. 23 that they did not know Jesus in a personal way. Notice that the works they performed are godly works. But fruit without relationship is as abominable as relationship without fruit. These same types of miracles were performed by Jesus’ true disciples (cf. 10:1-4), including Judas Iscariot! Miracles are not automatically a sign from God (cf. Matt. 24:24 and II Thess. 2:9-10). Religious self-deception is a tragedy.

▣ **“cast our demons”** See Special Topics: Exorcism at 10:1 and The Demonic at 10:1.

7:23 “then I will declare to them” This Greek term meant “to profess” or “to confess” publicly (see Special Topic at 10:32). The implication of this statement is that Jesus has the position and authority to judge and that judgment is in relation to personal faith in Him.

▣ **“I never knew you”** This was a strong grammatical construction in Greek. The term “know” had an OT background meaning “intimate, personal relationship” (cf. Gen. 4:1 and Jer.1:5). It is frightening to think that the religious activity of v. 22 can be performed in such a self-deceiving way (cf. I Cor. 13:1-3).

▣ **“depart from Me”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, a continuing command rendered literally as “keep on departing from Me!” Thus the implied meaning is “you are already going away—just keep on going!” It is an allusion to Ps. 6:8.

▣ **“you who practice lawlessness”** It is shocking that these apparently effective religious leaders were totally independent of the power and person of Christ.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:24-27

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

7:24 “everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them” This parable was unique to Matthew and Luke (6:47-49). This is similar to the thought in the Hebrew word *Shema* of Deut. 6:1 where the word implies “to hear so as to do.” Christianity involves (1) knowledge; (2) personal response; and (3) a lifestyle of service. It is interesting that both builders are said to hear Jesus’ words. Again, it looks as if the context of these warnings is religious people who have heard and responded at some level.

7:24-27 These verses are similar to the truth of Matthew 13, the parable of the soils. It is only through persecution and adversity that the true character of “supposed” believers is revealed. A life of persecution is a real possibility for Christians (cf. John. 15:20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; I Pet. 2:21; 4:12-16).

7:26 It is interesting that both builders are said to hear Jesus’ words. Again, it looks as if the context of these warnings is religious people who have heard and responded to some degree. A.T. Robertson said in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, “Hearing sermons is a dangerous business if one does not put them into practice,” p. 63, and I would add, as is writing and delivering them (i.e., sermons).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:28-29

²⁸When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

7:28 “When Jesus had finished these words” Matthew used this phrase to close several of the major sections in his Gospel (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). They form one possible outline of the book.

▣ **“the crowds were amazed at His teaching”** Jesus’ teachings were so different from the scribes. He based His authority not on previous teachers, but on Himself. This aspect of Jesus’ authority is a characteristic of the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 8:9; 9:6, 8; 10:1; 21:23-24, 27; 28:18). Jesus claimed the place of both the promised Messiah (i.e., the new Moses or new law-giver) and the eschatological Judge.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is it sinful for Christians to judge one another?
2. What does verse 6 mean?
3. Does verse 7 imply that human persistence can avail in prayer?
4. Does verse 13 imply that it is hard to be saved? What exactly are the two ways?
5. How do you know who is a false prophet?
6. What does the term “fruit” mean?
7. Is it possible for successful ministries to be empowered apart from a personal relationship with Christ?
8. What is the relationship between hearing and doing in the Christian faith?
9. Is persecution necessary in the Christian life?

MATTHEW 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Cleansing of a Leper	Jesus Cleanses a Leper	Events in Galilee (8:1-9:38)	Jesus Makes a Leper Clean	Cure of a Man with Skin-disease
8:1-4	8:1-4	8:1-4	8:1-2 8:3-4	8:1-4
The Healing of a Centurion's Servant	Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant	8:5-13	Jesus Heals a Roman Officer's Servant 8:5-6 8:7 8:8-9 8:10-13b 8:13c	Cure of a Centurion's Servant 8:5-13
8:5-13	8:5-13	8:5-13	8:5-6 8:7 8:8-9 8:10-13b 8:13c	8:5-13
The Healing of Many People	Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed Many Healed After Sabbath Sunset	8:14-17	Jesus Heals Many People 8:14-15 8:16-17	Cure of Peter's Mother-in-law 8:14-15 A Number of Cures 8:16-17 (17b)
8:14-17	8:14-15 8:16-17	8:14-17	8:14-15 8:16-17	8:14-15 A Number of Cures 8:16-17 (17b)
The Would-be Followers of Jesus	The Cost of Discipleship	8:18-22	The Would-be Followers of Jesus 8:18-19 8:20 8:21 8:22	Unconditional Commitment 8:18-20 8:21-22
8:18-22	8:18-22	8:18-22	8:18-19 8:20 8:21 8:22	8:18-20 8:21-22
The Calming of a Storm	Wind and Waves Obey Jesus	8:23-27	Jesus Calms a Storm 8:23-27	The Calming of the Storm 8:23-27
8:23-27	8:23-27	8:23-27	8:23-27	8:23-27
The Healing of the Gadarene Demoniacs	The Demon Possessed Men Healed	8:28-34	Jesus Heals Two Men with Demons 8:28-29 8:30-31 8:32 8:33-34	The Demoniac of Gadara 8:28-34
8:28-34	8:28-34	8:28-34	8:28-29 8:30-31 8:32 8:33-34	8:28-34

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 8:1-34

- A. Chapters 8 and 9 form a literary unit of ten miracles describing Jesus' power and authority not only over human beings, but over disease and nature. It is not by accident that these power miracles follow the Sermon on the Mount. Miracles are meant to (1) confirm Christ's message, (2) show the reality of the eschatological setting, and (3) show Deity's compassion.
- B. In this chapter several groups depreciated by Jewish society are ministered to by Jesus.
1. leper – vv. 2,4 (Matt. 10:8; 11:5; 26:6; Luke 5:12-14; 17:11-14)
 2. Gentile (i.e., Roman army officer) – vv. 5-13 (cf. Mark 7:26-30,31-37)
 3. woman – vv. 14-15 (cf. Luke 8:2,43-48; 7:36-50; 13:10-12)
 4. demon-possessed, vv. 16,28
- This list could be easily expanded.
1. children – 18:2 (in context a metaphor for new believers); Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17
 2. the poor –
 3. Samaritans – Luke 10:30-37; 17:15-19; John 4:1-54
 4. tax collectors – Mark 2:15-17; Luke 5:27-32; 15:1ff; 19:1-10
 5. sinners (those who did not keep the oral traditions) – Matt. 9:10-11; 11:19; Luke 15:2; 18:13; John 9:16,24,25,31
- Jesus' attention to and healing of these people was fulfillment of OT prophecy (cf. 11:5, which quotes Isa. 35:5-6; and 61:1, also note the parallel in Luke 7:22).
- C. There are discrepancies related to the time, place, and other details involved in these accounts as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. The difference speaks of (1) each Gospel writer's ability under inspiration to structure his evangelistic/catechistic presentation of Jesus to specific audiences and (2) the authenticity of the eyewitness accounts. We cannot explain the "why" and the "how" of Synoptic Gospel composition, but we can affirm their truthfulness, inspiration, and authority for our lives!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-4

¹When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. ²And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." ³Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

8:1 "When Jesus came down from the mountain" This statement and 5:1 form a literary frame. Matthew was obviously referring to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7. Some interpret this as Jesus the second law giver, descending a mountain as Moses did. Here, Jesus gave the new Law, not received it!

▣ **“large crowds followed Him”** The purpose of the miracles was to give validity to the message. Fallen mankind is always attracted to the immediate, the self-centered, the material instead of the eternal, the corporate, and the spiritual!

8:2 “a leper came to Him” Our English term “leper” comes from the Greek word “scales.” The ancient term covered many more skin diseases than our modern nomenclature. Leviticus 13 and 14 deal with the Old Testament examples of leprosy. The fact that a leper approached Jesus was socially and theologically inappropriate because leprosy was viewed as a disease given as a judgment by God. The OT and theological bases for this was King Uzziah, II Chr. 26:16-23.

▣ **“Lord”** This is the term *kurios*. It can be used as a polite designation such as “Sir” or as a theological designation of the Divine Messiahship of Jesus. Context determines which use is intended. Often it is uncertain, as in this context.

▣ **“if You are willing”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which meant possible future action. This man had heard of Jesus’ miracles and believed He could perform a cure if He would.

8:3 “Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him” Touching a leper went against the culture of that day based on the command of the OT (cf. Lev. 13:45-46). This showed Jesus’ compassion, lack of fear, and willingness to break with Jewish tradition (cf. 5:21-48).

▣ **“I am willing”** The man had faith in Jesus’ ability based on what he had heard, but he was not sure of Jesus’ willingness!

8:4 “see that you tell no one” This type of statement is often called the Messianic secret of the Synoptics (cf. Matt. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9; Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9; Luke 4:41; 5:14; 8:56; 9:21). It is related to Jesus’ unwillingness to be known simply as a healer. The gospel message was not yet complete (cf. 17:9; Mark 9:9). He knew that humans would respond to Him for the wrong reasons.

▣ **“but go, and show yourself to the priest. . . as testimony to them”** This was an attempt by Jesus to affirm the Mosaic law of Leviticus 13-14. It was also an attempt to show His power to the priests in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14; 17:14). Early in Acts many thousands of them accepted Jesus and His message (cf. Acts 6:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:5-13

⁵And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, ⁶and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.” ⁷Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.” ⁸But the centurion said, “Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” ¹⁰Now when Jesus heard *this*, He marveled and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; ¹²but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹³And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go, it shall be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed that *very* moment.

8:5 “Capernaum” This city became Jesus’ Galilean headquarters after His rejection in Nazareth (cf. 4:13). It was a central location. Peter and Andrew owned a home there.

▣ **“a Centurion”** There were no more ostracized people in Jewish society than lepers (v. 2) and Roman military officers. This concept demonstrated Jesus’ love for all mankind, as His dealings with the men of Gadara, 8:28, 34; and the Syro-Phoenician woman (15:21-28). This same account is paralleled in Luke 7:1-10, but in a different setting.

8:6 “my servant” The account in Luke records that this man had great love for the Jewish people (as did Cornelius of Acts 10). The account in Matthew shows that he had great love for his servant boy. Centurions throughout the NT are usually presented in a positive light.

8:7 “I will come and heal him” This is an emphatic use of “I,” which is explained in v. 8 by the unheard of action of Jesus being willing to enter a Gentile home, which was a major cultural/religious taboo.

8:8 “I am not worthy” this term is used in the statements of

1. John the Baptist – 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16

2. Roman Centurion – 8:8; Luke 7:6

In a theological sense it expresses the sinfulness of all humans as well as God’s amazing love and mercy. Humans must recognize their spiritual need (cf. Matt. 5:3-6) before they can receive God’s forgiveness and acceptance.

▣ **“just say the word, and my servant will be healed”** This man, being a military person, understood authority and did not demand a ritual, or magical formula, or even Jesus’ physical presence for the healing. In Luke the centurion did not come to Jesus personally, but sent representatives: (1) Jewish elders (cf. Luke 7:3-5) and (2) his friends (cf. Luke 7:6). This is a good example of how the Gospels record the same event in different ways. The question is not which account is true but why the authors recorded it in the way they did. See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148.

Jewish and Greek healers healed by means of chants, magic, and special rituals, but Jesus healed by the spoken word. This was a way to show

1. His connection with creation (i.e., Genesis 1)
2. His personal authority (cf. v. 16)
3. His difference from the other healers of His day

This is why the title *logos* (word) is so appropriate in John 1:1! Jesus could heal with a touch (cf. 8:3) or speak a word (cf. 8:8), as well as exorcize demons (cf. 8:16). He spoke with authority (cf. 7:28-29); He healed with authority!

It is also interesting in Matthew how he uses the formula “what was spoken. . . was fulfilled” (cf. 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 22:31; 24:15; 27:9) as a way to assert the trustworthiness of Scripture and its fulfillment in Jesus and the new age He inaugurated.

8:10

NASB “Truly I say to you”
NKJV “Assuredly I say to you”
NRSV “Truly I tell you”
TEV “I tell you”
JB “I tell you solemnly”
NJB “In truth I tell you”

This was Jesus’ distinctive way of showing emphasis. There are no other examples in Greek literature. The single or double use of “amen” to start a sentence accentuated the importance of the statement, as well as Jesus’ personal authority. See Special Topic at 5:18.

8:11 “many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” This was an allusion to the inclusion of Gentiles into the family of God (cf. Isa. 25:6-9; Mal. 1:11; Luke 13:22-30). The faith of this Roman military man was greater than any Jesus had encountered among the Jewish people. These kinds of encounters with Gentiles (i.e., Matt. 15:28; 21:32; Mark 7:24-30; Luke 10:30-37; 17:11-19), combined with Jesus’ strong statements concerning their faith is evidence of the universal nature and evangelistic goal of the gospel (cf. Matt. 15:28; 22:2-14; 28:18-20; Luke 7:9; 24:47; Acts 1:8). The phraseology was taken from the concept of the Messianic banquet at the end of time (cf. Isa. 25:6-9; Luke 14:15; Rev. 19:9). Jesus speaks of these Patriarchs as alive in the kingdom of heaven (i.e., the new age). They will fully participate in the eschatological events, as well as other believers. This is surely a strong witness to the reality of life after death, as well as the promise of fellowship with God and other believers.

8:12 “but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out” Many Jews knew nothing of a personal relationship with God but only of a racial, legalistic, and ritualistic religion handed down to them (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:13; Matt. 15:14). They were prideful and self-righteous based on their race and performance of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Matt. 3:9). Jesus affirms in v. 12 that many who were not historically part of the people of God will be included, and many who thought they were part of the people of God will be excluded (cf. 21:43; Luke 13:28).

▣ **“into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”** These metaphors were also used in Matt. 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 to describe the horrors of separation from God in hell (*Gehenna*, see Special Topic at 5:22). What men and women do with Jesus Christ now will determine their ultimate destiny (cf. 25:31-46). Jesus Himself is the One who shows us the grim alternative facing those who refuse to trust Him.

In the OT “gnashing of teeth” signified “rage” (cf. Job 16:9; Ps. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Lam. 2:16), as it does in Acts 7:54, but here it denotes the sorrow and pain of eschatological judgment (i.e., separation from God in *Gehenna*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:14-17

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter’s home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. ¹⁶When evening came, they brought to Him many who

were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: “HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.”

8:14 “Peter. . .his mother-in-law” Peter was married (cf. I Cor. 9:5). This speaks of the normalcy of marriage among the Jews. The rabbis said that marriage was an obligation because of the command in Gen. 2:24. We never hear of his wife; maybe she had died. The Gospels were not written to satisfy our curiosity.

8:16 “when evening came” The end of the Sabbath had come (Mark 1:32) and the Jews who were taught that healing was not allowed on the Sabbath were now coming to Peter’s front door. The Sabbath began at twilight on Friday and ended at twilight on Saturday. This follows the order of the days of creation in Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31.

▣ **“many who were demon-possessed. . .healed all who were ill”** There was always a distinction made between demon possession and physical disease in the NT. Sometimes demons cause physical problems, but certainly not always. Physical ailments, injuries, and diseases do not necessarily have demonic causes. See Special Topic: The Demonic (Unclean Spirits) at 10:1.

8:17 This is a quote from Isa. 53:4, but not from the Masoretic Text (Hebrew) nor the Septuagint (Greek translation). This is the only place in the NT this verse is quoted. This is used by many modern groups to affirm that physical healing is inherent in the Atonement. God is a supernatural God who acts in the lives of people for good. There is not enough Scriptural evidence based on this verse to affirm that all diseases on all occasions are out of the will of God and will be cured if we just respond with enough faith or prayer (cf. II Cor. 12:8-10; II Tim. 4:20).

Psalm 103:3b is also often quoted in connection with this subject. There is a Hebrew poetic parallel relationship between 103:3a and 3b. They both refer to spiritual forgiveness. In the OT physical ailments were used as a symbol for spiritual problems (i.e., Isa. 1:5-6). The rabbis saw sin and sickness as related (cf. James 5:14-16). See F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 44-45.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:18-22

¹⁸Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. ¹⁹Then a scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” ²⁰Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” ²¹Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” ²²But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

8:19 “scribe” This was an expert in the oral law (the Talmud) and written traditions (the Scriptures) of the Jews. They took the place of the local Levite of the OT in interpreting Scripture. They were consulted about how to apply the Law of Moses to everyday matters. See Special Topic: Scribes at 12:38. In Jesus’ day most of them were Pharisees (see Special Topic at 22:15).

▣ **“Teacher”** This is the VOCATIVE form (*didaskale*) of the term “teacher” (*didaskalos*). It translates the Hebrew term for “teacher” (lit. “great one,” cf. John 1:38; 20:16) and refers to one who knew the Law of Moses (i.e., an honorific title). It is used in the NT of

1. Jewish teachers – Luke 2:46
2. John the Baptist – Luke 3:12
3. Jesus – Matt. 8:19; 9:11; 17:24; 26:25,49; Mark 9:5,17,38; 11:21; Luke 10:25; John 1:49
4. Nicodemus – John 3:10
5. Paul – I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11
6. Christian teachers – Acts 13:1; I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; James 3:1

Jesus restricts the usage of this term/title to Himself (cf. 23:7-12; Mark 14:14; John 3:2; 11:27-28; 13:13-14). There is only “one” Father; there is only “one” teacher! He and only He is the true “Great One”!

8:20 “Jesus said to him” Two persons are involved in this context. One was willing to go anywhere; Jesus told him to stop and count the cost (cf. v. 20). The other one was reluctant to follow; Jesus told him, follow at any cost because of the priority of the call of God on a human’s life (cf. v. 21). Truth often cuts two ways!

▣ **“the Son of Man”** This was Jesus’ self-chosen designation. It was an Hebraic phrase referring to a human being (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1). But because of its use in Dan. 7:13, it took on divine qualities. Therefore, this term combines the humanity and Deity of Jesus. This designation was not used by the rabbis; therefore, it had no nationalistic or militaristic overtones.

Here is a quote from my commentary on Daniel (7:13).

“a son of man was coming” The Aramaic phrase (“ben *enosh*,” CONSTRUCT BDB 1085 and 1081) “son of man” is different from the similar Hebrew phrase (“ben *adam*”) found in Psalms and Ezekiel. Both phrases are used in parallel in Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; 90:3; 144:3; Isa. 13:12. This obviously refers to the Messiah and it links his humanity (cf. 8:17; Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1), which is the meaning of the Aramaic and Hebrew phrases, “son of man” with his deity because the clouds are the transportation of Deity (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

Jesus uses the phrase to refer to Himself in the NT. It was not used of the Messiah in rabbinical Judaism. It had no exclusivistic, nationalistic, militaristic connotations. It uniquely describes the Messiah as fully human and fully God (cf. I John 4:1-3). Daniel’s usage is the first which focuses on its divine aspect!

Jesus used the phrase for Himself in three senses.

1. His suffering and death (e.g., Mark 8:31; 10:45; 14:21; Luke 9:22,44)
2. His coming as Judge (e.g., Matt. 16:27; 25:31; John 5:27)
3. His coming in glory to set up His kingdom (e.g., Matt. 16:28; 19:28; Mark 13:26-27; 14:62)

From *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1657 (also see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 136-139), the later Jewish tradition about this text are listed.

1. This context is Messianic (cf. I Enoch 46:1; 48:10; 4 Ezra [2 Esdras] chapter 13; b. Sanh. 98a)
2. All predictions in this context are already fulfilled (cf. b. Sanh. 97b)
3. This context does not refer to the end-time (cf. Gen. Rab. 98:2)
4. This context represents Israel (cf. Ibn Ezra and Rashi)

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT TITLES OF THE SPECIAL COMING ONE

- A. Prophet - Deut. 18:15,18
- B. King
 1. from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:10; Ps. 60:7; 108:8
 2. from the family of David, II Samuel 7 (from Jesse, Isa. 11:1)
 3. from other texts, I Sam. 2:10; Ps. 89:3-4; Isa. 9,11; Jer. 30:8-9; Ezek. 37:21-22; Zech. 9:9-10
- C. King/Priest
 1. Psalm 110 (king, vv. 1-3; priest, v. 4)
 2. Zech. 4:14 (the two olive trees, the two anointed ones, Zerubbabel [line of David] and Joshua [line of Aaron])
- D. Anointed One (Messiah)
 1. God’s King, Ps. 2:2; 45:7
 2. Spirit’s presence, Isa. 11:2; 61:1
 3. Coming One, Dan. 9:26
 4. three OT leaders were anointed as a sign of God’s call and empowering: kings (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; I Sam. 2:10; 9:16; 24:10; II Sam. 19:21; 23:1; Ps. 18:50), priests (cf. Exod. 28:41; Lev. 4:3; 6:22) and prophets (cf. I Kgs. 19:16)
- E. King’s Son
 1. Ps. 2:7,12
 2. Israel’s king as a symbol of God’s reign (cf. I Samuel 8)
- F. Son of Man (Dan. 7:13)
 1. human, Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1
 2. divine, Dan. 7:13
- G. Special Redemptive Titles
 1. Suffering Servant, Isa. 52:13-53:12
 2. Suffering Shepherd, Zech. 12-14
 3. Cornerstone, Ps. 118; Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16
 4. Special Child, Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Micah 5:2
 5. Branch, Isa. 4:2; 11:5; 53:2; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12

The NT takes these scattered references about God’s special redemptive agent and clarifies and develops them into an understanding of Jesus as God’s Promised Coming One (e.g., Matt. 16:13-20; John 11:25-27). The two comings of the Messiah are the means by which these diverse functions and titles are united.

For a good discussion of the distinction in the Gospels between Son of Man as authority figure versus Suffering Servant, see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 149-158.

8:21 “permit me first to go and bury my father” On the surface this seems like a reasonable request. However, this was a cultural idiom for staying home and taking care of one’s parents as long as they lived. It was a social obligation (cf. I Kgs. 19:20).

8:22 “allow the dead to bury their own dead” This was a play on the word “dead.” It can be used of spiritual lifelessness as in 10:39. What Jesus was saying was that spiritual life and obedience to the heavenly Father are more important than social obligations to one’s earthly family.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:23-27

²³When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. ²⁵And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!” ²⁶He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. ²⁷The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

8:24

NASB “And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea”

NKJV “And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea”

NRSV “A windstorm arose on the sea”

TEV “Suddenly a fierce storm hit the lake”

NJB “Without warning a storm broke over the lake”

The Sea of Galilee is surrounded by hills and affected by its proximity to Mt. Hermon and the Mediterranean Sea. The strong winds descending on this body of water were often sudden, unexpected, and violent. Even these professional fishermen were afraid.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 557, has an interesting comment about the term *seismos* (“storm”).

“The other eleven occurrences of *seismos* in the NT all refer to earthquakes, and always as divine interventions: at the moment of Jesus’ death (Matt. 27:54); at the resurrection, where it is linked with the rolling back of the stone; and at Philippi, as Paul and Silas sing God’s praises in prison (Acts 16:26). Earthquakes are one of the eschatological signs (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11; Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13,19; 16:18).”

This sudden storm was not a coincidence, but a God-sent opportunity to

1. reveal Jesus
2. build the disciples’ faith

8:25 “Save us, Lord” This was the OT use of the term “save” meaning physical deliverance (cf. 14:30; John 12:27; Acts 23:24; 27:20,31,34,43,44; 28:1,4; James 5:15).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job. 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
 - a. Gen. 49:18
 - b. Deut. 32:15
 - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
 - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1
3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9

Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

8:26-27 “it became perfectly calm” They were absolutely astonished at Jesus’ power even over nature. Because of Ps. 89:8,9 this was an allusion to Jesus’ deity. Only the creator can control nature (cf. Ps. 107:23-32).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:28-34

²⁸When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. *They were* so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. ²⁹And they cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” ³⁰Now there was a herd of swine feeding at a distance from them. ³¹The demons *began* to entreat Him, saying “If You *are going* to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.” ³²And He said to them, “Go!” And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. ³³The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

8:28

NASB, NRSV,

(?) JB “into the country of the Gadarenes”

NKJV “to the country of the Gergesenes”

TEV “to the territory of Gadara on the other side of the lake”

There has been much discussion over this geographical location. This place was spelled three different ways in differing Greek manuscripts of Matthew, as well as in three different Synoptic Gospels. Apparently it was close to the city of Khersa, but the city of Gadara owned some land near the lake and it was often called the district of Gadara, even though this city was six miles away.

▣ “two men” Matthew usually has two people involved in an account where Mark and Luke only have one (cf. Mk 5:1; Luke 8:26). Another example would be the blind man/men of Jericho (cf. Matt. 20:29; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35). Some have supposed that two were mentioned because the OT required two witnesses in court (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16).

▣ “who were demon-possessed. . .coming out of the tombs” They had been ostracized by the community and this was the only place where they could find shelter. During this period small manmade or natural caves were used as burial places. Whether this location was connected with their demon possession is uncertain. There are many specific questions about demons and angels which cannot be answered because there is not enough biblical information. Our world is permeated by a personal force of evil with his servants, the fallen angels, who are out to thwart the will of God and to destroy mankind, God’s ultimate creation and focus of His love and attention. See Special Topics: Personal Evil at 4:5 and the Demonic at 10:1.

▣ “that no one could pass by that way” See Mark 5:2-6 and Luke 8:27.

8:29 “Son of God” These demons recognized who Jesus was (cf. James 2:19). The title “Son of God” was used several times in Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; 27:43,54. It was a play on the term “son” (cf. 2:15); the nation of Israel is called “son”; Israel’s king is called “son”; and Israel’s Messiah is called “son.” Several times in the Gospels the demons recognize Jesus (cf. Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34). Jesus does not acknowledge their testimony. They were not saying this to help Him. Later Jesus will be accused of utilizing Satan’s power (12:24). The demons’ witnessing to Him would have given credence to this charge. See Special Topic: Son of God at 27:54.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, JB “Have You come here to torment us before the time”

TEV “Have you come to punish us before the right time”

The spiritual realm knows that a time has been set for God to judge the living and the dead, humans, and angels (cf. Phil. 2:10-11; Rev. 11:15).

8:30 “a herd of many swine” It was a Gentile area shown by the presence of these hogs. Exactly why the demons wanted to go into the hogs is simply a matter of conjecture. There is not enough information. The destruction of this group of hogs does show the ultimate purpose of the demonic—death to their host. Also, the herd’s destruction would have caused the townspeople to ask Jesus to leave!

▣ “the demons” See Special Topic at 10:1.

▣ “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. Jesus was going to drive out the demons!

8:34 “they implored Him to leave their region” This is one of the saddest verses in all of the Bible. In the presence of the greatest man of history, these villagers were more concerned about the death of a few hogs than they were over the redemption and reclamation of two demonized persons and the spiritual potential of the gospel for their area.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do the Synoptic Gospels differ in their recording of the words and acts of Jesus?
2. Why was the healing of a leper such a significant event (cf. 11:5)?
3. Why did Jesus want those who had been healed to go and show themselves to the priests?
4. What is so unusual about Jesus working with a Roman military officer?
5. What is the significance of verses 11 and 12?
6. Who or what are demons? What is their purpose in our world?
7. Does verse 17 teach that physical healing is a part of the atonement?
8. What is the significance of the terms “Son of Man” and “Son of God” (cf. Ezek. 2:1; Dan. 7:13)?

MATTHEW 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Healing of a Paralytic 9:1-8	Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic 9:1-8	Events in Galilee (continued) (8:1-9:38) 9:1 9:2-8	Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man 9:1-2 9:3 9:4-6 9:7-8	Cure of a Paralytic 9:1-8
The Calling of Matthew 9:9-13	Matthew the Tax Collector 9:9-13	9:9 9:10-13	Jesus Calls Matthew 9:9a-b 9:9c 9:10-11 9:12-13	The Call of Matthew 9:9 Eating with Sinners 9:10-13
The Question About Fasting 9:14-17	Jesus is Questioned About Fasting 9:14-17	9:14-17	The Question About Fasting 9:14 9:15 9:16-17	A Discussion of Fasting 9:14-17
The Ruler's Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment 9:18-26	A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed 9:18-26	9:18-26	The Official's Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Cloak 9:18 9:19 9:20-21 9:22 9:23-24a 9:24b-26	Cure of the Woman with a Hemorrhage; The Official's Daughter Raised to Life 9:18-19 9:20-22 9:23-26
The Healing of Two Blind Men 9:27-31	Two Blind Men Healed 9:27-31	9:27-31	Jesus Heals Two Blind Men 9:27 9:28a-b 9:28c 9:29-30 9:31	Cure of Two Blind Men 9:27-31

The Healing of a Dumb Man	A Mute Man Speaks		Jesus Heals a Dumb Man	Cure of a Dumb Demoniac
9:32-34	9:32-34	9:32-34	9:32-33	9:32-34
The Compassion of Jesus			9:34	The Distress of the Crowds
9:35-38	9:35-38	9:35-38	9:35-38	9:35
				9:36-37

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 9:1-38

- A. Matthew often condenses events which are recorded in much fuller detail in both Mark and Luke. Interpreters should not compare the other Gospels seeking fuller details until they have determined how/why the individual Gospel writer recorded the events as he did. We are not looking for a complete history, but for the theological intent of the inspired writer (cf. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How to Study the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 120-129) .
- B. This chapter breaks into several distinct units:
 1. Verses 1-8, cf. Mark 2:3-12 and Luke 5:17-26
 2. Verses 9-17, cf. Mark 2:14-22 and Luke 5:27-38
 3. Verses 18-26, cf. Mark 5:22-43 and Luke 8:41-56
 4. Verses 27-31, which are unique to Matthew
 5. Verses 32-34, which are also unique to Matthew
 6. Verses 35-38, many believe that this is an introduction to the mission of the Twelve which should go with chapter 10
- C. Chapter 8 showed His power over diseases, nature, and the demonic. Matthew used this section to show the power and authority of Jesus over different types of circumstances.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1

¹Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city.

9:1 Contextually this verse should go with chapter 8, as it is a transitional verse leading to the next event. Capernaum became the headquarters of Jesus' ministry (cf. Mark 2:1; Matt. 4:13) after the experience of unbelief and rejection in Nazareth where he spent His childhood.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:2-8

²And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.” ³And some of the scribes said to themselves, “This fellow blasphemes.” ⁴And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? ⁵Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk?’ ⁶But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.” ⁷And he got up and went home. ⁸But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

9:2 “they brought to Him a paralytic” Fuller details of this event are found in Mark 2:1-22. This is the account in which the friends of the paralytic man tear the roof apart and lower him to the floor at Jesus’ feet.

▣ **“Seeing their faith, Jesus”** In context “their faith” referred not only to the man who needed healing, but primarily to his friends who had so much ingenuity and persistence.

▣ **“Take courage son; your sins are forgiven”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (cf. v. 22) and a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. The Jews often related sin and sickness (cf. John. 5:14; 9:2; and James 5:15-16). Although Jesus apparently recognized the connection, He also seemed to resist a formal linkage (cf. John. 9:3 and Luke 13:2-3). This is a powerful statement of Jesus’ self understanding. Only God can forgive sin (i.e., PASSIVE VOICE)!

Jesus addressed this man as “child” (*teknon*). However, this was not an indication of his age, but a term of endearment (cf. Mark 10:24; also possibly Luke 16:25 and Gen. 43:29 in the LXX).

9:3 “the scribes” Since the Babylonian captivity, the Temple had been somewhat rivaled by the Synagogue as the place of honor in Jewish society. These local experts in the Jewish law, following the tradition of Ezra, became known as scribes (see Special Topic at 12:38, Ezra 7:8,10). They were from several theological backgrounds, but they were mostly Pharisees. Whether they were present because of genuine interest or to spy on Jesus is uncertain. They would certainly have been astonished at His claiming to have the power to forgive sin. They believed that only God had this power. In this context, they condemned the radical claims of Jesus as blasphemy (cf. Mark 2:7); indeed, they were blasphemy if Jesus was not the Incarnate Son of God!

9:4 “and Jesus knowing their thoughts” Whether this is an example of Jesus’ supernatural knowledge, which seems to be implied from the context, or whether someone in the crowd passed on their grumbling verbally is uncertain. There are passages in the New Testament which imply that Jesus knew human nature well and other passages which imply that He used His supernatural power.

There is a manuscript variation between

1. seeing (*idōn*) – R, C, D, L, W, and the old Latin, Vulgate, and Coptic translations
2. knowing (*eidōs*) – B, E^c, and the Syrian and Armenian translations

The UBS⁴ rates #1 as “B” (almost certain). The second option probably comes from Matt. 12:25; Luke 6:8; 9:47. The NASB, NKJV, and NJB follow option #2.

9:5 “Which is easier, to say ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘Get up, and walk’” To say, “Your sins are forgiven” is harder, but it is not as obvious as a physical healing. Both are impossible for sinful mortals!

9:6 “But so that you may know” Throughout the Gospels Jesus was concerned not only with the poor and needy, but also the Jewish leadership (cf. John. 11:42,45). Jesus was confronting them for the purpose of turning them to faith in Himself. This healing was as much for the scribes as it was for the paralyzed man and his friends. As a matter of fact, this is true of most of Jesus’ healing ministry. Often these acts of power were to encourage the faith of the disciples or engender faith in by-standers.

▣ **“the Son of Man”** This was an adjectival phrase from the OT. It was used in Ezek. 2:1 and Ps. 8:4 in its true etymological meaning of “human being.” However, it was used in Dan. 7:13 in a unique context which implied both the humanity and deity of the person addressed by this title. Since this title was not used by rabbinical Judaism and, therefore, had none of the nationalistic, exclusivistic, militaristic implications, Jesus chose it as the perfect title of both veiling and revealing His dual nature (cf. I John. 4:1-6). It was His favorite self-designation.

▣ **“has authority on earth to forgive sins”** This term “authority” (*exousia*) was the word for “right,” “power” or “authority.” It strongly implied Jesus’ Messiahship, if not His Deity. The Jews were not expecting the Messiah to be divine, but to be a supernaturally-empowered military/political leader, like the Judges of the OT. It is only through NT progressive revelation that believers recognized the incarnational nature of the Messiah (i.e., John 1:1; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30,34-38; 14:9-10; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 1:8; II Pet. 1:1).

▣ **“He said to the paralytic, ‘Get up, pick up your bed, and go home’”** There are three VERBALS in this phrase.

1. “get up” is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE
2. “pick up your bed” is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
3. “go home” is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE.

The implication of these tenses would have been that God was the agent of the PASSIVE VOICE, “be raised up.” The two IMPERATIVES would speak of the man’s actions immediately after his healing. Taking up his bed was a sign that his days of begging were over and he was returning home. This healing confirmed Jesus’ claim of Deity and Messiahship!

9:8 “But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck” There is a Greek manuscript problem here connected to the term “awestruck.” The oldest and best Greek texts have “were afraid” (MSS α , B, D, W). Later texts softened the term to “marveled” or NKJV “were astonished” (MSS C, L). Some Greek manuscripts simply left the phrase out (MS X). The UBS⁴ gives option #1 an “A” rating (certain).

The crowds were not accustomed to someone speaking with this kind of authority. Rabbinical Judaism had become trapped by tradition and the quoting of the ancient sayings of the rabbis. Jesus spoke with truth and authority, which this generation of Jewish people had never heard. They praised God for giving this kind of power to a man. This may be a veiled allusion to the humanity of Jesus which was questioned by the early church heresy called “Gnosticism.” It is also likely from further reading of the NT that the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus’ popularity.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:9

⁹As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.

9:9 “As Jesus went on from there” Verses 9-17 are expressed in more detail in the other Synoptic Gospel parallels, Mark 2 and Luke 5.

▣ **“He saw a man called Matthew”** From Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 we learn that his other name was Levi. This does not imply that he was a priest or a Levite. Jews often had two names, one Jewish and one Greek, given to them usually at birth. This is the disciple to whom authorship of this Gospel is attributed. Jesus may have chosen him because of his gift of keeping meticulous records or as a way of showing His love to all people, even tax-collectors!

▣ **“sitting in the tax-collector’s booth”** Capernaum was located by the Sea of Galilee between the jurisdictions of Philip the Tetrarch and Herod the Tetrarch. Therefore, the taxation would be between the areas of Syria and Judea. The office of tax collector was purchased from the Herodian or Roman authorities. It was often done with the implied suggestion that all of the extra revenue which was collected would be the wage of the one having the office. This was notoriously practiced in Jesus’ day and, therefore, the office had become a synonym for evil and exploitation. Tax-collectors were certainly not welcome at the local synagogue or in Jewish society.

▣ **“Follow Me! And he got up and followed Him”** This was probably not the first time Matthew had heard Jesus. Apparently he had been exposed to Jesus’ teachings on many occasions and this was the culmination of an official call (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE) of a rabbi to a follower to come and be a full-time disciple (cf. 4:19,21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:10-13

¹⁰Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, “*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.* ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

9:10 This referred to Matthew’s house, not Jesus’. Apparently the giving of a banquet after a meaningful decision in life was quite common because Zaccheus, another tax-collector, does the same thing (cf. Luke 19). “Notorious sinners” would refer basically to those outcasts of Jewish society who could not perform the meticulous details of the Mosaic Law as amplified in the oral tradition of rabbinical Judaism. That some of them were openly immoral people is possible, but again, it may have been that their trade or occupation was unacceptable to the Jewish leaders (i.e., shepherds, tanners, etc.).

The phrase “took their seats” meant “reclined.” The people during this historical period reclined on their left elbows when they ate. Only in Egypt did people sit at a table to eat.

9:11 “when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples” These Pharisees were present at the dinner, but were not a part of the dinner. It seems unusual but in the ancient world anyone could come and stand around the walls or look in the windows and participate in the conversation without being an official guest at the dinner. Apparently “the Pharisees” was another name for “the scribes” who were mentioned earlier in this context. They were a group of committed Jews who followed a particular tradition which affirmed the oral tradition of the Jews (the Talmud). Notice that they confronted the disciples and not Jesus Himself. Jesus, by eating with these notorious sinners, was expressing fellowship and friendship. John the Baptist had come earlier as an ascetic and the Jewish leaders had rejected him and now they rejected Jesus who came as a more social person (cf. 11:19; Luke 7:34). They even accused Jesus of being a “wine-bibber” which meant a “glutton” or “one who over-drinks.” Quite often religious conservatism has an ugly and self-righteous side. For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees, see note at 22:15.

9:12 “But when Jesus heard *this*, He said” On this occasion Jesus obviously did not read the minds of the Pharisees (cf. v.4). Either it was conveyed to Him what they were saying or He heard them Himself.

☐ **“It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick”** This does not imply that the Pharisees were without sin; rather it was a sarcastic response.

9:13 “But go and learn what this means” This is a quote from Hosea 6:6 (as is Matt. 12:7). This verse began with an AORIST IMPERATIVE phrase which was an idiom that the rabbis used to tell their students to study a particular issue. Verse 13 is unique to Matthew’s Gospel.

☐ **“for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners”** Luke 5:32, which is the Synoptic parallel to this account, adds “to repentance.” Matthew’s account, although it does not specifically record this, implied it. The two necessary responses for people to be right with God were repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). Jesus even asserted that unless people repent they shall perish (cf. Luke 13:5). Repentance basically is a turning from self, sin, and rebellion and turning to God’s will and way for one’s life. It is not so much an emotion as it is a change in priority and lifestyle. It is willingness to change. See Special Topic at 3:2.

The VERB “call” (*kaleō*) can be understood as “invite” (cf. Matt. 22:2-10 and Luke 14:16-25; John 2:2; Rev. 19:9). In a theological sense this accentuates the covenant concept.

1. God invites (divine call)
2. humans must respond (with initial and continuing faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance)

See Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need For A Theological Balance at 24:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:14-17

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”
¹⁵And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. ¹⁷Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”

9:14 “then the disciples of John came to Him” It is uncertain whether they were (1) truly interested, (2) truly confused, or (3) trying to trick Him. They, like the Pharisees, were uninvited guests, but were apparently present at the feast. There were many disciples of John the Baptist, as can be seen from Acts 19:1ff.

☐ **“Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast”** In the Old Testament there was only one official fast day called *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement, cf. Leviticus 16) held each year. However, the rabbis had made the second and fifth days of the week fast days also (cf. Luke 18:12), supposedly basing them on the day that Moses went up on Mt. Sinai and on the day that he came back down. Fasting had become a way to prove one’s religious commitment. Jesus does not condemn the practice, but neither does He affirm it as required. See Special Topic: Fasting at 6:16.

There is a Greek manuscript problem in this verse connected with the term “often,” found in NKJV and NRSV, apparently from the parallel in Luke 5:33. The Markan parallel 2:18 just has “fast.” The UBS⁴ Committee put the other term “much” in brackets because they were uncertain whether it was original with Matthew or added later by a copyist from Luke.

9:15 The grammar of this question expects a “no” answer.

▣ **“But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast”** Jesus assumed that His disciples would fast after He was crucified. This is the first time that the crucifixion was implied. The VERB *apairo* (“taken away”), used in this phrase, has violent connotations (cf. Mark 2:20; Luke 5:35). Jesus’ analogy of “the bridegroom,” had Messianic connotations. See Special Topic: Fasting at 6:16.

9:16-17 There has been much discussion about how to apply this truth. It seems to emphasize the need to be flexible in one’s faith. However, one must be careful as to the nature and extent of this flexibility. It is in reality a condemnation of rabbinical Judaism’s literalistic interpretation of the Oral Tradition. Jesus’ message was radically new and different from the Jewish sects of His day! God help us, sometimes we are more committed to our traditions and legalisms than we are to a dynamic, obedient, daily relationship with God (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:13). This parable is paralleled in Mark 2:19-20 and Luke 5:33-39. Something new has come (i.e., the gospel) and it has changed everything!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:18-19

¹⁸While He was saying these things to them, a *synagogue* official came and bowed down before Him, and said, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹Jesus got up and *began* to follow him, and *so did* His disciples.

9:18 “a *synagogue* official came and bowed down before Him” A much more detailed account is found in Mark 5:22-43 and Luke 8:41-56. The person was literally a “synagogue ruler” (cf. Mark 5:22; John 3:1). This was a man who was responsible for the physical condition of the synagogue as well as its regular activities. He acted in an uncharacteristic way by publicly running up to a controversial, unofficial rabbi such as Jesus and by falling at His feet. However, he was greatly concerned about the condition of his daughter, whom he loved. When one compares this passage with Mark 5:21 and Luke 8:42, there is some discrepancy as to whether the daughter was at the point of death or was already dead.

9:19 “Jesus got up and *began* to follow him” Apparently this man’s faith was connected to (1) the physical presence of Jesus, (2) the act of laying on of hands, and (3) prayer. In 11:5 the raising of the dead was one of the signs mentioned to John the Baptist to validate the Messianic ministry of Jesus. Whether this was truly an act of resuscitation or an act of healing from a coma is uncertain from the context.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:20-22

²⁰And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; ²¹for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.” ²²But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well.

9:20 “a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years” We learn more details about this account from Mark 5:26 and Luke 8:43. Apparently she had spent all of her money on doctors and had received no help. We know of some of the magical cures in rabbinical Judaism from the Talmud, particularly Shabb, 110 A and B. One of the cures was to carry ostrich eggs or barley corn obtained from the dung of a white donkey around one’s neck. One can imagine the grotesque kinds of cures this woman had tried during these twelve years. This particular kind of illness made her ceremonially unclean and unwelcome in regular Jewish worship services (cf. Lev. 15:25). Also she was probably physically exhausted most of the time.

9:21 “if I only touch His garment, I will get well” There was an element of superstition in this woman’s faith and yet Jesus honors even her weak faith (THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE). Based on Lev. 15:19ff. it would have been illegal for her to touch a rabbi because it would have made Jesus ceremonially unclean. Jesus was more concerned with people than He was with ceremonial laws!

The garment referred to was possibly (1) Jesus’ outer robe (cf. John 19:2) or (2) Jesus’ prayer shawl (*talith*), which He used to cover His head during worship (cf. Num. 15:38-40; Deut. 22:12; Matt. 23:5) and worn on the shoulders at other times.

9:22 “your faith has made you well” This is literally the term “saved.” It was used in its OT sense of “physical deliverance” (cf. James 5:15). This woman’s faith, weak though it was because of superstition, was still honored by Jesus. In the NT it is the object of one’s faith that is the issue.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:23-26

²³When Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, ²⁴He said, "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they began laughing at Him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶This news spread throughout all that land.

9:23 "Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute players and the crowd in noisy disorder" It was a common practice in rabbinical Judaism (cf. Jer. 9:17; 48:36) that when someone died, even in the poorest family, at least two flute players and one wailing woman had to be hired for a standard funeral. Funerals were a very outward and emotional communal experience.

9:24 "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep" "Sleep" was not often used of death, but in this context it was contrasted with death. Whether it was a deep coma or death, a miracle of healing truly occurred.

9:25 "but when the crowd had been sent out" Luke 8:51 notes that the parents and the inner circle of disciples, Peter, James, and John, were allowed to stay.

▣ **"took her by the hand"** From Mark 5:41 more details are recorded as to what Jesus said to the girl. Touching a dead body would have made Him ceremonially unclean. But, when one has the power of life over death, there is no such thing as a dead body!

9:26 "this news spread throughout all that land" The reason that Jesus emptied the room was so that no one would spread the news about this miraculous healing (cf. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9; Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9; Luke 4:41; 5:14; 8:56; 9:21). However, with the funeral process well under way, the restoration of this young girl would certainly have been broadcast.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:27-31

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" ²⁸When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹Then He touched their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith." ³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: "See that no one knows *about this!*" ³¹But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout all that land.

9:27 "two blind men followed Him, crying out" It was characteristic in the Synoptic Gospels' miracle accounts that Matthew always records two persons whereas Mark and Luke only record one (cf. Matt. 8:28 and 20:30). The exact reason for this is uncertain. It has been speculated that Matthew wanted two witnesses to fulfill OT witness requirements (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

▣ **"Have mercy on us, Son of David"** This OT title is also used in Matt. 1:20. It apparently had Messianic implications going back to II Samuel 7 (cf. Matt. 1:1; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9,15). Exactly what these people understood by these titles is uncertain, but surely it was a sign of their faith, not a full theological understanding of the person of Christ. The Jews of Jesus' day expected the Messiah to be a healer from Isa. 35:5-6.

9:28 "Yes, Lord" This is the title "*kurios*." It was used in the sense of "sir" or "mister" or it could have been a full theological title of Jesus' Deity. Here it seems to be used more in the popular sense although these blind men's use of the title "Son of David" implied some theological understanding. Jesus took them off away from the crowd because He did not want to broadcast their healing (cf. v. 26, 30; 8:4).

9:29 "He touched their eyes" It is amazing how many accounts of the healing of blind people are recorded in the Gospels. However, they are performed with great variety. Here Jesus touched their eyes, apparently to increase their faith. Restoring sight to the blind was one of the prophetic evidences of the Messiah (cf. Ps. 146:8; Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 16, 18; Matt. 11:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:32-34

³²As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. ³³After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, *and were* saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." ³⁴But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

9:32 “a mute, demon-possessed man” A sharp distinction was made in the Gospels between demon possession and physical illness. A good example of this is found in Mark 7:32 and 9:25: a physically dumb man was healed while a demonized man, who was also dumb, was exorcized. Although demonic forces can cause physical illness, not all physical illness is demonic. The NT affirms the presence of demons in our world. Those who have spent much time in Third World countries affirm this reality and see this manifestation much more often and in NT categories. This is not to imply there are more demons in the Third World. The modern western worldview is biased against the supernatural. See special topic at 10:1.

The term “mute” (*kōphos*) can mean

1. deaf (cf. Matt. 11:5; Mark 7:32,37; Luke 7:22, so used by Homer)
2. dumb (cf. Matt. 12:22; 15:30-31; Luke 1:22; 11:14, so used by Herodotus)

The first could lead to the second. Context is the best clue as to which meaning is intended.

9:34

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons”

TEV

“It is the chief of the demons who gives him the power to drive them out”

NJB

“It is through the prince of devils that he drives out devils”

The “ruler of demons” refers to the chief demon who in 10:25 is called *Beelzebul*. Both titles are together in 12:24. See full note on this name there.

It is amazing that the Pharisees who saw Jesus’ power and heard His teachings could have rejected Him simply because He violated their traditions. This same account is found in Mark 3:22 and Luke 11:15. This same blasphemy is recorded as coming from the crowd in John. 7:20. They could not deny the reality of these miraculous events, so they attributed them to the power of the evil one.

Jesus fully answered this charge, which is often called the “unpardonable sin” in Matt. 12:22ff. The unpardonable sin is apparently the continual rejection of faith in Jesus in the presence of great light. These people were so blinded by their preconceived notions that they were unable to see the gospel which was revealed so clearly in the words and actions of Jesus Christ. When your light has become darkness, how great is the darkness (cf. 6:23; II Cor. 4:4).

It is interesting that this verse is omitted in the Greek manuscript D (Bezae) and some Old Latin MSS, but present in all the older uncial manuscripts. The verse is present in Matt. 12:24 and Luke 11:15. The UBS⁴ rates its inclusion as “B” (almost certain).

☐ **“by the ruler of the demons”** The phrase referred to Satan (cf. 12:24-32, Mark 3:22, and Luke 11:15). The attitude of the Pharisees in denying Jesus’ power and authority led them to the unpardonable sin of turning God’s light into darkness!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:35-38

³⁵Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ³⁶Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

9:35-38 There are two possible ways of relating this summary statement (1) as a summary going back to 4:23 or (2) an introduction of the mission of the Twelve in chapter 10.

9:35 “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” The kingdom of God was the focus of Jesus’ first and last sermons and most of His parables. It apparently referred to the reign of God in men’s hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). See special topic at 4:17.

The term “gospel” (*euangelion*) is used in summary statements by Matthew in 4:23 and 9:35. It is used by Jesus in 24:14 and 26:13. The term becomes a standard way of referring collectively to the life, teaching, death, resurrection, second coming, and offer of salvation in Paul. Only in the second century does the term begin to denote the four written accounts on Jesus’ life (i.e., Gospels, in Ireneaus and Clement of Alexandria).

9:36 “He felt compassion” It is comforting to know how caring Jesus the Messiah was (cf. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34) to the socially and religiously outcast. His compassion for them is expressed in these same terms in Luke 13:34.

☐ **“like sheep without a shepherd”** “Shepherd” was a common metaphor for religious leaders (cf. Num. 27:17; I Kgs. 22:17; Ezek. 34:1-16). It was sometimes used in the sense of false shepherds (cf. Ezek. 34; Zech. 11:5). Jesus is the good shepherd (cf. John. 10; Zech 11:7-14; 13:7-9).

9:37-38 God sees His world in an entirely different light than humans (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). Believers need to be praying for God to thrust or drive out laborers into His harvest field. Seeing the need does not constitute a call but, thank God, when we pray, God sometimes allows us to go! Notice that the world is seen as God's harvest field. This is His world. He loves it. He wants it redeemed (cf. John. 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do these same teachings seem to appear with different details and settings in the Synoptic Gospels?
2. What is the significance of Jesus' forgiving the sins of the paralytic man?
3. What is the theological significance of the term "Son of Man"?
4. Why is it significant that Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors?
5. What does Jesus say about fasting?
6. Why did the sick woman want to touch Jesus' clothing?
7. Describe an oriental funeral.
8. Why does Matthew consistently record two blind men or angels while Mark and Luke only record one?
9. Explain the difference between physical illness and demonic possession.
10. How did the Pharisees commit the unpardonable sin in v. 34?
11. What do verses 37 and 38 say about the heart of God?

MATTHEW 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Mission of Twelve	The Twelve Apostles	Commissioning and Instruction of the Twelve (10:1-11:1)	The Twelve Apostles	The Mission of the Twelve
10:1-4	10:1-4	10:1-4	10:1-4	10:1 10:2-5a
The Commissioning of the Twelve	Sending Out the Twelve		The Mission of the Twelve	
10:5-15	10:5-15	10:5-15	10:5-10 10:11-15	10:5b-10 10:11-16
Coming Persecutions	Persecutions are Coming		Coming Persecutions	The Missionaries Will Be Persecuted
10:16-23	10:16-26	10:16-23	10:16-20 10:21-23	10:17-20 10:21-23
10:24-25		10:24-25	10:24-25	10:24-25
Whom to Fear	Jesus Teaches the Fear of God		Whom to Fear	Open and Fearless Speech
10:26-31	10:27-31	10:26-31	10:26-31	10:26-27 10:28-31
Confessing Christ Before Men	Confess Christ Before men		Confessing and Rejecting Christ	
10:32-33	10:32-33	10:32-33	10:32-33	10:32-33
Not Peace, But a Sword	Christ Brings Division		Not Peace, But a Sword	Jesus, the Cause of Dissension
10:34-39	10:34-39	10:34-39	10:34-36 10:37-39	10:34-36 Renouncing Self to Follow Jesus 10:37-39
Rewards	A Cup of Cold Water		Rewards	Conclusion of the Instruction
10:40-11:1	10:40-42	10:40-11:1	10:40-42	10:40 10:41 10:42

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 10:1-42

- A. The newly chosen disciples are sent out on a mission trip which was foreshadowed in 9:37-38. Jesus also sent, at a later time, a larger group of seventy disciples (cf. Luke 10:1ff).
- B. This passage is paralleled in Mark 3:14-16; 6:7-13; and Luke 9:1-6. There may have been several of these kinds of mission trips.
- C. Jesus' message to the Twelve has three divisions marked off by the recurrent phrase "Truly, I say to you" vv. 15,23,42.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1

¹Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

10:1 "twelve" This is the first time this number is stated, possibly corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. See Special Topic: The Number Twelve at 14:20.

▣ "disciples" This is literally "learners." The New Testament emphasizes disciples, not just decisions (cf. 28:19; Acts 14:21)! The Special Topic below addresses this theological distinction.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION

Salvation is not a product, but a relationship. It is not finished when one trusts Christ; it has only begun! It is not a fire insurance policy, nor a ticket to heaven, but a life of growing Christlikeness.

SALVATION AS A COMPLETED ACTION (AORIST)

- Acts 15:11
- Romans 8:24
- II Timothy 1:9
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 13:11 (combines the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)

SALVATION AS A STATE OF BEING (PERFECT)

- Ephesians 2:5,8

SALVATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS (PRESENT)

- I Corinthians 1:18; 15:2
- II Corinthians 2:15

SALVATION AS A FUTURE CONSUMMATION (FUTURE in VERB TENSE or context)

- Romans 5:9,10; 10:9,13
- I Corinthians 3:15; 5:5
- Philippians 1:28; I Thessalonians 5:8-9
- Hebrews 1:14; 9:28
- (Implied in Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13)

☐ **“gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out”** Jesus empowered these followers with His power. They became His official representatives (i.e., Apostles). The physical miracles were a way of confirming Jesus’ new message.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EXORCISM

Exorcisms were common in Jesus’ day, but Jesus’ methods were radically different. His exorcisms were a sign of the New Age. The rabbis used magic formulas (see Alfred Edersheim, *the Life and Times of Jesus, The Messiah*, vol. 2, Appendix XIII, pp. 748-763; XVI, pp. 770-776), but Jesus used His own authority. There is so much confusion and bad information circulating today about exorcism and the demonic. Part of this problem is that the NT does not discuss these issues. As a pastor I have wished I had more information on this subject. Here are some books I trust:

1. *Christian Counseling and the Occult*, Kurt E. Koch
2. *Demons in the World Today*, Merrill F. Unger
3. *Biblical Demonology*, Merrill F. Unger
4. *Principalities and Powers*, John Warwick Montgomery
5. *Christ and the Powers*, Hendrik Berkhof
6. *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton Anton

It surprises me that exorcism is not listed as one of the spiritual gifts and that the subject is not addressed in the Apostolic letters. I believe in a biblical worldview which includes the spiritual realm (i.e., good and evil), present and active in the physical realm (i.e., Job 1-2; Daniel 10; Eph. 6:10-18). However, God has chosen not to reveal the specifics. As believers we have all the information we need to live godly, productive lives for Him! But some subjects are not revealed or developed.

☐ **“unclean spirits. . .heal every kind of disease”** Notice a distinction is made between demon possession and disease. Demons can cause diseases, but not always.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC (UNCLEAN SPIRITS)

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed personality to forces of nature, natural objects, and traits of human personality. Life is explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) that impacted individual human lives.
 1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
 2. Egypt, order and function
 3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright’s *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92
- C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 43:10-11; 45:21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.

1. *Se'im* (satyrs or hair demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15,18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)
6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26)

(These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523.)

However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT. Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zechariah 3), not an enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

- D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.). It was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons.

Judaism's theology on personified evil is explained and documented well in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 748-763) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.

1. Satan or Sammael
2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

- E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in the OT Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God, unless Genesis 3). They oppose God's will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings (also called unclean spirits, cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18, or evil spirits, cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2), from human beings. Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift nor is a methodology or procedure given for future generations of ministers or believers.

- F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor purpose is fully revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged (Jesus' first coming) and will be removed from creation (Jesus' second coming).
- G. God's people must resist evil (cf. James 4:7). They cannot be controlled by it (cf. I John 5:18), but they can be tempted and their witness and influence damaged (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). Evil is a revealed part of the Christian's worldview. Modern Christians have no right to redefine evil (the demythologizing of Rudolf Baltmann); depersonalize evil (the social structures of Paul Tillich), nor attempt to explain it completely in psychological terms (Sigmund Freud), but its influence is pervasive.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:2-15

²Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him. ⁵These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; ⁶but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons, freely you received, freely give. ⁹Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰or a bag for *your* journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. ¹¹And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave *that* city. ¹²As you enter the house, give it your greeting. ¹³If the house is worthy, give it your *blessing* of peace.

But if it is not worthy, take back your *blessing of peace*. ¹⁴Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for *the* land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.”

10:2 “the names of the twelve apostles” The term “apostle” (see note at v. 5) is used only in Matthew (here) and Mark (3:14) in connection with the list of the apostles’ names, also once more in Mark 6:30. It is much more common in Luke and Acts.

1. Luke 6:13; 9:10; 11:49; 17:5; 22:14; 24:10
2. Acts
 - a. the Twelve, 1:2,26; 2:37,42,43; 4:33,35,36,37; 5:2,12,18,29,40; 6:6; 8:1,14,18; 9:27; 11:1; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4
 - b. other apostles (later use of the term)
 - (1) Paul, 14:4,14 (equal authority with the Twelve)
 - (2) Barnabas 14:14 (lesser authority)

The lists of the Apostles are found in Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:12-16, and Acts 1:13-14. The names and order change slightly. However, they are always in three groups of four. Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot is always last. The groupings stay the same. These groupings were possibly a rotating system whereby certain disciples could go home for short periods to check on their families.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE CHART OF APOSTLES’ NAMES

	Matthew 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:12-18
First Group	Simon (Peter) Andrew (Peter’s brother) James (son of Zebedee) John (James’ brother)	Simon (Peter) James (son of Zebedee) John (James’ brother) Andrew	Simon (Peter) Andrew (Peter’s brother) James John	Peter John James Andrew
Second Group	Philip Bartholomew Thomas Matthew (tax gatherer)	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Bartholomew Matthew Thomas	Philip Thomas Bartholomew Matthew
Third Group	James (son of Alphaeus) Thaddaeus Simon (the Cananean) Judas (Iscariot)	James (son of Alphaeus) Thaddaeus Simon (the Cananean) Judas (Iscariot)	James (son of Alphaeus) Simon (the zealot) Judas (son of James) Judas (Iscariot)	James (son of Alphaeus) Simon (the zealot) Judas (son of James)

10:3 “Bartholomew” He was also called Nathaniel (cf. John. 1:45-51).

☐ **“Matthew”** He was also called Levi (cf. Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27).

☐ **“Thaddeus”** He was also called Judas, the son or brother of James (cf. Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13) or Lebbaeus (Greek MSS C², L, and W).

10:4

NASB, NJB “Simon the Zealot”
NKJV “Simon the Canaanite”
NRSV “Simon the Cananean”
TEV “Simon the Patriot”

He was also called “the Cananean,” which could refer to one from Cana (cf. Mark 3:18). However, the Greek reflects a Hebrew term “zealous.” He was a Jewish patriot and separatist (cf. Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). For Matthew and Simon to be in the same group shows the radical change that Jesus accomplished in these men’s lives.

☐ **“Iscariot”** This term can mean a man from a city in Judah, Keriath (from the Hebrew), or an assassin’s knife (from the Greek). If he was from Judah, he was the only Apostle from the south.

☐ **“the one who betrayed him”** There is an interesting book that attempts to interpret Judas in a new, a more positive way, *Judas, Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, published by Fortress Press, 1996. However, to do so it completely ignores John’s Gospel.

10:5 “sent” This was from the same Greek root as “apostle” (*apostello*, used in the LXX for God sending the prophets to speak for Him), which came to mean within rabbinical circles “sent one” with the implication of official authority. Mark 6:7 tells us Jesus sent the Apostles out in pairs.

▣ **“do not go in *the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans*”** This is probably the source of Paul’s “Jew first and also the Greeks” (cf. Rom 1:16). This was not exclusivism, but limiting His emphasis so as to give Abraham’s descendants every chance to respond.

The Jews hated the Samaritans because they were considered half-breeds. This referred to the Assyrian exile of the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel in 722 B.C. Thousands of Jews were deported to Media and thousands of Gentiles were exiled to take their place in Israel. Over the years an amalgamation of religion and social customs had occurred (cf. Ezra and Neh.). At this early stage of Jesus’ ministry the inclusion of either of these groups would have negatively affected His ability to reach Jews!

10:6 “the lost sheep” This was an unusual combination of terms; “sheep” often referred to God’s people (cf. John. 10), while “lost” implied their spiritual helplessness and vulnerability (cf. 9:36), especially if there is no shepherd (cf. Num. 27:17; I Kgs. 22:17; Ps. 119:176; Isa. 53:6; Zech. 13:7).

▣ **“of the house of Israel”** This was an idiomatic way of referring to the descendants of the Patriarchs. They are also known as

1. the house of Jacob (i.e., Luke 1:33, cf. 15:24; Acts 2:36; Heb. 8:8)
2. the house of Judah (i.e., Heb. 8:8)
3. children of Abraham (i.e., Matt. 3:9; John 8:33,39)

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persisteth
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
 - C. *El* Perevereth
 - D. Let *El* Contend
 - E. *El* Strives
 - F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28).
- II. Usages in the OT
 - A. Jacob’s name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10).
 - B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
 - C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
 - D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
 - E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
 - F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became the collective name for all of Jacob’s descendants again (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
 - G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

10:7 “as you go” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE (cf. 28:19).

▣ **“preach”** This was a PRESENT IMPERATIVE. This is a foreshadowing of (1) the mission trips of the Twelve and seventy and (2) the Great Commission of 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8.

▣ **“kingdom. . . is at hand”** This was to be the content that they were to preach (cf. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 21:31). The kingdom is the reign of God in human’s hearts now which will one day be consummated over all the earth (cf. 6:10). Although the disciples did not understand it yet (i.e., Luke 24:16,31), it began with the Incarnation of Christ (the Messiah) and

will be consummated at the Second Coming of Christ. Initially Jesus and the disciples preached a message similar to John the Baptist's message. See Special Topic: the Kingdom of God at 4:17.

10:8 “heal. . .raise. . .cleanse. . .cast out” These are all PRESENT IMPERATIVES (cf. 10:1). They went and ministered as Jesus ministered. His power and authority were flowing through them. These signs confirmed their message about Him.

The Greek manuscripts contain several variations of the phrase “raise the dead.” This may be because (1) biblical records are lacking that the twelve Apostles did this, (2) it is metaphorical of the spiritually dead, and (3) Matthew used the other three VERBS often without mentioning “raising the dead.” See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, pp. 27-28. The phrase is included in the uncial MSS \aleph , B, C, D, N, and many versions.

▣ **“lepers”** In the OT the disease of leprosy was a sign of God's disfavor (cf. II Chr. 26:16-23).

▣ **“cast out demons”** Jesus' power is greater than Satan and the demonic (cf. I John. 4:4). The demons are designated by the terms “spirits,” (cf. 8:16) and “unclean spirits,” (cf. 10:1). The origin of demons is not disclosed in Scripture. The rabbis attribute the origin of evil in the world to Genesis 6 (Paul says it was Genesis 3, cf. Rom. 5:12-21). They assert that the “sons of God” (see Special Topic on Genesis 1-11 commentary online at www.freebiblecommentary.org) mentioned in Genesis 6 became disembodied at their death by the flood of Noah and became the demons of the NT period seeking another body.

▣ **“freely you received, freely give”** This is not a passage against salaries for missionaries, but rather encouraging believers to trust in God while doing Kingdom work in (1) His power, (2) His provisions, and (3) His purposes to be accomplished. These verses are not universal principles, but guidelines for this particular mission trip (cf. Luke 22:35-36). They are the practical application of Matt. 6:25-34 to the present situation.

10:9 “your money belts” This was how first century Jews carried their coinage.

10:10 “bag” This kind of bag functioned as a suitcase. The disciples were not to carry with them every thing they might need, but trust God's daily provision.

▣ **“or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff”** Comparisons with Mark 6:8-9 have caused great controversy. The theories are

1. “staff” could be used in two different senses: a walking stick or a defensive club
2. the two shirts of v. 10 imply “do not take extras of these items”
3. Luke 22:35-36 shows one harmonization

The Gospels were not written for us to compare the details. The key to this text is that believers are to trust in God for His provisions; rely on His resources!

▣ **“for the worker is worthy of his support”** Jesus is probably alluding to the truth of Deut. 25:4 (cf. I Cor. 9:6-7,14; I Tim. 5:18), which goes back to Deut. 24:14-15 (cf. Lev. 19:13). Gospel preachers are to be supported by their hearers! The NT guidelines for giving are not OT tithing, but voluntary, sacrificial, joyful, according to the ability (cf. II Corinthians 8-9). See Special Topic: Tithing at 23:23.

10:11

NASB “inquire who is worthy in it; and stay at this house until you leave *that city*”

NKJV “inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out”

NRSV “find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave”

TEV “Go in and look for someone who is willing to welcome you, and stay with him until you leave that place”

NJB “Seek out someone worthy and stay with him until you leave”

When they came to a village (1) they were to seek out a godly home which desired the blessing of their presence, and (2) they were not to move again and again seeking better accommodations. It is possible that the godly home would be one of the first that responded to their preaching.

10:12 “give it your greeting” This referred to the traditional Jewish blessing of peace, *shalom*.

10:13 “if. . .if” There are two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which meant potential future action.

10:14 “shake the dust off your feet” This was a Jewish symbol of rejection (cf. Acts 13:51; 18:6).

10:15 This is one passage that implies degrees of judgment based on the amount of light that has been rejected (cf. 11:22-24). Also notice the same book which reveals God's matchless love also reveals God's wrath and judgment. See Special Topic: Degrees of Rewards and Punishments at 5:12.

☐ **"Truly"** See Special Topic at 5:18.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:16-20

¹⁶Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but *it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

10:16 "I send you out as sheep" Sheep were a metaphor for the new faith community which was fragile, helpless, and in need of constant care and protection, see Luke 10:3 and John. 10. This the first of four metaphors from the animal kingdom that characterize humanity.

☐ **"in the midst of wolves"** Wolves represented those who prey on the new community of faith, see Matt. 7:15-27; Luke 10:3; John. 10:12; Acts 20:29; II Peter 2.

☐ **"shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves"** Believers must be wise but innocent (cf. Rom. 16:19). They were to avoid conflict when possible, but remain bold proclaimers of the gospel.

10:17 "Because of. . ." This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (cf. 7:15; 16:6,11). Even with the dawn of the new age (Romans 5-6), the old age remains (Romans 7)! This is the tension of "the already" and the "not yet" of the overlapping (i.e., two comings of Christ) of the two ages. See Special Topic at 12:31.

☐ **"the courts"** This referred to local Jewish synagogue courts (cf. 23:34). It is interesting to note that some of Mark's eschatological discourse (cf. Mark 13:9-13) of Jesus is repeated here instead of Matthew 24. Therefore, this mission assignment of the Disciples takes on eschatological implications (as does v. 23).

☐ **"scourge"** This referred to Jewish flogging (cf. Deut. 25:3), which consisted of one less than forty lashes, one-third on the front of the body and two-thirds on the back (cf. II Cor. 11:24).

☐ **"in their synagogues"** See parallel at 23:34. This was the local place of worship, education, and welfare relief.

10:18 "you will even be brought before governors and kings" This referred to the future universal spread of the gospel (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). It is important that the narrow exclusiveness of v. 5 be balanced by this verse. Gordon Fee (*How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 133) makes the assertion that vv. 5-12 relate to the sending out of the Twelve new apostles, but vv. 10-20 are instructions for a much later time (i.e., governors, kings, Gentiles) because at first Jesus came only to the lost sheep of Israel. This illustrates how the Gospel writers "selected, rearranged, and adapted" Jesus' teachings to meet the needs of the early church.

Another example of this is v. 23 "until the Son of Man comes" (see note at v. 23). Obviously this could have several meanings depending on the historical period.

☐ **"governors and kings"** If this refers to (1) Jesus' day, then Pontius Pilate or (2) Paul's mission activities then

1. "governors" could be the Roman governors of Felix (Acts 23:24) or Festus (Acts 24:27)
2. "kings" could be Agrippa I (Acts 12:1) or Agrippa II (Acts 25:13)

They basically stand for governmental authority of any kind.

10:19 This speaks of special illumination and grace during persecution (cf. Mark 13:11; Luke 21:12). This is not a proof-text for preachers and teachers not studying before proclaiming! This verse and verse 26 are AORIST SUBJUNCTIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which meant never start an action. Verses 28 and 31, which also deal with fear, are PRESENT IMPERATIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually meant stop an act in process.

10:20 “it is the Spirit of your Father” Here the Holy Spirit is linked to the Father (cf. Rom. 8:11,14). In Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; and I Pet. 1:11 the Spirit is linked to the Son. There is a fluidity between the persons of the Trinity. They all participate in the acts of redemption. See Special Topic: The Trinity at 3:17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:21-22

²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against his parents and cause them to be put to death. ²²You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

10:21 This speaks of the radical commitment necessary for discipleship which supersedes even family love and often caused confrontation within families (cf. vv. 34-39).

10:22 “you will be hated by all because of My name” Persecution was expected for disciples of Jesus (cf. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; II Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; and all of I Peter).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

1. Because of personal sin (temporal judgment). This does not imply that all problems and negative circumstances are a result of sin (cf. Job; Ps. 73; Luke 14:1-5; Neh. 9; Acts 5:1-11; I Cor. 11:29-30; Gal. 6:7).
2. To develop Christlikeness (Heb. 5:8). Even Jesus, humanly speaking, had to be matured, so too, His followers (cf. Rom. 5:3-4, 8:28-29; II Cor. 12:7-10; Heb. 12:5-12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 1:7).
3. To develop a powerful, effective witness (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-22; I Pet. 2:18-21, 3:13-17).
4. As a sign of the birth pains of the New Age (cf. Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:8).

▣ **“it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved”** The doctrine of the “perseverance” (see Special Topic below) is as biblical as “the security of the believers!” (cf. 24:13; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12; 21:7). We must affirm both truths, even though they cause doctrinal tension! Doctrines are given in tension-filled relationship to other doctrines, not isolated truths. The best illustration is that biblical truth is revealed as constellations of stars, not as single stars. We must focus on the patterns of the whole of biblical revelation.

“End” (*telos*) refers to the end of this age (cf. 24:6,13,14). “Saved” can be understood in its OT sense of physical deliverance or its NT sense of spiritual salvation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern, dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both poles are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Some examples:

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a life-time commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or a faith and repentant response on mankind’s part to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem starts with seemingly conflicting passages of the NT:

1. texts on assurance
 - a. statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
 - b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
 - c. statements of Peter (I Pet. 1:4-5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
 - a. statements of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13)
 - b. statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel (John 8:31; 15:4-10)

- c. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23; II Tim. 3:2)
- d. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
- e. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9; Rev. 2:7,17,20; 3:5,12,21; 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit. Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus' death dealt with the sin problem of the fallen creation! God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible addresses two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives or (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings of perseverance! Which group are you in?

There is a historical theological controversy involving Augustine versus Pelagius and Calvin versus Arminius (semi-Pelagian). The issue involves the question of salvation: if one is truly saved, must he persevere in faith and fruitfulness?

The Calvinists line up behind those biblical texts that assert God's sovereignty and keeping-power (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:31-39; I John 5:13,18; I Pet. 1:3-5) and VERB TENSES like the PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES of Eph. 2:5,8.

The Arminians line up behind those biblical texts that warn believers to "hold on," "hold out," or "continue" (Matt. 10:22; 24:9-13; Mark 13:13; John 15:4-6; I Cor. 15:2; Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). I personally do not believe that Hebrews 6 and 10 are applicable, but many Arminians use them as a warning against apostasy. The parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 and Mark 4 addresses the issue of apparent belief, as does John 8:31-59. As Calvinists quote the PERFECT TENSE VERBS used to describe salvation, the Arminians quote the PRESENT TENSE passages like I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15.

This is a perfect example of how theological systems abuse the proof-texting method of interpretation. Usually a guiding principle or chief text is used to construct a theological grid by which all other texts are viewed. Be careful of grids from any source. They come from western logic, not revelation. The Bible is an eastern book. It presents truth in tension-filled, seemingly paradoxical pairs. Christians are meant to affirm both and live within the tension. The NT presents both the security of the believer and the demand for continuing faith and godliness. Christianity is an initial response of repentance and faith followed by a continuing response of repentance and faith. Salvation is not a product (a ticket to heaven or a fire insurance policy), but a relationship. It is a decision and discipleship. It is described in the NT in all VERB TENSES:

AORIST (completed action), Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5

PERFECT (completed action with continuing results), Eph. 2:5,8

PRESENT (continuing action), I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15

FUTURE (future events or certain events), Rom. 5:8,10; 10:9; I Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; I Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:23

²³"But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes."

10:23 "But, whenever they persecute you" This is missing in Luke, but has a parallel in Mark 9:1. See note and Special Topic at 10:22.

▣ **"flee to the next"** Believers must avoid conflict and confrontation when possible. Evangelism must be the constant goal!

▣ **"Truly"** See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ “you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes” This was probably initially understood as

1. Jesus will rejoin the Twelve after their mission
2. Jesus asserts His authority in Jerusalem
3. inauguration of the church (i.e., Pentecost)
4. Jesus fulfilling His promises to them (i.e., upper room event of John 20:19-23)
5. the judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (NASB Study Bible, p. 1382)
6. Jesus’ Second coming in power as Judge (i.e., Dan. 7:13-14), inaugurating the eternal kingdom

See Special Topic: the Any-Moment Return of Jesus vs. the Not-Yet (NT paradox) at 24:27.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:24-25

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!”

10:25 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ “**Beelzebul**” This was a compound term from *Ba’al* and *Zebub*. This was the local *Ba’al* of Ekron (cf. II Kgs. 1:16). The Jews changed the names of pagan rulers and pagan gods by changing the vowels, to make fun of them. The term can be translated as “Lord of the house,” “Lord of the flies,” or “Lord of the dung.”

The second term was often spelled *Zebul*, the chief demon in Jewish folklore (cf. Matt. 12:24; Luke 11:15). This explains why NASB and NRSV have *Beelzebul*, while NKJV and NIV have *Beelzebub*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:26-27

²⁶Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.

10:26 “do not fear them” This is a negative AORIST PASSIVE (deponent) SUBJUNCTIVE like v. 19 functioning as an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE like vv. 28 and 31. This construction meant “do not even start an action.” This verse states that the motives and purposes of the human hearts, both positive and negative, will be known on Judgment Day.

It is difficult to relate the truth of this verse with the biblical promises that when God forgives, God forgets (cf. Ps. 103:11-14; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). Possibly unconfessed (believers, cf. I John 1:7-9) sin or unforgiven (unbelievers) sin is being referred to. I so rejoice in the “forgetfulness of God”! Jesus’ blood cleanses from all sin (cf. Hebrew 9)!

Believers are not to fear humans, but respect/fear God (cf. v. 28; Heb. 10:31).

Overall I think this verse refers to the motives and actions of

1. unworthy houses, v. 13
2. wolves, v. 16
3. evil men, v. 17
4. governors and kings, v. 18
5. brother, v. 21
6. child, v. 21
7. “they” of v. 23
8. “them” of v. 26
9. “those” of v. 28

10:27 “housetops” The flat rooftops common in Palestine were places of social activity; therefore, what was told would become public knowledge. Jesus wants His message known by all mankind!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:28-31

²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are numbered. ³¹So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

10:28 “Do not fear” See notes at v. 26.

☐ “to destroy” See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 2:13.

☐ “soul and body” This verse does not refer to a sharp dichotomy between body, soul, and spirit, but is an expression of the possibility of physical death, but not eternal death for believers.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BODY AND SPIRIT

Body and spirit are not an ontological dichotomy in mankind, but a dual relationship to both this planet and to God. The Hebrew word *nephesh* (i.e., soul) is used of both mankind and the animals in Genesis, while “spirit” (*ruah*) is used uniquely of mankind. This is not a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a two-part (dichotomous, cf. I Cor. 7:34; Heb. 4:12) or three-part (trichotomous) being (cf. I Thess. 5:23). Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7; II Cor. 7:1). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity, see Millard J. Erickson’s *Christian Theology* (second edition), pp. 538-557 and Frank Stagg’s *Polarities of Man’s Existence in Biblical Perspective*.

☐ “in hell” This was the Hebrew term “*Gehenna*.” It was a compound of “valley” and “(sons of) Hinnom.” This was a valley outside Jerusalem where a Canaanite fertility and fire god (cf. Lev. 18:21) was worshiped by sacrificing children (called *molech*). The Jews turned it into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Jesus’ metaphors of eternal punishment were taken from this burning, stinking, worm-infested dump. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? At 5:22.

10:29-30 “sparrows. . . hairs” God cares and knows about every aspect of believers’ lives (cf. Luke 12:6; 21:18; I Pet. 5:7). This is a promise of individual (not corporate) concern.

☐ “a cent” This is literally “*assarion*,” which was a Roman copper coin. One *assarion* could buy several sparrows.

10:31 “So do not fear” See note at vv. 19 and 26.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:32-33

³²“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

³³But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is heaven.”

10:32 “who confesses Me before men” This meant “publicly acknowledge” (cf. Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8-9). Verses 32 and 33 are contrasting parallel statements. Christianity is a God-offered covenant that must be personally, publicly received, obeyed and maintained.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

A. There are two forms of the same Greek root used for confession or profession, *homologeō* and *exomologeō*. The compound term used in James is from *homo*—the same, *legō*, to speak, and *ex*, out of. The basic meaning is to say the same thing, to agree with. The *ex* added to the idea of a public declaration.

B. The English translations of this word group are

1. praise
2. agree
3. declare
4. profess
5. confess

C. This word group had two seemingly opposite usages

1. to praise (God)
2. to admit sin

These may have developed from mankind’s sense of the holiness of God and its own sinfulness. To acknowledge one truth is to acknowledge both. This may also explain the opening three questions, the first and third deal with suffering and sickness (possibly caused by sin) and the second, cheerful praise.

- D. The NT usages of the word group are
1. to promise (cf. Matt. 14:7; Acts 7:17)
 2. to agree or consent to something (cf. John. 1:20; Luke 22:6; Acts 24:14; Heb. 11:13)
 3. to praise (cf. Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom. 14:11; 15:9)
 4. to assent to
 - a. a person (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John. 9:22; 12:42; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11; Rev. 3:5)
 - b. a truth (cf. Acts 23:8; II Cor. 11:13; I John. 4:2)
 5. to make a public declaration of (legal sense developed into religious affirmation, cf. Acts 24:14; I Tim. 6:13)
 - a. without admission of guilt (cf. I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:23)
 - b. with an admission of guilt (cf. Matt. 3:6; Acts 19:18; Heb. 4:14; James 5:16; I John. 1:9)

▣ **“My Father in heaven”** There are several different PRONOUNS used with Father.

1. your – 5:16,45; 6:1; 7:11
2. our – 6:9
3. My – 7:21; 10:32,33; 12:50

I think 12:50 is crucial, one who does the Father’s will, as Jesus does, is part of the family. One who refuses is not part of the family. It must have been particularly irritating to the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day to hear Him, an unofficial rabbi and Galilean upstate, to use “Father” to refer to YHWH, the Holy One of Israel. Even more so to allow the outcast to be included in God’s family!

10:33 The antonym of “confess” (*homologeō*, cf. v. 32 [twice]) is “deny” (*arneomai*, cf. v. 33 [twice]; 26:70,72 [*aparneomai* in 26:35,75]). See Special Topic: Confession at v. 32 above.

This is a shocking verse, as is II Tim. 2:12. It must be remembered that public acknowledgment in word (cf. Rom. 10:9-13) and deed (cf. Matt. 13:1-23; 25:36-46) is crucial. The decisions made now relate to eternity (cf. 25:46).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:34-36

³⁴“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; ³⁶and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.”

10:34 “Do not think” According to the *Analytical Greek New Testament* by Barbara and Timothy Friberg, this VERB is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE used as an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE.

Jesus was probably speaking these words against the backdrop of the Jewish expectations concerning the Messiah, who was called the “Prince of Peace” (cf. Isa. 9:6). The Jews expected the Messiah to usher in a military order and a nationalistic peace on the Jews’ behalf (cf. Luke 12:49-53).

▣ **“peace”** This term’s etymology was “to bring together that which was broken” (cf. John. 14:24).

▣ **“I did not come to bring peace, but a sword”** Jesus did not come to bring war or strife, but the fact that He has come forces humans to make a radical decision between “followship” or rejection (cf. John. 3:17; Luke 12:51-53).

10:35 “for I came to set a man against his father” See v. 21. The parallel in Luke 14:26 has the Hebrew idiom, “hate father,” which was an idiom of comparison. We must recognize this as a Hebrew idiom instead of interpreting it literally (cf. Gen. 29:31, 33; Deuteronomy. 15; Mal. 1:2-3; John. 12:25). This speaks of a radical priority commitment to Jesus which supercedes all earthly ties.

10:35-36 This is a quote from Micah 7:6. This passage was often quoted in eschatological settings (cf. Mark 13:12 and Luke 12:53).

10:36 “a man’s enemies will be the members of his household” A good example of this type of familial pressure can be seen in Peter’s response to Jesus’ claim to Messiahship (cf. Matt. 16:22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:37-39

³⁷"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."

10:37 "He who loves. . . more than Me" The key here is radical priority commitment. Discipleship, unlike decision, is a life-long commitment of fellowship and obedience!

▣ "is not worthy of Me" See Luke 9:62.

10:38 "take his cross and follow after Me" This is a graphic metaphorical summons to total commitment to Christ for life. Jesus is demanding that possible followers count the cost (cf. Luke 14:25-35).

The cross was a Phoenician method of execution that was taken over by the Romans and developed into an ordeal involving several days of excruciating pain before death. Its purpose was to discourage non-Romans from criminal activity. There was a historical precedent of its use in Palestine:

1. Antiochus IV "Epiphanes" crucified eight hundred Pharisees
2. Varus, a Roman general, put down a revolt and crucified two thousand Jews along the highways of Palestine (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 17:10:10)
3. Herod planned on crucifying many Pharisees at his death so that people would grieve

This metaphor does not refer to some particular problem in your life. It refers to death—death to self (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; I John. 3:16).

10:39 "life. . . life" This was the Greek term *psuche*. This term was often synonymous with "spirit" [*pneuma*]. In this context, however, it seems to refer to an individual person or self. This statement involved a radical crucifixion of self interest in light of Jesus' interest (cf. Matt. 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John. 12:25). Salvation involves far more than a decision or prayer. It demands one's all (possessions, family, reputation, time, and energy)! Nothing less will do!

▣ "lose" See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 2:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:40-42

⁴⁰"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. ⁴¹He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴²And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

10:40,41 "He who receives you receives Me. . . a prophet. . . a righteous man" The context seems to imply that Jesus is referred to personally by all three of these terms. The term "prophet" alludes to Deut. 18:15 and 18. The term "righteous man" equals "the Righteous One" of Acts 7:52 and possibly the Dead Sea Scrolls phrase "teacher of righteousness."

Jesus' radical new message was directed to those who would trust Him and His words. One must first repent and receive Him as their savior and hope. In so doing they become identified with the new spiritual kingdom of God. The disciple represents Jesus Himself and His message, therefore, whoever receives them and their message, receives Jesus and to receive Jesus is to receive the Father (cf. John 8:19; 16:3; 17:3; I John 2:23; 4:15; 5:1,10-12; II John v. 9). One cannot know or fellowship with the Father except through the Son (cf. John 14:6-7,8-11).

▣ "sent" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (*APOSTELLŌ*)

This is a common Greek word for "send" (i.e., *apostellō*). This term has several theological usages.

1. the rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English "ambassador" (cf. II Cor. 5:20).
2. the Gospels often use this term of Jesus being sent by the Father. In John the term takes on Messianic overtones (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48 and especially John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). It is used of Jesus sending believers (cf. John 17:18; 20:21).

3. the NT used it for disciples
 - a. the original twelve inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
 - b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
 - (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
 - (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
 - (3) Apollos (cf. I Cor. 4:6-9)
 - (4) James the Lord's brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
 - (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6)
 - (6) possibly Titus (cf. II Cor. 8:23)
 - (7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
 - c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
4. Paul uses this title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given authority as Christ's representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

10:42 “gives to one of these little ones” Loving help by one Christian should be given to another simply because they are both related to Jesus Christ. “Little ones” are not children, but new believers (cf. Matt. 18:6).

☐ **“Truly”** See Special Topic at 5:18.

☐ **“reward”** The Bible is replete with statements concerning the Christian's reward. These rewards are based on the Spirit's activity in believers and their yieldedness to His activity. However, in the bountiful grace of God believers will be rewarded for their Christ-like yieldedness and the effective operation of the Spirit working through their spiritual giftedness! See Special Topic at 5:12.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus limit Himself mostly to the Jews? Can you list the exceptions?
2. Why do Matthew, Mark, and Luke differ in their accounts of Jesus' life?
3. Are there degrees of reward and punishment? Based on what?
4. What is verse 23 referring to?
5. Why is public acknowledgment of faith in Jesus so important?
6. Why does Jesus cause such controversy?
7. What does it mean to take up one's cross and follow Him?

MATTHEW 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Messengers of John the Baptist (10:40-11:1)	John the Baptist Sends Messengers 11:1-19	Narratives Illustrate the Authority Claimed by Jesus (11:2-15:50)	The Messengers from John the Baptist 11:1	11:1 The Baptist's Question; Jesus Commands him
11:2-15		11:2-6 11:7-15	11:2-3 11:4-6 11:7-15	11:2-6 11:7-10 (10b) 11:11-15 Jesus Condemns his Contemporaries
11:16-19		11:16-19	11:16-19	11:16-19 (17)
Woes to Unrepentant Cities 11:20-24	Woes to the Impenitent Cities 11:20-24	11:20-24	The Unbelieving Towns 11:20-24	Lament Over the Lake-Towns 11:20 11:21-24
Come to Me and Rest 11:25-30	Jesus Gives True Rest 11:25-30	11:25-27 11:28-30	Come to Me and Rest 11:25-26 11:27 11:28-30	The Good News Revealed to the Simple. The Father and the Son 11:25-27 The Gentle Mastery of Christ 11:28-30

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW: 11:1-30

- A. This chapter has often been described as unrelated stories, but the unifying factor seems to be the answer to the question, “Why was Jesus’ ministry not more outwardly successful?”
- B. John the Baptist is a central character in this chapter (cf. John. 1:6-8, 19-36). He was the last of the Old Testament prophets (cf. v. 9).
- C. Isaiah lists several actions by which the Jews could recognize the Messiah, of whom John the Baptist was forerunner (i.e., Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5b). These are the very actions of Jesus recorded in chapters 8 and 9.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1

¹When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

11:1 “When Jesus had finished giving instructions” This was a phrase which Matthew used to outline his book. It occurred at the end of Matthew’s five literary units (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

▣ **“to teach and preach in their cities”** This is Jesus’ main mission, to communicate the gospel, not to heal (cf. 4:23; 9:35). Healing was meant to confirm and validate the gospel, not to become the focus of His ministry. Healing was a way to (1) show God’s love; (2) show Jesus’ power; and (3) fulfill OT prophecy about the Messiah (cf. v. 5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:2-6

²Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” ⁴Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you see: ⁵the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. ⁶And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

11:2 “John, while imprisoned” John the Baptist was imprisoned in Machaerus (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*. 18.5.2), one of the fortresses of Herod Antipas. It is on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. Herod had imprisoned John for preaching against his marriage to Herod Phillip’s former wife, Herodias. Antipas wooed her away from Phillip during a visit to Rome (cf. Josephus’ *Antiq.* 18:5:2).

▣ **“Christ”** The term “Christ” equals the OT term *Messiah* which meant “an Anointed One.” It was used in the sense of God’s special call and equipping. In the OT, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed functions (cf. Heb. 1:1-3). King Cyrus of the Persian Empire, who was an unbeliever, was even called God’s anointed (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1).

11:3 “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else” This was a Messianic title (cf. Ps. 118:26; alluded to often, Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 6:14; 11:27; 12:13; and Heb. 10:37). See Special Topic at 8:20.

In Luke 1:15 John was filled with the Spirit, but he still had doubts. Several theories explain John’s doubting.

1. John was discouraged because he was in prison
2. John Calvin says that this was his way of referring his disciples to Jesus
3. Jesus was not acting in the expected manner (cf. Matt. 3:7-12)

“Someone else” is the Greek term *heteros* which meant, in Classical Greek, “another of a different kind.” John expected a message of judgment from the Messiah, instead Jesus offered salvation to all.

11:4-5 “Jesus answered and said to them” Verse 5 is a quote from Isaiah. It is debated whether it was from 26:19; 29:18,19; 35:5-6; or 61:1. It does emphasize the ministry of the Messiah as a ministry of compassion and the healing of the poor and outcast.

11:5 “Gospel” The NOUN form (*euangelion*, over 60 times in Paul’s writings) is found in 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; and 26:13. The VERB form (*euangelizumai*) is found only here in Matthew (not in John). This word describes the contents of Jesus’ message, “good news.” It includes the “bad news” of the sin and separation of all humans from God, but continues in the offer of forgiveness, restoration, and eternal salvation for all in faith in Christ. The good news of victory in the spiritual conflict!

11:6 This was a gentle rebuke of John’s lack of faith. The Bible depicts its characters in both positive and negative ways. This shows its credibility. It was not propaganda, but true historical people and their feelings and faults!

Matthew chose to record this because it gets back to the major theological issue—who is Jesus?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:7-15

⁷As these men were going *away*, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings’ palaces! ⁹But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written,

‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,

WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’

¹¹Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. ¹³For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

11:7 “A reed shaken by the wind” Notice the threefold parallelism, “what did you go out to see?” John was like Elijah; he fulfilled the predictions of Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3 (cf. Mark 1:2-3).

This may relate to (1) John’s doubt which had just been expressed publicly in his question (i.e., v. 3) or (2) John’s steadfast character and moral courage in denouncing sin (i.e., the Pharisees’ and Herod’s).

11:9 “and one who is more than a prophet” John was not the first gospel preacher, but the last OT prophet predicted by Isaiah and Malachi. It is difficult to compare OT prophets with NT prophets. OT prophets wrote Scripture, but not NT prophets. Some of the Apostles, like Paul, claimed to be a prophet, but not all. What then is the purpose of the NT gift? See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

- I. It is not the same as OT prophecy, which has the rabbinical connotation of inspired revelations from YHWH (cf. Acts 3:18,21; Rom. 16:26). Only prophets could write Scripture.
 - A. Moses was called a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15-21).
 - B. History books (Joshua - Kings [except Ruth]) were called the “former prophets” (cf. Acts 3:24).
 - C. Prophets usurp the place of High Priest as the source of information from God (cf. Isaiah - Malachi [except Lamentations and Daniel]).
 - D. The second division of the Hebrew canon is “the Prophets” (cf. Matt. 5:17; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:25,27; Rom. 3:21).
- II. In the NT the concept is used in several different ways.
 - A. referring to OT prophets and their inspired message (cf. Matt. 2:23; 5:12; 11:13; 13:14; Rom. 1:2)
 - B. referring to a message for an individual rather than a corporate group (i.e., OT prophets spoke primarily to Israel)
 - C. referring to both John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:9; 14:5; 21:26; Luke 1:76) and Jesus as proclaimers of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 13:57; 21:11,46; Luke 4:24; 7:16; 13:33; 24:19). Jesus also claimed to be greater than the prophets (cf. Matt. 11:9; 12:41; Luke 7:26).
 - D. other prophets in the NT
 1. early life of Jesus as recorded in Luke’s Gospel (i.e., Mary’s memories)
 - a. Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:41-42)
 - b. Zacharias (cf. Luke 1:67-79)

- c. Simeon (cf. Luke 2:25-35)
- d. Anna (cf. Luke 2:36)
- 2. ironic predictions (cf. Caiaphas, John 11:51)
- E. referring to one who proclaims the gospel (the lists of proclaiming gifts in I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
- F. referring to an ongoing gift in the church (cf. Matt. 23:34; Acts 13:1; 15:32; Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; 13:2; Eph. 4:11). Sometimes this can refer to women (cf. Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17; 21:9; I Cor. 11:4-5).
- G. referring to the apocalyptic book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:7,10,18,19)

III. NT prophets

- A. They do not give inspired revelation in the same sense as did the OT prophets (i.e., Scripture). This statement is possible because of the use of the phrase “the faith” (i.e., a sense of a completed gospel) used in Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3,20.

This concept is clear from the full phrase used in Jude 3, “the faith once and for all handed down to the saints.” The “once-for-all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, worldview teachings of Christianity. This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT. This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”:

God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)

- 1. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
- 2. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION)
- 3. The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately to God.

This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

- B. In some ways NT prophets are similar to OT prophets.
 - 1. prediction of future events (cf. Paul, Acts 27:22; Agabus, Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11; other unnamed prophets, Acts 20:23)
 - 2. proclaim judgment (cf. Paul, Acts 13:11; 28:25-28)
 - 3. symbolic acts which vividly portray an event (cf. Agabus, Acts 21:11)
- C. They do proclaim the truths of the gospel sometimes in predictive ways (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 20:23; 21:10-11), but this is not the primary focus. Prophesying in I Corinthians is basically communicating the gospel (cf. 14:24,39).
- D. They are the Spirit’s contemporary means of revealing the contemporary and practical applications of God’s truth to each new situation, culture, or time period (cf. I Cor. 14:3).
- E. They were active in the early Pauline churches (cf. I Cor. 11:4-5; 12:28,29; 13:29; 14:1,3,4,5,6,22,24,29,31,32,37,39; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; I Thess. 5:20) and are mentioned in the Didache (written in the late first century or in the second century, date uncertain) and in Montanism of the second and third centuries in northern Africa.

IV. Have the NT gifts ceased?

- A. This question is difficult to answer. It helps to clarify the issue by defining the purpose of the gifts. Are they meant to confirm the initial preaching of the gospel or are they ongoing ways for the church to minister to itself and a lost world?
- B. Does one look at the history of the church to answer the question or the NT itself? There is no indication that the spiritual gifts were temporary in the NT. Those who try to use I Cor. 13:8-13 to address this issue abuse the authorial intent of the passage, which asserts that everything but love will pass away.
- C. I am tempted to say that since the NT, not church history, is the authority believers must affirm that the gifts continue. However, I believe that culture affects interpretation. Some very clear texts are no longer applicable (i.e., the holy kiss, women wearing veils, churches meeting in homes, etc). If culture affects texts then why not church history?

- D. This is simply a question that cannot be definitively answered. Some believers will advocate “cessation” and others “non-cessation.” In this area, as in many interpretative issues, the heart of the believer is the key. The NT is ambiguous and cultural. The difficulty is being able to decide which texts are affected by culture/history and which are eternal (cf. Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 14-19 and 69-77). Here is where the discussions of freedom and responsibility, which are found in Rom. 14:1-15:13 and I Cor. 8-10, are crucial. How we answer the question is important in two ways.
1. Each believer must walk in faith in the light they have. God looks at our heart and motives.
 2. Each believer must allow other believers to walk in their faith understanding. There must be tolerance within biblical bounds. God wants us to love one another as He does.
- E. To sum up the issue, Christianity is a life of faith and love, not a perfect theology. A relationship with Him which impacts our relationship with others is more important than definitive information or creedal perfection.

11:10 “this is the one about whom it is written” This is a quote from Mal. 3:1. It was a reference to a royal visit and the feverous preparation which preceded it. Mark 1:2-3 is a composite quote from Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3. This same concept is found in Isa. 57:14; 62:10.

Matthew collects the life and teachings of Jesus to convince Jews that He is the Messiah (the Coming One). This is done by quoting many OT texts. They are introduced in a variety of ways.

1. a prophet is unnamed or alluded to
 - a. the prophet, 1:22 (unnamed, Isa. 7:14)
 - b. the prophet, 2:5 (unnamed, Micah 5:2)
 - c. the prophet, 13:35 (unnamed, Ps. 78:2)
 - d. the prophet, 21:4 (unnamed, Isa. 62:11)
2. a prophet is named
 - a. Isaiah, 3:3; 4:14; 12:17; 13:14; 15:7
 - b. Jeremiah, 2:18; 27:9
3. it is written (PERFECT PASSIVE), 4:6,10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24,31
4. God said, 15:4; 22:31
5. have you not read, 19:4; 21:16,42
6. Moses said, 22:24
7. David in the Spirit, 22:43

Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, and return were fulfillments of OT prophecy (cf. 26:54-56).

11:11 “Truly” This is literally “amen,” the Hebrew word for faith (cf. Hab. 2:4). Its original etymology meant “to be firm” or “to be sure.” It was often used initially by Jesus to introduce a significant statement. See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ **“among those born of women”** This verse is not a put down of John the Baptist, but an affirmation that he was the last of the OT prophets (cf. 13:16, 17). In a sense this was Jesus’ way of affirming the significance of the new age (New Covenant, Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38), inaugurated by Himself.

11:12

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV **“the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force”**

TEV **“the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violent attacks, and violent men try to seize it”**

NJB **“The Kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm”**

There has been much discussion about what this verse meant and how it should be translated. The first phrase can (1) in a positive sense, indicate that the kingdom of heaven is vigorously pressing forward, or (2) in a negative sense, refer to the violent reaction of the Jewish leaders to both John and Jesus’ preaching.

The second phrase seems to be a play on the word “vigorous” and was used of sinners eagerly grasping, or responding to, the gospel (cf. Luke 16:16). The Septuagint uses this VERB in the sense of a “strong invitation” (cf. Gen. 33:11; Jdgs. 19:7). See Special Topic: The Kingdom of God at 4:17.

11:13 “for all the prophets and Law” The Hebrew canon was divided into three sections, “the Law,” “the Prophets,” and “the Writings.” This was the NT way of indicating the entire OT (cf. Luke 24:44). The OT pointed toward Jesus and the gospel.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW CANON

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three divisions (the English Bible follows the order of the Septuagint).

1. The Torah (Pentateuch), Genesis - Deuteronomy
2. The Prophets
 - a. former prophets, Joshua - Kings (except Ruth)
 - b. later prophets, Isaiah - Malachi (except Lamentations and Daniel)
3. The Writings
 - a. Wisdom Literature, Job - Proverbs
 - b. Post-exilic Literature, Ezra - Esther
 - c. Megilloth (five scrolls)
 - (1) Ruth (read at Pentecost)
 - (2) Ecclesiastes (read at tabernacles)
 - (3) Song of Songs (read at Passover)
 - (4) Lamentations (read to remember the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.)
 - (5) Esther (read at Purim)
 - d. I and II Chronicles
 - e. Daniel

11:13 “until John” This seems to imply that the old covenant comes to an end (cf. Galatians 3 and the book of Hebrews) with the preaching of John the Baptist, who was the last old covenant prophet. Something radically new has come in Jesus. John is His forerunner! The new age of the Spirit; the new covenant; the promise of Gen. 3:15; 12:3 has come!

11:14 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

☐ **“John himself is Elijah who was to come”** This is implied in Luke 1:17. In John. 1:20-25, John denied that he was Elijah, but this was in the context of the specific questioning by the Pharisees. John was denying that he was Elijah reborn. Jesus asserted that John fulfilled the prophecy of the return of Elijah before the Messiah from Mal. 3:1 and 4:5, (cf. v. 10).

11:15 “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” This idiom (PRESENT PARTICIPLE and PRESENT IMPERATIVE) refers to the fact that unless the Holy Spirit aids believers’ insight they cannot understand spiritual truth (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 50:5; Matt. 13:9,43; Mark 4:9,23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; very similar to Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9). However, it also implies that the willingness of the individual to hear and respond is also necessary. Revelation involves a divine sender and a human hearer/responder (i.e., covenant).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:16-19

¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, ¹⁷and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

11:16 “like children sitting in the market place” This is paralleled in Luke 7:31-32. Even though John the Baptist came as an ascetic (i.e., a prophet from the desert, like Elijah), the Jews rejected him. Jesus came as one who readily associated with humans of all social levels and yet they rejected Him too. This either speaks of the fickleness of the Jewish leaders or shows their preconceived biases.

11:17 “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance” This social approach referred to the way Jesus interacted with people (cf. v. 19). The flute could be used for dancing (v. 17a) at both a party or a funeral (v. 17b).

☐ **“we sang a dirge, but you did not mourn”** This somber approach referred to the ministry of John the Baptist (cf. v. 18).

11:18 “He has a demon” This same charge is made against Jesus in 9:34 and 12:24 (cf. John. 7:20; 8:48-49,52; 10:20). This is the only text that accuses John of having a demon. The Jews could not deny the power of either John or Jesus, but claimed that their source of authority and power was the evil one. This, ultimately, is the unpardonable sin.

11:19 “The Son of Man” This was Jesus’ self-chosen title because it had no militaristic nor nationalistic implications. It combined the human and divine aspects of Christ’s nature (cf. Ezek. 2:1; Ps. 8:4; Dan. 7:13). The combination of aspects became a crucial NT truth (cf. I John 4:13).

▣ **“a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners”** Jesus acted in a very unexpected way. He befriended the same people the religious leaders rejected (cf. 9:11; Luke 5:30; 7:34; 15:2). This fulfills the Messianic predictions of Isaiah.

Religious legalism and asceticism have been such a spiritual/theological struggle for the church that I would like to quote a brief section from New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1, p. 495.

“Viewed as a whole, however, asceticism in the sense of renunciation of possessions, sexual activity, and food-restrictions is not generally enjoined by the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels. This does not mean that renunciation by a particular person in a concrete situation is excluded (cf. the story of the rich young ruler, Matt. 19:21). It is only that from such passages (cf. Matt. 11:19; 9:14ff; Mk. 2:18f; Lk. 5:33ff.), one cannot deduce a basic attitude on the part of Jesus, just as one cannot deduce his will for the overall validity of an ascetic ethic. Renunciation is only demanded where something stands in the way of following Jesus.”

11:19

NASB, NRSV “Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds”

NKJV “But wisdom is justified by her children”

TEV “God’s wisdom, however, is shown to be true by its results”

JB “Yet wisdom has been proved right by her actions”

The mention of “wisdom” alludes to Proverbs 8, where it is personified. Jesus is that personification. An example of this imagery is seen in 12:42, where Jesus is greater than the wisdom of Solomon (also note He is greater than the temple, 12:6 and Jonah, 12:41). Even Jesus’ use of “yoke” in 11:29 may be a reference to wisdom teachings.

There is a Greek manuscript variation here. By her “deeds” is found in the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts \aleph , B, and W, while “children” is found in the Corrector of Vaticanus B², C, D, K, and L. “Children” is the parallel in Luke 7:35 and seems to be added here by scribes to make the passages agree. “Deeds” may refer to v. 2. The UBS⁴ gives “deeds” a “B” rating (almost certain). The same truth is expressed in the phrase “by their fruits you shall know them” (cf. Matt. 7:16,20; 12:33). This is true of Jesus and of all people. The acts of Jesus in chapters 8-9 revealed to those who would see that He was the promised Messiah (cf. Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1-2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:20-24

²⁰Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

11:20-24 “He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done” This showed the universal truth that to whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48). The cities of Jesus’ day are compared with the OT cities. They had seen His miracles and heard His teachings. Nineveh had repented at the preaching of Jonah, while Tyre, Sidon, Sodom, and Gomorrah did not, yet the Galilean cities of Jesus’ day had much greater light by which to respond. Those who have greater light are more responsible!

Jesus’ comments were introduced by “woe” (cf. 18:7; 23:13,15,16,23,25,27,29; 24:19; 26:24). This was one of the three usual literary forms by which the OT prophets communicated their messages (promise oracle, court scene, and funeral dirge or lament). This form represented a funeral dirge (lament).

▣ **“repent”** Repentance is a turning from sin and self, the negative aspect of salvation, while faith is a turning to God in Christ, the positive aspect of salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16, 19; 20:21). By combining the meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words, the meaning of repentance is a change of mind followed by a change of action. Repentance is more than feelings (cf. II Cor. 7:8-11). It must result in a lifestyle change. See complete note at 4:17.

11:21, 23 “if” This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is called “contrary to fact,” a false statement is made to show the false premise drawn from it.

11:21 “Chorazin” This shows our limited knowledge of the works of Jesus, for we have no Gospel record of Jesus’ miracles in this town. We must remember that the Gospels are selected theological truths to reveal Jesus to selected audiences (i.e., Jews, Romans, Gentiles), and not western histories (cf. John. 20:30-31).

▣ **“Bethsaida”** There were two Bethsaidas. One was somewhere close to Capernaum and one at the place where the Jordan River flowed into the Sea of Galilee.

▣ **“if”** This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE , see note at v. 23.

▣ **“Tyre and Sidon”** Tyre and Sidon were OT types of sinful, prideful nations or mankind. The phrase found in v. 23 related this to Isa. 14:13-15 and Ezek. 28:12-16. In these verses the pride of the Kings of Babylon and Tyre were used as examples of the pride of Satan.

▣ **“in sackcloth and ashes”** In context this may refer to a sign of repentance (cf. Jonah 3:5-8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:9; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, II Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 1:16,22; I Kgs. 21:27
10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

11:22 There are degrees of both reward and punishment based on the amount of light to which the hearers have been exposed (cf. Luke 12:47, 48; Matt. 10:15). See Special topic at 5:12.

11:23 “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you” This grammatical construction expects a “no” answer. This may be an allusion to Isa. 14:13-14 and Ezek. 28:2,5-6,17, which magnifies the pride of the kings of Babylon and Tyre.

▣ **“descend to Hades”** This may be an allusion to Isa. 14:15 or Ezek. 26:20; 28:8; 31:14; 32:18,24. This referred to the realm of the dead (cf. Luke 16:23) in Hebrew *Sheol*. According to the rabbis, there was a righteous part, called *Paradise* and a wicked part, called *Tartarus*. This may be true. Jesus’ words to one of the criminals crucified with Him in Luke 23:43 seem to imply a righteous part of Hades because Jesus did not return to heaven until Pentecost. At Jesus’ resurrection He took the righteous part of Hades (*Sheol*) to be with Him. Therefore, Paul can now say in II Cor. 5:8b that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Be careful not to combine the concepts of *Hades* and *Gehenna*. They are distinct in the New Testament. See Special topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:22.

▣ **“if”** This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is called “contrary to fact” (as was v. 21). This should then be translated, “If the miracles had occurred in Sodom, which occurred in you (but they did not), then it would have remained to this day, (which it did not).”

11:24 “the land of Sodom” The word “land” may be the Aramaic phrase for “the city.” Modern archaeologists believe this OT city was located on the southern end of the Dead Sea.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:25-27

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. ²⁷All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.”

11:25 In Luke 10:21 these words of Jesus are spoken after the return of the mission of the seventy. Remember the Gospels are not necessarily in chronological order! See Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 127-148.

☐ **“I praise You”** This compound term in this context can mean to make open avowal (cf. 3:6; Phil. 2:11), to praise, or to celebrate. This same Greek term translated the Hebrew term for “praise” in the Septuagint. The Aramaic possibly meant “openly agree.”

☐ **“Lord of heaven and earth”** This is a Hebraic idiom for physical creation. This affirms God as creator of all things. Interestingly, John, John 1:3,10; Paul, I Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16; and the author of Hebrews, Heb. 1:2; 2:10, assert that Jesus is the Father’s agent in creation.

☐ **“You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants”** This is a Semitic idiom meaning the things that all humans, not just the religious or worldly elite, can know about God. “Infants” referred to new believers (cf. Matt. 18:6). It is still surprising that the Jewish religious leaders who knew the OT did not recognize Jesus and put their faith in Him (cf. Romans 9). Isaiah 50:5 must occur before the result of sin (Isa. 6:9-10) can be reversed!

11:26 “for this was well-pleasing in Your sight” This is a Hebrew idiom for “it was God’s will” (cf. Luke 10:21).

11:27 “all things have been handed over to Me by My Father” This was a strong affirmation of Jesus’ self-understanding and sense of unique authority given very early in His ministry (cf. Matt. 28:18, John 3:35; 13:3; Eph. 1:20-22, Col. 1:16-19; 2:10, and I Pet. 3:22). Jesus makes such strong statements about Himself (i.e., John 10:1-18; 14:1-24). He cannot be a great teacher, a religious genius! He is either the incarnated Son of God or a lunatic or a liar! There is no middle ground here! The NT is true or Christianity is a lie (cf. I Cor. 15:12-19). You must decide!

This verse sounds like John’s Gospel (cf. 3:35; 10:15; 13:3; 17:2). Yet this same truth is repeated in Matt. 28:18.

☐ **“nor does anyone know the Father”** The intensified term “know,” used twice, meant full, complete, and personal knowledge (i.e., *epiginoskō*). No one knows the Father but the Son (cf. John. 1:18; 17:25; I John 5:1-12).

☐ **“and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*”** This is not a proof-text for Jesus choosing some and not choosing others. Verse 28 shows that God, by choosing Christ, chose all humans (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14). It also asserts that Jesus is the ultimate revelation of the invisible, eternal God (cf. John 1:1,18; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). He is the only way (1) to know the Father (cf. John 1:18; 3:11) and (2) to the Father (cf. John 10:1-9; 14:6; Acts 4:12; I Tim. 2:5)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:28-30

²⁸“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

11:28-30 These verses are unique to Matthew. Verse 28 affirms the doctrine of justification, while verse 29 affirms progressive sanctification.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Romans 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

Initial Response

Acts 20:23; 26:18

Romans 15:16

I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11

II Thessalonians 2:13

Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12

I Peter 1:12

A Progressive Christlikeness

Romans 6:19

II Corinthians 7:1

Ephesians 1:4; 2:10

I Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23

I Timothy 2:15

II Timothy 2:21

Hebrews 12:14

I Peter 1:15-16

11:28 “Come to Me” “Come” is an ADVERB used as an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It denotes an immediate faith response to Jesus Himself and His radical new covenant message. Notice the emphasis was on personal relationship, not on doctrinal content or ritual only. This same truth was repeated often in the Gospel of John.

▣ **“weary”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The terms “weary” and “heavy-laden” in this verse describe hard labor. They are synonymous.

▣ **“heavy-laden”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. These two terms related culturally to the heavy obligations of rabbinical Judaism (cf. Acts 15:10). This same idea is expressed by the Hebrew idiom “yoke” (cf. vv. 29,30; Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46). This was also used metaphorically for the Oral Tradition of the Jews (Talmud), which had become such a burden that it separated mankind from God rather than bringing them to Him. Judaism had become a barrier instead of a bridge!

The new covenant in Jesus has requirements just like the old covenant. However, they do not bring us to God and make us acceptable. They become the natural result of knowing Him in Christ. God still wants a righteous people who reflect His character to the world. I usually state the NT requirements as

1. repentance
2. faith
3. obedience
4. perseverance

▣ **“I will give you rest”** This is an emphatic grammatical construction. Jesus was saying, “I, myself, will lead you into rest.” “Rest” did not refer to perpetual inactivity, but to a time of refreshment and training so as to move out into useful service for Christ. This concept of a rest goes back to the seventh day rest of Genesis 1. For a good discussion of the different ways this term was used in the OT see Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4.

11:29 “learn” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It is etymologically related to the word “disciples” found in 11:1. Believers are commanded to learn and mature.

▣ **“I am gentle and humble”** These were not virtues in the Greek world, but Jesus made attitude the key. Humility and gentleness became the catch-words of the new kingdom of God.

11:30 “for My yoke is easy and My burden is light” There are new covenant tasks to be performed. Faith and repentance in Jesus’ name are the first step; the second is obedience and maturity; the third is perseverance. Jesus changed the burdensome task of the Pharisees (cf. Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46) into a life of gratitude and service in His name (cf. I John 5:3).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did John the Baptist doubt that Jesus was the promised coming Messiah?
2. Why did Jesus say that John the Baptist was not in the new kingdom of God?
3. How does verse 17 apply to Jesus and John the Baptist?
4. Will there be degrees of punishment?
5. Does Jesus invite all men to come unto Him or just certain chosen ones?
6. Define the terms “burden” and “yoke” in their cultural/religious setting.

MATTHEW 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Plucking Grain on the Sabbath 12:1-8	Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath 12:1-8	Jesus and the Sabbath Laws 12:1-8	The Question About the Sabbath 12:1-2 12:3-8	Picking Corn on the Sabbath 12:1-8
The Man with a Withered Hand 12:9-14	Healing on the Sabbath 12:9-14	12:9-14	The Man with a Crippled Hand 12:9-10 12:11-13a 12:13b-14	Cure of the Man with a Withered Hand 12:9-14
The Chosen Servant 12:15-21 (18-21)	Behold My Servant 12:15-21	Work of Healing 12:15-21	God's Chosen Servant 12:15-21	Jesus the 'Servant of Yahweh' 12:15-21 (18-21)
Jesus and Beelzebul 12:22-32	A House Divided Cannot Stand 12:22-30	Sources of Jesus' Power 12:22-32	Jesus and Beelzebul 12:22-23 12:24 12:25-28 12:29 12:30-32	Jesus and Beelzebul 12:22-24 12:25-28 12:29 12:30-32
	The Unpardonable Sin 12:31-32			
A Tree and Its Fruits 12:33-37	A Tree Known by Its Fruits 12:33-37	12:33-37	A Tree and Its Fruit 12:33-35 12:36-37	Words Betray the Heart 12:33-37
Demand for a Sign 12:38-42	The Scribes and Pharisees Ask for a Sign 12:38-42	Request for a Sign 12:38-42	The Demand for a Miracle 12:38 12:39-42	The Sign of Jonah 12:38-42
The Return of the Unclean Spirit 12:43-45	An Unclean Spirit Returns 12:43-45	The Return of the Unclean Spirit 12:43-45	The Return of the Evil Spirit 12:43-45	The Return of the Unclean Spirit 12:43-45
The Mother and Brothers of Jesus 12:46-50	Jesus' Mother and Brothers Send for Him 12:46-50	Jesus' True Family 12:46-50	Jesus' Mother and Brothers 12:46-47 12:48-50	The True Kinsman of Jesus 12:46-50

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 12:1-50

- A. Chapter 12 describes the growing opposition (cf. 11:12) by the Jewish religious leaders, particularly the Pharisees, to Jesus because of His violation of the oral tradition (i.e., the "Talmud"). There is both a Babylonian and a Palestinian Talmud. The Palestinian was never finished, so the Babylonian became the more authoritative of the two.
- B. Chapter 12 relates to 11:28-30 which describes the oral tradition in terms of a "burden" and a "yoke." Jesus' yoke is easy and light and brings rest, but not so the elaborate ceremonial and legal rules of the Pharisees.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-8

¹At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." ³But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, ⁴how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? ⁵Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷But if you had known what this means, "I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE," you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

12:1 "At that time" Often the Gospel writers used this (and other) time designations as a way to move to a new topic or event, not a pure temporal indicator (cf. 11:25; 12:1; Luke 10:21; 13:1; Acts 7:20; 12:1; 19:23).

☐ "Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath" The Talmud taught that any journey over 2,000 paces on the Sabbath was considered work and therefore not permitted. It is interesting that the crowds, along with the Pharisees and the Scribes, were following Jesus on the Sabbath; therefore, they also were guilty of breaking this Sabbath law. For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees, see note at 22:15.

The Gospel writers had to choose certain events and teachings from all that Jesus said and did (cf. John 20:30-31) to reveal the new covenant and His Messianic person and work. It almost seems that these writers chose these Sabbath encounters to illustrate how Jesus confronted and dealt with the religious leaders, sects, and traditions of the Talmud. Jesus' good news was different from the legalism and ritualism of Jewish traditions (cf. Matt. 5:21-48).

▣ “Sabbath”

SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH

This is from the Hebrew word meaning “rest” or “cessation.” It is connected to the seventh day of creation where God ceased His labor after finishing initial creation (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). God did not rest because He was tired, but because (1) creation was complete and good (cf. Gen. 1:31) and (2) to give mankind a regular pattern for worship and rest. The Sabbath begins like all the days of Gen. 1, at twilight; therefore, twilight on Friday to twilight on Saturday was the official time period. All the details of its observance are given in Exodus (especially chapters 16,20,31, and 35) and Leviticus (especially chapters 23-26). The Pharisees had taken these regulations and, by their oral discussions, interpreted them to include many rules. Jesus often performed miracles, knowingly violating their picky rules so as to enter into a dialogue with them. It was not the Sabbath that Jesus rejected or belittled, but their self-righteous legalism and lack of love.

▣ **“began to pick the heads of grain and eat”** Normally this was legally allowed (cf. Deut. 23:25). The problem was that it occurred on the Sabbath (cf. Exod. 34:21). From the other Synoptic Gospels we learn that the disciples were hungry. Technically according to the rabbis, they were guilty of several offenses: (1) harvesting, (2) processing, (3) preparing food on the Sabbath and (4) all of this with ceremonially unclean hands.

12:3 “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry” Jesus’ phrasing affirms the inspiration of the OT (cf. 5:17-19). For the historical event see I Samuel 21:1ff.

12:4 “the house of God” Verse 4 is a historical allusion to the tabernacle (cf. Exodus 25-30) of David’s younger days. But it must also refer to the late temple built by Solomon (cf. v. 6). YHWH symbolically dwelt between the wings of the cherubim over the ark of the covenant. Genesis 1 may be YHWH’s cosmic temple (see John L. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*).

▣

NASB	“the consecrated bread”
NKJV	“the showbread”
NRSV	“the bread of the promise”
TEV	“the bread offered to God”
NJB	“the loaves of the offering”

This referred to “the Showbread” or “the Bread of the Presence” which was placed on the table in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and later the temple (each weighing over 12 pounds). This seems to have symbolized YHWH’s provision and care for His people, not food for YHWH! It was unleavened which linked back to the Exodus (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). They became weekly nourishment exclusively for the priests (cf. Lev. 24:5-9; Exod. 25:30). These twelve loaves were replaced every week. However, under the special conditions of I Samuel 21, David was allowed to eat them.

12:5 “the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent” The Sabbath was a work day for the priests (cf. Num. 28:9-10). The VERB “break” is literally “treat as common.” It is found only here and Acts 24:6. The PRONOMINAL form is in I Tim. 1:9

12:6 “But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here” Some manuscripts have the MASCULINE “someone” (cf. NKJV), but the most attested ancient reading is NEUTER, “some thing” (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV, JB). This seems to refer to the Kingdom of God, a veiled Messianic reference (cf. v. 28, 41-42). This must have been a shocking statement to these Jews.

Jesus is greater than:

1. the temple, Matt. 12:6
2. Jonah, Matt. 12:41
3. Solomon, Matt. 12:42
4. Jacob, John 4:12
5. John the Baptist, John 5:36
6. Abraham, John 8:53
7. Scripture, Matt. 5:21-48; Mark 7:18-19

12: 7 “if you had known what this means” This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE called “contrary to fact.” Its inference is “If you had known (but you did not), then you would not have condemned the innocent (but you did).”

▣ **“I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE”** This is a quote from Hosea 6:6. It was an example of the preaching of the eighth century prophets, which emphasized attitude over ritual (cf. Mic. 6:6-8).

To clarify this theological issue I have included my comments from Hosea 6:6.

“I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice” God looks at the heart! Motive is the key (cf. Jer. 9:24)! This is one of the key theological passages in the book (cf. 8:7; 11:12). “Loyalty” is the same as v. 4, but here it is true covenant love/loyalty. Jesus used this concept in His discussion with the Pharisees in Matt. 9:13; 12:7. This does not imply that God wanted them to stop sacrificing, but to be careful to have the right motive (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-13; Jer. 7:21-23; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8). For a good discussion see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp.207-208, 294-295). The sacrificial system was a way to show the seriousness of the sin and the willingness of God to accept sinners into fellowship with Himself. However, when it was turned into ritual without repentance and faith, it became a farce, a barrier to a true interpersonal relationship with God.”

12:8 “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” This must have been a great shock to the Jews who had made circumcision and Sabbath keeping almost ultimate (cf. Mark 2:27). Jesus illustrates this truth in His reinterpretations of Moses (cf. 5:20-48). When people raise anything or anyone to the place of ultimate allegiance instead of God Himself (or His Messiah), they become idolaters. For the title “Son of Man” see note at 8:20.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:9-14

“Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man *was there* whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. ¹¹And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, *as to how they might destroy Him.*”

12:10 “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath” This question is never dealt with in the OT, but the ultimacy of the Sabbath had become part of the Oral Tradition by which the rabbis of old interpreted the OT texts (i.e., healing on the Sabbath only to save a life). The focus was on human rules (cf. Isa. 29:13), not human need!

▣ **“And a man *was there* whose hand was withered”** From the apocryphal “Gospel of Hebrews” we learn the tradition that the man was a mason and that it was his right hand that was withered. Therefore he was unable to work.

12:11 “sheep” This is one of many examples of where the Oral Tradition had become a burden instead of a joy. Sheep had become worth more than humans (cf. v. 12; 10:31).

▣ **“if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which denoted potential action.

12:12 Jesus uses the question/answer format to dialog with his challengers (cf. 9:5; 12:12; 21:25; even disciples, Mark 8:17-18).

12:14 “the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him” From Mark 3:6 we learn that the consultation was held between the Herodians and the Pharisees, who were traditional enemies (politics and religion).

▣ **“*as to how they might destroy Him*”** These leaders saw themselves as YHWH’s defenders! It is amazing that the religious leaders saw no conflict in their premeditated murder compared to Jesus’ supposed ritual and Sabbath breaking (cf. 26:4; Luke 6:11; John. 11:53).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:15-21

¹⁵But Jesus, aware of *this*, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all, ¹⁶and warned them not to tell who He was. ¹⁷*This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:*

¹⁸“BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN;

MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASED;

I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM,

AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.

¹⁹HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT;

NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

**²⁰A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.
²¹AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE.”**

12:15 “aware of *this*” It is difficult to ascertain the source of Jesus’ knowledge.

1. over heard
2. knew the human heart
3. informed by the Spirit

This question cannot be answered because of Jesus’ unique combination of the human and the divine (i.e., incarnation).

▣ **“and He healed them all”** There is such power, compassion, and fulfilled OT prophecy expressed in this phrase. Jesus cared for people, all people. It must be remembered that physical healing, even exorcism, did not automatically involve spiritual restoration or salvation.

The verses that speak of Jesus’ healing ministry express the extent of it in different ways.

1. sometimes they say “all,” (cf. Matt. 8:16; 12:15; Luke 4:40; Acts 10:38)
2. sometimes they say every “kind,” not every “one” (cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:23)
3. sometimes they say “many” not “all” (cf. Mark 1:34; 3:10; Luke 7:21)
4. often they imply that He healed all (cf. Matt. 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14)

12:16 “and warned them not to tell who He was” This is related to the Messianic secret (esp. of Mark’s gospel). Jesus implored people not to share His miracles, but to share His message which was still in process. The gospel was not yet finished. This Messianic secret was a common theme of the Synoptics (cf. 8:4; 9:30; 17:9; Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9; Luke 4:41; 8:56; 9:21). Jesus did not want to be known as just another itinerant healer!

12:17 “Isaiah the prophet” Verses 18-21 are a quote from Isa. 42:1ff. It does not exactly follow the Masoretic Hebrew text or the Greek Septuagint. It clearly showed Jesus’ Messianic consciousness.

12:18-21 This is a quote from Isa. 42:1-4 (but not the LXX), which is the first of the “Servant Songs” of Isaiah.

Notice the characteristics of the Coming One which are being displayed in Jesus.

1. called
 - a. My (YHWH) Servant
 - b. whom I have chosen
 - c. My Beloved
 - d. in whom My (YHWH) Soul is well-pleased
2. YHWH’s Spirit upon Him
3. proclaim justice to the Gentiles
4. personal characteristics
 - a. will not quarrel
 - b. will not cry out
 - c. will not hear His voice in the streets
5. personal actions
 - a. will not break the battered reed
 - b. will not put out the smoldering wick
 - c. will lead justice to victory
 - d. in His name Gentiles will hope

12:18 “MY SERVANT” This was a special honorific title (cf. Acts 3:13) used of Moses, Joshua, and David in the OT. Because of the special poems in Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12, called “the Servant Songs,” it took on Messianic connotations. This Messianic element climaxes in Isa. 52:13-53:12, the “Suffering Servant.” The Jews of Jesus’ day did not expect a suffering Messiah but a supernaturally empowered military Messiah. This explains why the Jewish leaders did not accept Jesus’ message (even John the Baptist did not understand, cf. 11:3).

The Jews have always understood these Servant Songs to refer to the nation of Israel and this is surely true (cf. Isa. 41:8; 42:1,19; 43:10; 49:3-6). However these songs are individualized into one ideal righteous Israelite (cf. Isa. 52:14 (LXX), 53 (LXX); 53:1-12). Israel had failed (cf. Isa. 42:19; 53:8) in her world mission task (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6) because of continued violations of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Lev. 26; Deut. 27-28). Therefore, instead of blessing, all the world saw was the

judgment of God. Therefore, YHWH Himself had to enact a new covenant focusing on His actions and faithfulness (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

☐ **“MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASSED”** This phrase was also used at the baptism and the Transfiguration of Jesus (cf. 3:17; 17:5). The Father was pleased with the ministry of the Son. This title combines the royal emphasis of Psalm 2 and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 40-53.

The use of “soul” to describe God is a metaphor to express that He is a living being (cf. Heb. 10:38). This description of God in human terms is called anthropomorphism. See Special Topic at 6:4.

☐ **“I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM”** Do you see the three persons of the Trinity (see Special Topic at 3:17) in the quote from Isa. 42:1?

Jesus and the Spirit have a combined theological relationship. See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

There is a fluidity between the work of the Spirit and the Son. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is “the other Jesus” (however, they are distinct, eternal persons). The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

1. Spirit called “Spirit of Jesus” or similar expressions (cf. Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11).
2. Both called by the same terms
 - a. “truth”
 - 1) Jesus (John 14:6)
 - 2) Spirit (John 14:17; 16:13)
 - b. “advocate”
 - 1) Jesus (I John 2:1)
 - 2) Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)
 - c. “Holy”
 - 1) Jesus (Luke 1:35; 14:26)
 - 2) Spirit (Luke 1:35)
3. Both indwell believers
 - a. Jesus (Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
 - b. Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14)
 - c. Father (John 14:23; II Cor. 6:16)

12:18, 21 “HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. . . IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES WILL HOPE” The statement that the Kingdom was open to the Gentile believers was shocking to the Jews (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 45:22; 49:6; 60:3; 66:18,23; see Paul’s statement at Eph. 2:11-3:13).

12:19 “HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT” This described the manner of Jesus’ ministry before the governmental leaders of Palestine (cf. Isa. 53:7) like Pilate and Herod.

**12:20 “A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY”** This could mean (1) Jesus treated sinners with gentleness or (2) Jesus’ kingdom looked so weak and small, yet it would fill the earth with joy (cf. 13:31-32).

12:21 “IN HIS NAME” See Special Topic at 18:20.

☐ **“HOPE”** This is surprisingly the only occurrence of the word “hope” in Matthew and even here it is in an OT quote from Isa. 42:4. It does appear three times in Luke (cf. 6:34; 23:8; 24:21). The word becomes an eschatological pointer in Paul’s writings, who uses it nineteen times.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

Paul used this term often in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer's faith (e.g., I Tim. 1:1). This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. It was often associated with "faith" and "love" (cf. I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 2:16). A partial list of some of Paul's uses are:

1. The Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13
2. Jesus is our hope, I Tim. 1:1
3. The believer to be presented to God, Col. 1:22-23; I Thess. 2:19
4. Hope is laid up in heaven, Col. 1:5
5. Trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23; I Thess. 2:19
6. Ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; I Thess. 4:13; 5:8
7. The glory of God, Rom. 5:2, II Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
8. The salvation of the Gentiles by Christ, Col. 1:27
9. Assurance of salvation, I Thess. 5:8
10. Eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
11. Results of Christian maturity, Rom. 5:2-5
12. Redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20-22
13. Adoption's consummation, Rom. 8:23-25
14. Title for God, Rom. 15:13
15. Paul's desire for believers, II Cor. 1:7
16. OT as a guide to NT believers, Rom. 15:4

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:22-24

²²Then a demon-possessed man *who was blind and mute* was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. ²³All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

12:22 This was one of the Messianic signs (cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7,16; Matt. 9:27-31; 12:22; 15:30; 21:14). Israel herself needed this healing ministry (cf. Isa. 6:9-10 and 42:18-22). It was a sign they refused to see!

12:23 "This man cannot be the Son of David, can He" In Greek, this question expected a "no" answer, but with the possibility that maybe it might be true. The term "the Son of David" was a Messianic title from II Samuel 7. It was used often by Matthew (cf. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15; 22:42; also note Rev. 3:7; 5:5; 22:16).

12:24 "the Pharisees heard *this*, they said" This is the essence of the unpardonable sin, attributing God's work to Satan and calling that which is true, false and that which is light, darkness. The Pharisees could not deny the marvelous powers of Jesus so they attributed them to the supernatural power of the evil one (cf. Matt. 9:32-34; Mark 3:22-30, Luke 11:14-26).

▣ "Beelzebul" This referred to the *Ba'al* (male Canaanite fertility god) of the City of *Zebub* (cf. II Kgs. 1). The Jews slightly changed the name to *Ba'al of Zebul* which meant "lord of the dung" or "lord of the flies." This word is spelled differently in the ancient texts. *Zebul* is in the Latin Vulgate and the Peshitta translations, while the term *Zebub* is in all the Greek manuscripts. It was a title for Satan. In later Judaism, *Zebul* was the chief of demons.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:25-30

²⁵And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong *man*? And then he will plunder his house. ³⁰He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

12:25-32 Jesus used a logical, analytical argument to show the ridiculousness of the Pharisees' claim (cf. Mark 3:23-27; Luke 11:17-22). There were four examples used: (1) v. 25; (2) v. 27; (3) v. 28; and (4) v. 29. There is a series of FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, which are usually assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes, but here they are false (vv. 26 and 27). However, the FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE in v. 28 is true to reality! Context, context, context!

12:25 "And knowing their thoughts" It is uncertain whether Jesus was using His supernatural ability to read men's thoughts or whether he saw them talking and overheard their comments (cf. 9:4). See note at v. 1.

☐ **"Jesus"** The oldest Greek manuscripts omit the name (i.e., P²¹, \aleph , B, D, and some Old Latin, Syrian, and Coptic manuscripts).

12:27

NASB, NKJV "by whom do your sons cast *them* out"

NRSV "by whom do your own exorcists cast them out"

TEV "who gives your followers the power to drive them out"

NJB "through whom do your own experts drive them out"

The Jews (i.e., "your sons") practiced exorcism by magical formulas and oaths (cf. Mark 9:38; Acts 19:13). The unusual account in vv. 43-45 seems to relate to this Jewish exorcism which cast out the demons, but did not replace it with faith in God, leaving a spiritual vacuum.

12:28 "If. . . then the kingdom of God has come upon you" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, assumed to be true by the author for his literary purposes. This is another veiled Messianic reference. It is also highly unusual for Matthew to use the phrase "the kingdom of God," which is usually found in Mark and Luke. Matthew usually used the phrase "kingdom of heaven." There are only four exceptions: (1) this passage; (2) 19:24; (3) 21:31; and (4) 21:43. Jesus asserted that His exorcisms demonstrated that His Messianic power proved the arrival of the new age of the Spirit! See a good brief discussion of "realized eschatology" in F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 198. See Special Topic: the Kingdom of God at 4:17.

12:29 This verse is often used to support the modern practice of casting Satan out of worship services. But in context this is not a "promise" text to be used for corporate exorcisms. Believers are not given the authority to bind Satan (i.e., "the strong man"). Even Michael the Archangel of Israel does not speak judgment against Satan (cf. Jude 9). The Apostles and the Seventy were given the power of exorcism over the demonic (cf. 10:1; Luke 10:17-20). However this is never listed among the gifts of the Spirit given to the Church. This parable is paralleled in Mark 3:22-27 and Luke 11:21-23.

12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me" A clear, radical choice must be made (cf. Mark 9:40; Luke 9:49, 50; 11:23). Jesus brings the New Age, mankind must respond to Him. Not to respond is to choose!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:31-32

³¹"Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³²Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

12:31-32 This reference to blasphemy against the Spirit is often called "the unpardonable sin." From the parallel in Mark 3:28 it is obvious that "Son of Man" was not a title for Jesus in this context but a generic use of the Hebrew idiom "sons of men" or "mankind." This is supported by the parallelism of vv. 31 and 32. The sin discussed was not the sin of ignorance but of willful rejection of God and His truth in the presence of great light. Many people worry about whether they have committed this sin. People who desire to know God or are afraid that they have committed this sin have not! This sin is the continuing rejection of Jesus in the presence of great light, to the point of spiritual callousness. This is similar to Heb. 6:4-6 and 10:26-31.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

In the OT "the Spirit of God" (i.e., *ruach*) was a force which accomplished YHWH's purpose, but there is no hint that it was personal (i.e., OT monotheism). However, in the NT the full personality and personhood of the Spirit is documented:

1. He can be blasphemed (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29)
2. He teaches (cf. Luke 12:12; John 14:26)
3. He bears witness (cf. John 15:26)
4. He convicts, guides (cf. John 16:7-15)

5. He is called “who” (i.e., *hos*) (cf. Eph. 1:14)
6. He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30)
7. He can be quenched (cf. I Thess. 5:19)

Trinitarian texts also speak of three persons (see Special Topic: the Trinity at 2:32-33):

1. Matt. 28:19
2. II Cor. 13:14
3. I Pet. 1:2

The Spirit is linked to human activity.

1. Acts 15:28
2. Rom. 8:26
3. I Cor. 12:11
4. Eph. 4:30

At the very beginning of Acts the Spirit’s role is emphasized. Pentecost was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Jesus always had the Spirit. His baptism was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Luke prepares the church for a new chapter of effective ministry. Jesus is still the focus, the Spirit is still the effective means and the Father’s love, forgiveness, and restoration of all humans made in His image is the goal!

▣ “either in this age or in the age to come”

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future by an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism):

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled most of the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age. However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:33-37

³³“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. ³⁵The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil. ³⁶But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

12:33 “for the tree is known by its fruit” What one does, like what one says, reveals the true self. See note at 7:16.

12:34 “You brood of vipers” Jesus used His harshest language for the religious leaders of His day. In this regard He followed the preaching of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:7). The Serpent of Genesis 3 could be the original source of this metaphor (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

▣ **“For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart”** It is not what goes into a person, but what comes out, that defiles (cf. Mark 7:17-23). Humans reveal themselves by what they say. Speech is part of the image of God. Speech reveals the heart (cf. Matt. 7:116,20; Luke 6:44; James 3:12). See Special Topic: Human Speech at 15:19.

12:35 The “treasure” refers to a person’s inner self (cf. Luke 6:45).

12:36 “they shall give an account for it in the day of judgment” Jesus repeatedly spoke about judgment and its eternal consequences (cf. Matthew 7; 25). This relates to those who have rejected Jesus. Their lives, priorities, and words reflect their spiritual choices (cf. v. 37).

12:37 See Special Topic: Human Speech at 15:19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:38-42

³⁸Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” ³⁹But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”

12:38 “scribes”

SPECIAL TOPIC: SCRIBES

The title comes from the Hebrew NOUN (BDB 706) which means “a spoken message,” “a written document/decreed.” The Greek translation “grammateus” usually refers to a written message. It can denote

1. educator (Nehemiah 8)
2. governmental official (II Kgs. 22:3-13)
3. recorder/secretary (I Chr. 24:6; II Chr. 34:13; Jer. 36:22)
4. military officer (cf. Jdgs. 5:14)
5. religious leader (Ezra 7:6; Neh. 12:12-13)

In the NT they are often associated with the Pharisees. In a sense they were people who were educated in the OT and the Oral Traditions (i.e., Talmud). They helped interpret and apply the Jewish traditions to everyday life (cf. Sirah 39:6). However, their righteousness (i.e., Jewish legalism and ritual) could not bring peace with God (cf. Matt. 5:20; Rom. 3:19-20; 9:1-5,30-32; 10:1-6; Col. 2:20-22).

They were often depicted in the Synoptic Gospels (John never mentions them, 8:3 not original), as opposed to Jesus, although some did respond to Him (cf. Matt. 8:19).

1. conflict over eating with sinners and tax-collectors, Mark 2:16; Matt. 9:9-13
2. conflict over the source of Jesus’ authority in exorcisms, Mark 3:22
3. conflict over Jesus forgiving sin, Matt. 9:3; Luke 5:21
4. demand for a spectacular sign, Matt. 12:38
5. conflict over hand washing (i.e., ceremonial washings), Matt. 15:1-2; Mark 7:1-5
6. conflict over the crowds’ affirmation at the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Matt. 21:15

- 7. Jesus' accusation of their motives (i.e., seeking honor and preeminence), Mark 12:38-40
- 8. Jesus' accusing them of being hypocrites and blind guides in Moses seat, Matt. 23:1-36

Because of their knowledge of Scripture, they should have been the first to recognize and embrace Jesus, but their traditions (cf. Isa. 29:13) had blinded them (6:9-10)! When light becomes darkness, how great is the darkness!

▣ **“we want to see a sign from You”** They had heard Jesus' teachings and had seen the healings and exorcisms performed by Him, but they wanted some ultimate sign to convince them to believe on Him. This is exactly the temptation of Matt. 4:5-7 to which Jesus would not succumb. However, in reality, He had given them sign after sign but they would not or could not see (i.e., Isa. 6:9-10)!

12:39 “adulterous” Adultery became a metaphor for spiritual unfaithfulness (cf. Lev. 20:5; Num. 25:1; Hos. 1:2; 4:10,18; 5:3; Matt. 16:4; mark 8:38; James 4:4).

▣ **“the sign of Jonah the prophet”** As Jonah was in the great fish three days, Jesus was three days in the grave (Hades). We must remember that this is three days by Jewish reckoning, not three twenty-four hour periods. Any part of a day, which for them was evening to evening (cf. Genesis 1), was reckoned as a full day.

Jesus' allusion to Jonah confirms strongly the historicity of the book of Jonah. It is precisely the experience in the great fish that was used as an analogy (cf. 16:4).

12:40 “three nights” See note at 16:21.

▣ **“in the heart of the earth”** This referred to descending into *Hades* (cf. 11:23), the realm of the dead, the grave, or the metaphorical place of unborn children (cf. Ps. 139:15-16). This is phenomenological language: the language of observation and of common human description. The Jews, like us, buried their dead; therefore, they “lived” in the ground. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:22.

Jesus' words would not have been understood by His contemporary hearers until after His resurrection. Matthew has structured the sayings of Jesus for theological purposes, not chronological sequence (cf. Matt. 7:21-23, also could not have had meaning until a much later date).

12:41 “the men of Nineveh” This also relates to 11:20-24, as does v. 42. Nineveh repented due to Jonah's preaching and consequently was spared the wrath of God's judgment. This also implies that the Ninevites of Jonah's day were alive in an afterlife.

▣ **“repented”** See Special Topic: Repentance at 3:2 and see note at 4:17.

12:42 “The Queen of the south” This was a way of referring to the Queen of Sheba (cf. I Kings 10:1-15), who is still alive and will appear to testify in the eschaton.

▣ **“something greater than Solomon is here”** This is another clear Messianic claim. It reveals Jesus' self-understanding. He saw Himself as greater than the wisest man of the ancient East (cf. I Kgs. 3:12; 4:19-34). See full note at 12:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:43-45

⁴³“Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. ⁴⁴Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came’; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation.”

12:43 “the unclean spirit” See the two Special Topics: Demonic (Unclean Spirits) at 10:1.

▣ **“waterless places”** In the OT the desert was the haunt of the demonic (i.e., Azazel in Leviticus 16 and desert animals in Isa. 13:21; 34:14).

12:44-45 This passage has three possible meanings.

1. the Jewish exorcists performed exorcisms without personal faith, and the demonic spirit returned
2. it is an allusion to national Israel in the sense of their rejection of idol worship, but without replacing it with a faith relationship to YHWH
3. it referred to the preaching of John the Baptist, whom they accepted as being from God, while rejecting Jesus

The last condition was far worse than the immediate problem (cf. II Pet. 2:20-22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:46-50

⁴⁶While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. ⁴⁷Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” ⁴⁸But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

12:46 “His mother and brothers were standing outside” Apparently they thought Jesus was working too hard or was becoming too untraditional (cf. Mark 3:20-21).

12:47 This verse is not included in the Greek manuscripts \aleph , B, and L or in some Old Latin, Syrian, and Coptic manuscripts. It is included in the manuscripts \aleph^c , C, and D and the Vulgate and the Diatessaron. It is also found in Mark 3:32 and Luke 8:20. It seems that scribes added it to this verse to make the three parallel. It is included in NASB, NKJV, NRSV, and TEV translations. The United Bible Societies Fourth Edition Greek New Testament translation committee believes that it was inadvertently left out of the text because of a slip of the eye (*homoloteleuton*) between two similar words (“speak”) in the Greek text at the end of vv. 46 and 47. The verse is required to make sense of the paragraph.

12:50 “For whoever does the will of My Father” The will of God is to repent and to believe on Him whom He has sent (cf. John. 6:39-40). Once one is saved, God also has a will of Christlikeness for every believer, (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). See Special Topic: The Will of God at 7:21.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 488, has such a good statement about Jesus’ call to be a disciple.

1. the unconditional sacrifice of one’s whole life (cf. Matt. 10:37; Luke 9:59-62; 14:26-27)
2. the unconditional sacrifice of one’s life for the whole life (cf. Matt. 16:24-25; John 11:16)
3. bound to Jesus and to do God’s will (cf. Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35)

Jesus’ call to follow Him is a radical call to selflessness which demonstrates that the effects of the Fall are reversed! This is a life-long, life-inclusive call!

▣ **“who is in heaven”** This is a recurrent theme in Matthew (cf. 5:16,45; 6:1,9; 7:11,21; 10:32-33; 12:50).

▣ **“He is my brother and sister and mother”** Faith in Christ supercedes earthly family ties (parallel in Mark 3:31-35). Christianity is a family based on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:15-17).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Jesus make such an affirmation of Old Testament Law in Matthew 5:17-21 and yet reject so vehemently the Oral Tradition of the Jews?
2. Does Jesus claim to be the Messiah in Chapter 12?
3. Did Jesus perform these miracles in confrontation or in reaction to the Pharisees?
4. How does Isaiah 42:1-4 describe the ministry of the Messiah?
5. Define/explain the Pharisees’ calling Jesus Beelzebub.
6. What and where is Hades?
7. Explain the parable in verses 43-45.

MATTHEW 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Sower 13:1-9	The Parable of the Sower 13:1-9	Teaching in Parables 13:1-9	The Parable of the Sower 13:1-3a 13:3b-9	Introduction 13:1-3a Parable of the Sower 13:3b-9
The Purpose of the Parables 13:10-17 (14b-15)	The Purpose of Parables 13:10-17	13:10-17	The Purpose of the Parables 13:10 13:11-15 13:16-17	Why Jesus Speaks in Parables 13:10-15 (14b-15) 13:16-17
The Parable of the Sower Explained 13:18-23	The Parable of the Sower Explained 13:18-23	13:18-23	Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower 13:18-23	The Parable of the Sower Explained 13:18-23
The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat 13:24-30	The Parable of the Wheat and Tares 13:24-20	Weeds in the Wheat 13:24-30	The Parable of the Weeds 13:24-30	Parable of the Darnel 13:24-30
The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven 13:31-32	The Parable of the Mustard Seed 13:31-32	The Mustard Seed 13:31-32	The Parable of the Mustard Seed 13:31-32	Parable of the Mustard Seed 13:31-32
13:33	The Parable of the Leaven 13:33	Yeast 13:33	The Parable of the Yeast 13:33	Parable of the Yeast 13:33
The Use of Parables 13:34-35 (35b)	Prophecy and Parables 13:34-35	13:34-35	Jesus' Use of Parables 13:34-35	The People are Taught Only in Parables 13:34-35 (35b)
The Parables of the Weeds Explained 13:36-43	The Parable of the Tares Explained 13:36-43	13:36-43	Jesus Explains the Parable of the Weeds 13:36 13:37-43	The Parable of the Darnel Explained 13:36-43
Three Parables 13:44	The Parables of Hidden Treasure 13:44	Hidden Treasure 13:44	The Parable of the Hidden Treasure 13:44	Parable of the Treasure and of the Pearl 13:44
13:45-46	The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price 13:45-46	The Pearl of Great Value 13:45-46	The Parable of the Pearl 13:45-46	13:45-46

	The Parable of the Dragnet	The Dragnet	The Parable of the Net	Parable of the Dragnet
13:47-50	13:47-52	13:47-50	13:47-50	13:47-50
				Conclusion
13:51-42		13:51-53	13:51a	13:51-52
			13:51b	
			13:52	
The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth	Jesus Rejected at Nazareth	Rejection at Home	Jesus Rejected at Nazareth	A Visit to Nazareth
13:53-58	13:53-58		13:53-57a	13:53-58
		13:54-58		
			13:57b-58	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 13:1-58

- A. The understanding of parables was and is related to a prior faith commitment. Even the Apostles did not initially understand Jesus' teachings (i.e., Mark 4:13,40; 6:52; 7:18; 8:17,21,33; 9:10,32). In some ways understanding is dependent upon
 1. election
 2. the illuminating power of the Spirit
 3. a willingness to repent and believe (i.e., Isa. 6:9-10; 30:6)
 Understanding involves a divine empowering and a human faith response!

- B. "Parable" is a compound word in Greek meaning "to throw alongside." Common occurrences were used to illustrate spiritual truths. However it must be remembered that to these Jewish writers this Greek word reflected the Hebrew *mashal* which meant "riddle" or "proverb," in wisdom literature terminology. The parables form types of literary relationships similar to the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.
 1. parables that illustrate similarity
 2. parables that illustrate contrasts
 3. parables that build to certain types of climatic statements of truth
 It is crucial to determine the type of contrast/similarity climax that the parable is intended to illustrate. To miss this is to misinterpret the parable's intended purpose. One must be willing to rethink issues and expected outcomes in light of the surprising nature of the *mashal*.

- C. Some of the parables in chapter 13 form doubles. The same central truths are repeated with different examples.
1. The Tares and the Dragnet
 2. Mustard Seed and Leaven
 3. Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price
- It is possible that vv. 51-52 form an eighth parable.
- D. The parables of chapter 13 are paralleled in the other Synoptic Gospels.

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>
13:1-9, 18-23	4:1-9, 13-20	8:4-8, 11-15
13:6-9	-----	-----
13:24-30, 36-43	-----	-----
13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
13:33	-----	13:20-21
13:34	-----	-----
13:44	-----	-----
13:45-46	-----	-----

- E. Of the seven parables in Matthew 13, the sower/soils and the mustard seed are both in Mark and Luke while the parable about leaven is repeated in Luke only. As Matthew gathered the teachings of Jesus into the long sermon of chapters 5-7, so too he gathered the parables of Jesus into one context.
- F. It is possible that Matthew structured his Gospel so that the faith response to Jesus' preaching and teaching was mixed (chapters 8-12). Some responded but some did not. If Jesus was God's Messiah, why did not all respond? This is the question that this series of parables answers.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERPRETING PARABLES

The Gospels were written many years after Jesus' life. The Gospel writers (by the aid of the Spirit) were culturally accustomed to the oral communication of truth. The rabbis taught by oral presentation. Jesus also used this oral approach to teaching. To our knowledge He never wrote down any of His teachings or sermons. To aid in the memory, teaching presentations were repeated, summarized and illustrated. The Gospel writers retained these memory aids. Parables as a literary genre are one of these techniques. Parables are hard to define.

"Parables are best defined as stories with two levels of meaning; the story level provides a mirror by which reality is perceived and understood." taken from *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 594

"A parable is a saying or story that seeks to drive home a point that the speaker wishes to emphasize by illustrating it from a familiar situation of common life." taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 590

It is hard to define exactly what was understood by the term "parable" in Jesus' day

1. Some say it reflects the Hebrew term *mashal* which was any kind of riddle (Mark 3:23), clever saying (Proverbs, Luke 4:23), short saying (Mark 7:15) or mysterious saying ("dark saying").
2. Others hold to a more limited definition of a short story.

Depending on how one defines the term, over one-third of Jesus' recorded teachings are in parabolic form. This was a major NT literary genre. Parables are certainly authentic sayings of Jesus. If one accepts the second definition, there are still several different types of short stories

1. simple stories (Luke 13:6-9)
2. complex stories (Luke 15:11-32)
3. contrasting stories (Luke 16:1-8; 18:1-8)
4. typological/allegorical (Matt. 13:24-30, 47-50; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15; 10:25-37; 14:16-24; 20:9-19; John. 10; 15:1-8)

In dealing with this variety of parabolic material one must interpret these sayings on several levels. The first level would be general hermeneutic principles applicable to all biblical genres (general hermeneutic).

First Level

1. Identify the purpose of the entire book or at least the larger literary unit.
2. Identify the original audience. It is significant that often the same parable is given to different groups, example:
 - a. lost sheep in Luke 15 directed to sinners
 - b. lost sheep in Matt. 18 directed toward disciples
3. Be sure to note the immediate context of the parable. Often Jesus and/or the Gospel writer (in a sense, two inspired authors) tells the main point usually at the end of the parable or immediately after it.
4. Express the central intent(s) of the parable in one declarative sentence. Parables often have two or three main characters. Usually there is an implied truth, purpose or point (plot) to each character.
5. Check the parallel passages in the other Gospels, then other NT books and OT books.

The **Second Level** of interpretive principles are those that relate specifically to parabolic material (special hermeneutics).

1. Read (hear if possible) the parable again and again. These were given for oral impact, not written analysis.
2. Most parables have only one central truth which is related to the historical and literary contexts of both Jesus and/or the Gospel writer/evangelist.
3. Be careful of interpreting the details (although often Jesus did, i.e., Parable of the Sower). Often they are just part of the setting of the story.
4. Remember parables are not reality. They are life-like analogies, but often exaggerations, to drive home a point (truth).
5. Identify the main points of the story that a first century Jewish audience would have understood. Then look for the twist or surprise. Usually it comes toward the end of the story (cf. A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, pp. 221-224). This is the crucial element of the genre!
6. All parables were given to elicit a response. That response is usually related to the concept of “the Kingdom of God.” Jesus was the inaugurator of the new Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 21:31; Luke 17:21). Those who heard Him must respond to Him now!

The Kingdom was also future (Matt. 25). A person’s future was dependent on how he responded to Jesus at the time. Kingdom parables described the new kingdom that had arrived in Jesus. They described its ethical and radical demands for discipleship. Nothing can be as it was. All is radically new and focused on Jesus!

7. Parables often do not express the point or central truth. The interpreter must seek the contextual keys that reveal the originally culturally obvious central truths but now obscure to us.

A **Third Level** that is often controversial is that of the hiddenness of parabolic truth. Jesus often spoke of the hiddenness of parables (cf. Matt. 13:9-15; Mark 4:9-13; Luke 8:8-10; John. 10:6; 16:25). This is related to the prophecy in Isa. 6:9-10. The heart of the hearer determines the level of understanding (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9,15,16,43; Mark 4:9,23,33-34; 7:16; 8:18; Luke 8:8; 9:44; 14:35).

However, it must also be stated that often the crowd (Matt. 15:10; Mark 7:14) and the Pharisees (Matt. 21:45; Mark 12:12; Luke 20:19) understood exactly what Jesus was saying but refused to respond appropriately to it by faith and repentance. In one sense this is the truth of the Parable of the Soils (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8).

The parables were a means to conceal or reveal truth (Matt. 13:16-17; 16:12; 17:13; Luke 8:10; 10:23-24).

Grant Osborne, in his *Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 239, makes the point that “parables are an ‘encounter mechanism’ and function differently depending on the audience...Each group (leaders, crowds, disciples) is encountered differently by the parables.” Often even the disciples did not understand either His parables or His teachings (cf. Matt. 15:16; Mark 6:52; 8:17-18,21; 9:32; Luke 9:45; 18:34; John. 12:16).

A **Fourth Level** is also controversial. It deals with the central truth of parables. Most modern interpreters have reacted (justifiably so) to the allegorical interpretation of the parables. Allegory turned the details into elaborate systems of truth. This method of interpretation did not focus on the historical setting, literary setting or authorial intent, but presented the thought of the interpreter, not the text.

However, it must be admitted that the parables that Jesus interpreted are very close to allegorical or at least typological. Jesus used the details to convey truth (the Sower, Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8 and the wicked tenants, Matthew 21; Mark 12, Luke 20).

Some of the other parables also have several main truths. A good example is the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). It is not only the love of the Father and waywardness of the younger son but the attitude of the older son that is integral to the full meaning of the parable.

A helpful quote from *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* by Peter Cotterell and Max Turner,

“It was Adolf Julicher more than any other who directed New Testament scholarship towards a decisive attempt to understand the role of parable in the teaching of Jesus. The radical allegorizing of the parables was abandoned and the search begun for a key that would enable us to penetrate their true meaning. But as Jeremias made clear, ‘His efforts to free the parables from the fantastic and arbitrary interpretations of every detail caused him to fall into a fatal error.’ The error was to insist not merely that a parable should be understood as conveying a single idea, but that the idea should be as general as possible” (p. 308).

Another helpful quote from *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osborne,

“Yet I have noted many indications that the parables are indeed allegories, albeit controlled by the author’s intention. Blomberg (1990) in fact argues that there are as many points as there are characters in the parables and that they are indeed allegories. While this is somewhat overstated, it is nearer the truth than the ‘one point’ approach” (p. 240).

Should parables be used to teach doctrinal truths or illuminate doctrinal truths? Most interpreters have been influenced by the abuse of the allegorical method of interpreting parables which allowed them to be used to establish doctrines that had no connection to Jesus’ original intent nor that of the gospel writer. Meaning must be linked to authorial intent. Jesus and the gospel writers were under inspiration, but interpreters are not.

However badly the parables have been abused they still function as teaching vehicles of truth, doctrinal truth. Hear Bernard Ramm on this point.

“Parables do teach doctrine and the claim that they may not be used at all in doctrinal writing is improper...we must check our results with plain, evident teaching of our Lord, and with the rest of the New Testament. Parables with proper cautions may be used to illustrate doctrine, illuminate Christian experience and to teach practical lessons” *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*” (p. 285).

In conclusion let me give three quotes that reflect warnings in our interpretation of parables:

1. Taken from *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart:
“The parables have suffered a fate of misinterpretation in the church second only to the Revelation” (p. 135).
2. Taken from *Understanding and Applying the Bible* by J. Robertson McQuilkin,
“Parables have been the source of untold blessing in enlightening God’s people concerning spiritual truth. At the same time, parables have been the source of untold confusion in both doctrine and practice in the church” (p. 164).
3. Taken from *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant Osborne,
“Parables have been among the most written about yet hermeneutically abused portions of Scripture. . .the most dynamic yet the most difficult to comprehend of the biblical genres. The potential of the parable for communication is enormous, since it creates a comparison or story based upon everyday experiences. However, that story itself is capable of many meanings, and the modern reader has as much difficulty interpreting it as did the ancient hearers” (p. 235).

Some helpful resources

1. Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, chapter 8
2. Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* and *Through Peasant eyes” A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*
3. Robert Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teaching*, chapter 2
4. Robert Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, chapter 10

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-2

¹That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ²And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach.

13:1

NASB “that day”

NKJV “on the same day”

NRSV, TEV,

NJB “that same day”

This is not meant to be a temporal marker in this context, but a transition technique. An example of it as a temporal marker is 22:23; Mark 4:35.

▣ **“was sitting by the sea”** Sitting was the official teaching position of a rabbi (cf. v. 2; 15:29; 24:3; 26:55; Luke 4:20; Acts 13:14). They stood to read the Scripture (cf. Luke 4:16). This position and place suggest a teaching session. The sea acted as a natural amphitheater.

13:2 “so He got into a boat and sat down” A boat was usually available when Jesus taught because of the press of the crowd (cf. Luke 5:1-3; Mark 3:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:3-9

³And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear.”

13:3 “the sower went out to sow” This parable (vv. 3-9) is extremely important because Jesus Himself gave interprets it. The seed, the sower, the soils, and the harvest are all significant in Jesus’ interpretation of the parable (vv. 18-23).

It is somewhat allegorical or at least typological. Allegory seeks a hidden, deeper level of meaning in a text. It imports meaning into the text that has no relation at all to the intended meaning of the original author or his day or even the thrust of Scripture as a whole. Typology, on the other hand, seeks to focus on the unity of the Bible, based on one divine Author and one divine Plan. Similarities in the OT pre-figure NT truths. These similarities rise naturally out of a reading of the entire Bible (cf. Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6, 11).

13:4-7 “the road. . .the rocky places. . .thorns” Usually the village farmers worked together and plowed the entire field around their homes. In this field were footpaths, some shallow ground and some places where thorn bushes had established themselves. All of the field had been plowed. The sowers scattered the seed indiscriminately in this large plowed field.

13:8 “And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty” The plants bearing of fruit, not the precise amount, is the focal point. We must be careful not to identify germination with salvation! John 8:31 says “those Jews who had believed Him,” yet later in the context it is obvious they are not saved (i.e., John 8:59). The Bible differentiates between an initial emotional response and a life changing permanent discipleship. In this parable germination referred to the first, and fruit-bearing to the second.

13:9 See note at 11:15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:10-17

¹⁰And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” ¹¹Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹²For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;

YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;

¹⁵FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,

WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,

AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES,

OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,

HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,

AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,

AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.’

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

13:10-13 Proper interpretation of Jesus’ parables involves a faith commitment on the part of the hearer as well as the illuminating power of the Spirit. Parables demand a response! This response combines the power of God and the free will of the believing hearer. See introductory notes at the beginning of this chapter.

13:11 “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” Jesus uses this term for the New Age (cf. Matthew 5-7) with its new way of viewing reality. These mysteries are about Him and His New Kingdom. This term is used to describe God’s eternal redemptive plan that is only now being revealed by God’s Messiah (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; Eph. 1:11; I Pet. 1:12). Every hearer does not understand (cf. v. 13,16-17,19,23; Mark 4:11-12).

13:12 The Jewish leadership, with their scriptural knowledge, should have recognized and embraced Jesus and His teachings, but they did not. Therefore, those who could have/should have are more responsible (cf. Luke 12:48). Their partial knowledge results in complete judgment (similar to II Pet. 2:20-22).

13:14-15 “the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled” This is a quote from the Septuagint (LXX). This related to Isaiah’s call and mission. God told him that he would speak, but the people would not hear and respond (cf. Isa. 6:9-10). This same OT passage is quoted in John. 12:40 and Acts 28:25-27. To those who have faith, God will progressively reveal more truth as they walk in the light they have, but to those without faith the Scriptures are dark and silent! Parables open truth to those who will hear but veils truth to those who refuse faith in Christ. See F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 176-177.

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic: Heart at 5:8.

13:16 Compare this with Mark 4:13.

13:17 “Truly” See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ **“many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it”** NT believers know more of God’s eternal redemptive plan and purpose for all humans than did any of the OT characters (I Pet. 1:10-12). This gives us an awesome responsibility!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:18-23

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

13:18-23 Jesus’ interpretation of this parable was given to the disciples privately.

13:19 “the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart” In the parallel in Mark 4:15 he is called Satan (see Special Topic at 4:5). II Corinthians 4:4 describes his work among men. It is surprising that the evil one appears so often in these parables (cf. vv. 25, 28, 39). Jesus asserted the presence of a personal force of evil who is out to thwart God’s will for both nations and individuals. There is a veiled reference in these parables to the three enemies of man: (1) Satan (cf. v. 19; Eph. 2:2); (2) the world system (cf. v. 22; Eph. 2:2); and (3) mankind’s fallen nature (cf. Eph. 2:3).

13:20 “the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy” This was obviously a superficial response to Jesus and His message as the context shows. True salvation is an initial response of repentance and faith followed by an ongoing response of repentance and faith. There are many in the visible Church who use Christian words, attend Christian meetings, and read the Christian Bible, but do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; II Peter 2).

13:21-22 “but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away” Christlikeness in attitude and lifestyle is evidence of a valid profession (cf. the books of I John. and James). An initial response, even when exuberant, is not always permanent or valid. See Special Topic: Apostasy at Matt. 7:21.

The NT speaks often of those who heard having turned way.

1. no root, Matt. 13:21; Mark 4:17; Luke 8:13
2. fall away, Matt. 24:10
3. do not abide, John 15:6
4. gone astray, I Tim. 1:9; 6:21; II Tim. 2:18
5. shipwreck, I Tim. 1:19
6. fall away, I Tim. 4:1
7. apostasy, II Thess. 2:3
8. falling away, Heb. 3:12
9. fall away, Heb. 6:6
10. turn away, II Pet. 2:20-22

Christianity is a relationship which must be maintained! It involves an initial response (i.e., John 1:12; Rom. 4), a continuing response (James and I John), and a faithful conclusion (Heb. 11)!

13:22 “deceitfulness of wealth” See Special Topic: Wealth at 6:24.

13:23 “it becomes unfruitful” Bearing fruit is the evidence of genuine conversion and not just an emotional initial decision! Christianity is not one high moment but a life of discipleship.

Manfred T. Brauch, *Abusing Scripture: the Consequences of Misreading the Bible*, p. 106, has an interesting comment.

“In warning against false prophets, Jesus taught that they would be known by the fruit they bore (Mt. 7:15-16). That is, our character, our deepest values and beliefs, are ultimately revealed in the life that we live (Mt. 7:17-20; Lk. 6:43-45). Therefore, participation in the sphere of God’s reign is neither guaranteed nor secured by the confession of Jesus as Lord; rather, only those who embody God’s will in their lives are children of the kingdom (Mt. 7:21; Lk. 6:46-48). In his interpretation of the parable of the sower (Mt. 13:18-23; Mk. 4:13-29; Lk. 8:11-15), Jesus asserted that neither the hearing nor the receiving of “the word of the kingdom” is sufficient. Only those who bear the fruit of its presence in their lives are revealed as those who truly grasp its deepest significance (Mt. 13:23), accept it (Mk. 4:20) and “hold it fast in an honest and good heart” (Lk 8:15).”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:24-30

²⁴Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.””

13:24-30 The parable of the wild wheat is unique to Matthew (cf. 36-43). Here is an interesting paragraph from New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDOTTE), vol. 1, p. 299.

“The idea of the invisible church is found in Augustine, *City of God*; Wycliffe, *De ecclesia*; Luther, *Preface to Revelation*; Calvin, *Institutes* IV 1 7; and many other writers (see edition of Calvin’s *Institutes*, ed. J. T. McNeill, 1960, II 1022). The thought that is uppermost is not to minimize the importance of church membership, but to recognize the

possibility of hypocrisy and deceit. In the last analysis, those who belong to God are visible to God alone. Membership of the true church is a fact which is not visible to man. The idea recalls the statement of 2 Tim. 2:19; ‘The Lord knows who are his.’ It extends to the church what Paul says of Israel, that they are not all Israel who belong to Israel, but only “the children of promise” (Rom. 9:6 f.). It recognizes the danger, which church members are warned against, of reaping corruption through sowing to the flesh (Gal. 3:7; cf. Rom. 8:12 f.). Paul recognized the need for discipline in his own life lest he should become a castaway (I Cor. 10:27; cf. Phil. 2:12, 19). The possibility of church members falling away is one of great themes of Heb. (cf. 2:3; 3:7-4:14; 6:1-12; 10:26-39; 12:12-28). It is also suggested by the parables of the weeds (Matt. 13:24-43) and the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46) and the example of Judas (Matt. 10:4; 26:14, 25, 47 ff.; 27:3; Mk. 14:10, 43; Lk. 6:16; 22:3, 47; Jn. 13:2; 17:12; 18:22 ff.; Acts 1:17 ff., 25).”

These warnings do not jeopardize security, but give a balance to excessive confidence in an initial decision and ignores the mandate of discipleship and perseverance.

13:25 “the enemy” In this context the characterization refers to

1. Satan, Luke 10:19
2. false teachers, Matthew 7; II Peter 2

Anyone who distorts the gospel of the Kingdom. Only the grace of God can help believers understand the truth (cf. vv. 13,16-17,23) and resist error.

▣ **“the tares”** Wild wheat (darnel) and domestic wheat looked exactly alike until they bore fruit. The wild seed had a dark grain, while edible wheat had a light brown grain.

13:27 “Sir” This is an example of the term *kurios* (Lord) used as a polite address. Remember context, context, context, not a dictionary or lexicon, determines word meaning. Dictionaries list only the way the word has been used in known literature or speech in a given language/culture.

13:29 “for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them” The context seems to relate this to the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. There is no way for humans to know the hearts of other humans. God will set all things straight on Judgment Day. One of Satan’s most effective schemes is religion. People seem to be spiritual but they are not (i.e., Matt. 7:21-23). The wheat and tares look alike, but time reveals the difference. Many people are fooled by religiosity (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23) masquerading as true spirituality (cf. Matthew 7)!

13:30 “gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn” Ultimate destiny is related to what humans do with the message of Jesus Christ and the person of Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 42, 50). It is interesting to note that it is Jesus who emphasizes the awesome, eternal consequences of rejecting personal faith in Himself.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:31-32

³¹He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³²and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.”

13:31-32 The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast and verses 31-33, are parallel. They are repeated in Mark 4:30-32 and Luke 13:18-19. Those who respond to the gospel seem small and insignificant, but they are part of a spiritual kingdom which will ultimately fill the earth.

13:32 “so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES” The capitalization in the NASB assumes this is a quote from Daniel (4:11-12). This would make the phrase a way of asserting how large the mustard seed plant became, here a symbol for the extent of the Messianic kingdom of the eschaton.

▣
NASB “pecks”
NKJV, NRSV,
NJB “measures”
TEV “bushel”

This Greek term *saton* translated the Hebrew unit of measurement *seah*. It’s exact volume is uncertain, but it was a large amount (parallel to the large tree).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:1). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a “light” and a “heavy” of each amount (see *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) of Mesopotamia.

Many of the “sizes” and “amounts” used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer’s containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

I. Volume terms used most often

A. Dry measures

1. Homer (BDB 330, possibly a “donkey-load,” BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2
2. Letekh (or letech, BDB 547), cf. Hosea 3:2
3. Ephah (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
4. Se’ah (BDB 684, e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32)
5. Omer (BDB 771 II, possibly “a sheaf” [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
6. ‘Issaron (BDB 798, “a tenth part”), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21
7. Qav (or Kab, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25

B. Liquid Measures

1. Kor (BDB 499), e.g., I Kgs. 5:2,25; Ezek. 45:14
2. Bath (BDB 330, equal to a homer), e.g., II Chr. 2:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
3. Hin (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
4. Log (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24

C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 201 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 379)

homer (dry) = kor (liquid)	1						
ephah (dry) = bath (liquid)	10	1					
se’ah (dry)	30	3	1				
hin (liquid)	60	6	2	1			
omer/issaron (dry)	100	10	-	-	1		
qav/kab (dry)	180	18	6	3	-	1	
log (liquid)	720	72	24	12	-	4	1

II. Weight terms used most often

A. The three most common weights are the talent, the shekel, and the gerah.

1. The largest weight in the OT is the talent. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one talent equals 3,000 shekels (i.e., “round weight,” BDB 503).
2. The term shekel (BDB 1053, “weight”) is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of shekel mentioned in the OT.
 - a. “commercial standard” (NASB of Gen. 23:16)
 - b. “the shekel of the sanctuary” (NASB of Exod. 30:13)
 - c. “by the king’s weight” (NASB of II Sam. 14:26), also called “royal weight” in the Elephantine papyri.
3. The gerah (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit)
4. The mina (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70-71). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1 ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.
5. The beka (BDB 132, “half a shekel,” cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a shekel. Its name means “to divide.”

B. Chart

1. Based on Exodus

talent	1			
mina	60	1		
shekel	3,000 50	1		
beka	6,000*	100	1	

*(gerah, also 6,000 from Exod. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12)

2. Based on Ezekiel

talent	1			
mina	60	1		
shekel	3,600 60	1		
beka	7,200 120	2	1	
gerah	72,000	1,200 20	10	1

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:33

³³He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

13:33 “leaven” In the OT yeast was often a symbol of evil, but here it was an obvious symbol of the pervasiveness and growth of the Kingdom of God. Be careful of attaching one definition or connotation to a word, regardless of its context. Context determines meaning! See Special Topic at 16:6.

☐ **“hid”** In context this refers to the mixing process. It describes the hiddenness of the kingdom.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:34-35

³⁴All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES;

I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”

13:35 “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet” This is a quote from Ps. 78:2.

Several ancient Greek manuscripts including the original copier of \aleph and the Greek manuscripts used by Eusebius and Jerome have “through Isaiah the prophet.” It has been speculated that the original text had “through Asaph” to whom Psalm 78 is attributed in the Masoretic Text. There is no Greek text, however, which has this name. An early scribe either (1) did not recognize this Levitical Temple choir leader and changed the name to “Isaiah” or (2) thought the reference from vv. 14-15 somehow continued.

The Jews believed that all writers of inspired Scriptures were “prophets.” The vast majority of ancient Greek manuscripts do not have the name “Isaiah” in the text.

☐ **“THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD”** The GENITIVE phrase “of the world” is not found in Uncial manuscripts \aleph^1 and B, as well as some Old Latin and Syriac manuscripts and the Greek texts used by Origen and Jerome. The full phrase does occur in Matt. 25:34 and many Uncial Greek manuscripts (i.e., \aleph^* , \aleph^2 , C, D, L, W. The UBS⁴ committee decided to include “*Kosmou*,” but in brackets, with a “C” rating (i.e., difficulty in deciding).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:36-43

³⁶Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰So just as the tares

are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

13:36-43 This was Jesus’ interpretation of the parable of vv. 24-30 given in private to the disciples.

13:37 “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man” These parables relate to both Jesus as God’s Messiah, who brings life and truth, and the gospel message as the content of that truth. God’s truth is both a person (sower) and a message (seed).

13:38 “the field is the world” This is a key for understanding these parables. It is not the Church but the world (cf. v. 47). Only the parable of the sower seems to deal with those who have heard the gospel message and even then it could refer to (1) Palestine of Jesus’ day or (2) the places where the gospel was preached (i.e., the world, cf. Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:46; Acts 1:8).

▣ **“the sons of the kingdom. . .the sons of the evil one”**

SPECIAL TOPIC: “SONS OF . . .”

The term “son” (or “children of. . .”) is often used to characterize a group (or individual) or show one’s inclusion in a group.

A. Characterization of a group

1. positive
 - a. sons of the Kingdom, Matt. 8:12; 13:38
 - b. sons of men, Mark 3:28; Eph. 3:5
 - c. sons of light, Luke 16:8; John 12:36; Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:5
 - d. sons of the resurrection, Luke 20:36
 - e. sons of the Prophets, Acts 3:25
 - f. sons of the covenant, Acts 3:25
 - g. children of God, I John 3:10
2. negative
 - a. sons of the evil one, Matt. 13:38; John 8:44; I John 3:10
 - b. a son of hell, Matt. 23:15
 - c. sons of this age, Luke 16:8; 20:34
 - d. sons of the devil, Acts 13:10; 23:6
 - e. sons of disobedience, Eph. 2:2; 5:6

B. Characterization of an individual

1. positive
 - a. son of encouragement (i.e., Barnabas), Acts 4:36
 - b. son of Pharisees (i.e., Paul), Acts 23:6
2. negative
 - a. sons of thunder (i.e., James and John), Mark 3:17
 - b. son of perdition (i.e., Judas Iscariot), John 17:12
 - c. son of destruction (the Antichrist), II Thess. 2:3

13:39,40 “the end of the age” This is an eschatological setting. The kingdom is both “already” but “not yet,” as is judgment.

▣ **“fire”** See Special Topic at 3:12.

13:41 This is a partial quote from Zechariah 1:3. Notice that in this verse the Kingdom is called “His kingdom.” There are several places where the kingdom is attributed to the Son (cf. 16:28; Luke 22:30; 23:42; John 18:36; II Tim. 4:1,18). There are also several places where the kingdom is attributed to both the Father and the Son (cf. v. 43; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15).

The kingdom of the Son is not temporal (John 18:36), but eternal (cf. Dan. 7:14; Luke 1:33; II Tim. 4:18; II Pet. 1:11). See Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 164-165.

13:42 See note at 8:12. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:22.

13:43 “**shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father**” This was similar to the statements of Dan. 12:3.

▣ “**He who has ears, let him hear**” Those whom God has allowed to understand the gospel must respond to it now! This cryptic phrase occurs many times in the NT (cf. Matt. 11:15; 13:9,43; Mark 4:9,23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7,11,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9). These parables strike a note of urgency in the immediate need to hear, trust and respond to Him, and respond now!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:44

⁴⁴“**The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**”

13:44 “**the kingdom of heaven**” See vv. 45,47,52. This phrase was equivalent to “the kingdom of God” in Mark and Luke. Matthew, in writing to the Jews, did not use God’s name but CIRCUMLOCUTION, “heaven.” This parable is unique to Matthew.

▣ “**hidden in the field**” Burying valuables in the ground to protect them was a common practice in the Ancient Near East. There were no banks.

▣ “**sells all. . .buys the field**” This shows the radical nature of discipleship. Knowing Jesus is worth everything! The paradox is (1) a free salvation comes by God’s grace alone and is therefore absolutely free (cf. Rom. 3:24; 5:15; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9), but (2) it costs the disciple everything (cf. 10:34-39; 13:44,46).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:45-46

⁴⁵“**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.**”

13:45-46 The parable of the pearl of great price is unique to Matthew.

13:45 “**pearls**” Pearls were costly in the ancient world and equally valued with gold as a medium of exchange.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:47-50

⁴⁷“**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; ⁴⁸and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**”

13:47-50 The parable of the dragnet is unique to Matthew. Its meaning is similar to the parable of the tares, which is that there will be an end-time separation of the believers and unbelievers (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

13:48 This verse describes the end time division of people based on their response to Jesus and the gospel (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

13:49 “**at the end of the age**” The Jews viewed reality as two ages: the current evil age and the age to come (see Special Topic at 12:31). They believed that God would empower a human leader to inaugurate the new age by force. From the New Testament we now know these ages have overlapped, from Incarnation at Bethlehem to the Second Coming. This verse speaks of eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Revelation 20).

13:50 “**and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth**” See vv. 30, 42, 50; 8:12; 25:31ff. Jesus often spoke of Hell!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:51-52

⁵¹“**Have you understood all these things?**” They said to Him, “Yes.” ⁵²“**And Jesus said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”**”

13:52 “every scribe who has become a disciple” A scribe was a legal expert in the oral and written Law (see Special Topic at 12:38). A believing scribe will be able to draw truths from the Old Testament as well as see the fulfillments in Jesus’ teachings (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11; II Tim. 3:16). It is possible Matthew is characterizing himself!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:53-58

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. ⁵⁴He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, “Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter’s son? ⁵⁵Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?” ⁵⁷And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his *own* household.” ⁵⁸And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

13:53 “parables” This was a compound word in Greek which meant “to throw alongside.” Common occurrences were used to illustrate spiritual truths. However, it must be remembered that to these Jewish writers this Greek word (*parabola*) reflected the Hebrew *meshal*, which meant “riddle” or “proverb.” One must be willing to rethink issues and expected outcomes in light of the surprising nature of the *meshal*. There are two paradoxical reasons given for the use of parables in Jesus’ teaching ministry: (1) to communicate clearly spiritual truths to those who exercised faith in Him and (2) to hide spiritual truths from those who do not have faith in Him.

13:54 “He came to His hometown” A similar account is mentioned in Luke 4:16-30. There has been much discussion among commentators as to whether this is the same visit or a second visit. There are several accounts in Jesus’ ministry that are very similar (cf. John. 2:13-22 versus Matt. 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47), but scholars must be careful, based on their western literary presuppositions, not to assume they are the same event. There may well have been two cleansings of the Temple, for example, and Luke’s account may refer to another incident.

▣ **“began teaching them in their synagogue”** It was Jesus’ habit to attend regular Sabbath worship. Jesus learned the OT during His days in the synagogue school at Nazareth. The synagogue was a Jewish institution which developed during the Babylonian exile for the purpose of (1) training children, (2) worship, (3) ministering to the Jewish community, and (4) retaining the Jews’ unique culture while in exile by emphasizing study of the Law and the traditions of the fathers.

▣ **“they were astonished”** They were incredulous, not only by the tremendous insight of His teaching, but also by the authority of His teaching. The scribes taught in the authority of earlier famous rabbis; Jesus taught in His own authority (cf. 7:28-29).

▣ **“where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers”** The source of Jesus’ power was much debated. He was an officially untrained local boy. The Jews even accused Him of being in league with the evil one. For them His action against the oral law was “the unpardonable sin.” For those in Nazareth it was hard to believe that a local boy was the Messiah, Deity Incarnate.

13:55,56 “Is not this the carpenter’s son” There are three questions in these two verses; all three expect a “yes” answer.

Carpenter was used in the sense of craftsman. It could have referred to a craftsman of stone, metal or wood. The English term “architect” comes from this Greek term. These questions by the townspeople of Jesus’ hometown imply that Jesus had a normal childhood (cf. Luke 2:40,52).

13:55 “His brothers” The men listed

1. James, who became the leader of the Jerusalem church and wrote the book of James.
2. Joseph, he is called Jose in Mark 6:3 and a few later Greek manuscripts. We know nothing else about him.
3. Simon, we know nothing else about him.
4. Judas, he is also called Jude and wrote the NT book of Jude.

▣ **“His brothers. . .His sisters”** These are later children by Mary and Joseph (cf. 1:25; 12:46; Mark 6:3) or possibly children from Joseph’s previous marriage (which is not recorded anywhere in Scripture), so option #1 is best (see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 47 and 174).

13:57 “they took offense at Him” He is the rock of offense and a stone of stumbling. The stone which the builders have rejected has become the head of the corner (cf. 11:6; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; Jer. 6:21).

▣ **“a prophet”** This was a common proverb. That which is familiar loses its significance. See Special Topic at 11:9.

13:58 “He did not do many miracles there” God has always chosen for believers to cooperate in matters which relate to Him (covenant). It is not that Jesus could not, He chose not to. We learn from Luke 4:28-29 that they tried to kill Him because of His statements.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List the central truth of each of these parables in your own words. Is there a unifying theme in this chapter?
2. How does one balance a free salvation with one that costs everything?
3. Is hell as biblical a doctrine as heaven?
4. How was Jesus' teaching style different from the rabbis'?
5. Why did Nazareth reject Him?

MATTHEW 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Death of John the Baptist	John the Baptist Beheaded	Events of Decisive Acceptance or Rejection of Jesus (13:53-17:27) Death of John	The Death of John the Baptist	Herod and Jesus
14:1-12	14:1-12	14:1-12	14:1-2 14:3-5 14:6-7 14:8 14:9-12	14:1-2 John the Baptist Beheaded 14:3-12
The Feeding of the Five Thousand	Feeding the Five Thousand	Five Thousand Fed	Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand	First Miracle of the Loaves
14:13-21	14:13-21	14:13-21	14:13-14 14:15 14:16 14:17 14:18-21	14:13-14 14:15-21
Walking on Water	Jesus Walks on the Sea	Jesus Walks on Water	Jesus Walks on the Water	Jesus Walks on the Water and, with Him, Peter
14:22-33	14:22-33	14:22-27 14:28-33	14:22-26 14:27 14:28 14:29-30 14:31 14:32-33	14:22-33
The Healing of the Sick in Gennesaret	Many Touch Him and are Made Well		Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret	Cures at Gennesaret
14:34-36	14:34-36	14:34-36	14:34-36	14:34-36

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND TO MATTHEW 14:1-36

- A. Herod the Tetrarch who is mentioned in Matthew 14:1ff.; Luke 3:1; 9:7; 13:31, and 23:7, was the son of Herod the Great. At the death of Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons (Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip). The term "Tetrarch" meant "leader of the fourth part." This Herod was known as Herod Antipas which is the shortened form of Antipater. He controlled Galilee and Perea (4 B.C. - A.D 39). This meant that much of Jesus' ministry was in the territory of this second generation Idumean ruler.
- B. Herodias was the daughter of Herod Antipas' brother, Aristobulus, which made her his niece. She had also been previously married to Philip, the half brother of Herod Antipas. This was not Philip the Tetrarch who controlled the area just north of Galilee, but the other brother Philip who lived in Rome. Herodias had one daughter by Philip (Salome). On Herod Antipas' visit to Rome he met and was seduced by Herodias who was looking for political advancement. Therefore, Herod Antipas divorced his wife, who was a Nabatean princess and Herodias divorced Philip so that she and Herod Antipas could be married. She was also the sister of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12).
- C. We learn the name of Herodias' daughter, Salome, from Flavius Josephus in his book *The Antiquities of the Jews* 18:5:4. She must have been between the ages of twelve and seventeen at this point. She was obviously controlled and manipulated by her mother. She later married Philip the Tetrarch but was soon widowed.
- D. About ten years after the beheading of John the Baptist, Herod Antipas went to Rome at the instigation of his wife Herodias to seek the title of king because Agrippa I, her brother, had received that title. But Agrippa I wrote Rome and accused Antipas of corroboration with the Parthians, a hated enemy of Rome from the Fertile Crescent (Mesopotamia). The Emperor apparently believed Agrippa I and Herod Antipas, along with his wife Herodias, was exiled to Spain.
- E. It may make it easier to remember these different Herods as they are presented in the New Testament by remembering that Herod the Great killed the children in Bethlehem; Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist; Herod Agrippa I killed the Apostle James; and Herod Agrippa II heard Paul's appeal recorded in the book of Acts.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-5

¹At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, ²and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." ³For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

14:1 "At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard the news about Jesus" Matthew apparently inserted a parenthesis between vv. 1-2 and v. 13 dealing with the earlier death of John the Baptist. (What Jesus heard in v. 13 was not the death of John the Baptist but the report that Herod had heard about Him and thought that He was John the Baptist come back to life.)

14:2 "This is John the Baptist" See account in Luke 9:7-9.

▣ **“that is why miraculous powers are at work in him”** Herod apparently was superstitious and this magnified his guilt over the beheading of John the Baptist. There are no historical records of John the Baptist ever performing any miracles.

14:3 “Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison” We learn from Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.2 that this was the prison of Machaerus (cf. Matt. 4:12; 11:2). It was apparently a high, impregnable fortress to the southeast of the Dead Sea on the border of the Nabatean Empire. It is interesting to note that Herod’s first wife successfully defected to her father, Aretas (cf. II Cor. 11:32), by requesting to come to this particular summer palace. Later, her father had a military clash with her former husband, Herod Antipas, and totally defeated him. Herod would have been removed from office then if the Roman authorities had not intervened.

▣ **“Herodias”** The *New Testament TransLine* by Michal Magill has a good summary of her.

“She was the grand-daughter of Herod the Great, the daughter of Aristobulus, the sister of Agrippa I. See 2:1. She married Herod Philip I, a paternal brother of her father. Later, she left him and married Herod Antipas, also a paternal brother of her father by a different wife. She chose to go into exile with Antipas when he was exiled in A.D. 39” (p. 49).

14:4 “for John had been saying to him” The verb is IMPERFECT TENSE which meant repeated action in past time. John had apparently made this accusation repeatedly. These charges were based either on Herod Antipas and Herodias (his niece) being too closely related to be married (cf. Lev. 18:16), or more probably, because they were each had been illegally divorced (cf. Deut. 24:1-4).

14:5 “Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd” This seems to be in direct contradiction to v. 9. However, the schizophrenia of these eastern potentates was notorious. Apparently there was a fascination with John because Herod often called him to talk with him (cf. Mark 6:20), yet at the same time, there was great fear!

▣ **“because they regarded John as a prophet”** Jesus said in Matt. 11:7-11 that John was the last OT prophet and the greatest man ever born of woman under the old covenant. See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at 11:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:6-12

“But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod,⁷ so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Having been prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. ¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

14:6 “But when Herod’s birthday came” There is some archaeological, linguistic evidence that this may refer to an annual feast recognizing his inauguration. Judging from the available historical evidence, it was simply his birthday. On these occasions great feasts were the rule of the day.

▣ **“the daughter of Herodias danced before them”** Salome’s dance (see Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.5.4) must have greatly surprised everyone present because in this day and time dancing women were considered to be immoral. For a princess to dance before a group of drunken guests, particularly at this young age, must have been astonishing. The implication of the context is that it was a sensual dance instigated by her mother to win Herod’s approval.

14:8 “Having been prompted by her mother” The word “prompted” was the strong Greek term “urged.” This shows that this young girl was not only manipulated by her mother, but also controlled by her in an obviously premeditated plan to secure the death of John the Baptist (cf. Mark 6:22-25).

14:9 “although he was grieved” He was sorry—not because he was going to commit the premeditated murder of an innocent man, but because he had made an oath (secular use of “confess,” cf. Luke 22:6) and he was embarrassed to break it before his drunken guests (cf. Mark. 6:26).

14:11 “and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother” We do not know what the mother did with the head. There is a tradition, first mentioned by Jerome in the 4th century A.D., that she pulled out his tongue and stuck a pin through it.

The Greek term “girl” was used both of Jairus’ daughter (cf. Mark 5:41-42 where she is said to be twelve) and Salome, therefore, she was probably a teenager.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:13-14

¹³Now when Jesus heard *about John*, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard *of this*, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.

14:13 “when Jesus heard *about John*” This seems to refer to vv. 1 and 2 and not the intervening parenthesis of vv. 3-12.

▣ **“He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself”** This account of Jesus feeding the five thousand is also recorded in Mark 6:32-44, Luke 9:10-17, and John. 6:1-13. Apparently He wanted to get away to pray. This was His normal custom which helped Him to be prepared for the circumstances He faced. If Jesus needed to get away to pray, how much more do believers?

▣ **“when the people heard *of this*, they followed Him on foot from the cities”** Jesus never got tired of nor impatient with the crowds, but was always moved with compassion (cf. v. 14). This is a theme in Matthew’s Gospel (cf. 9:36; 15:32). Jesus, although tired and needing a time of retreat for prayer, still made people the priority. He cured all of those who were brought to Him, although He usually did not go out of His way to heal. He did not primarily want to be known as a healer but His compassion overflowed whenever He was in the presence of human misery. The healings of Jesus did two things: (1) they confirmed His message and (2) they showed the character and presence of the Messianic kingdom. Jesus is recorded as healing people numerous times in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 4:23; 8:16; 9:35; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14). I still believe in a supernatural God who heals. I do not understand why God heals some and does not heal others. I believe that there was a special emphasis on healing during the first century to confirm Jesus’ message as there was a special outburst of the demonic during His lifetime. This same pattern may be repeated before the Second Coming. See Special topic: Is Healing God’s Plan for Every Age? At 19:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:15-21

¹⁵When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, “This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away; you give them *something* to eat!” ¹⁷They said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸And He said, “Bring them to Me.” ¹⁹Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food*, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, ²⁰and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. ²¹There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.

14:15 “When it was evening” See v. 23. Matthew presents this chapter as one day in the life of Jesus (cf. v. 23). It is assumed that the Jews of Jesus’ day had an early evening and a late evening. The early one would occur at 3 p.m. in the afternoon when the offering of the evening sacrifice occurred in the Temple. The later one would be sometime just after sunset.

▣ **“this place is desolate”** This idiom meant that there was no large town or village close by, not that it was an uninhabited desert region.

14:16 Jesus apparently told the disciples to provide for these people (cf. Mark 6:37). “You give them *something* to eat” is emphatic in the Greek text. They were stunned. This was a training opportunity for them, as was the storm (cf. v. 32).

14:17 “We have here only five loaves and two fish” This was one boy’s lunch (cf. John. 6:9). Commentators who are nervous about miracles (William Barclay and other logical positivists) try to say that what happened was that this young boy shared his lunch and others who had brought their lunches shared them, which provided enough food for everybody. This is an obvious example of one’s presuppositions misinterpreting the biblical author’s obvious meaning. Where did the twelve full baskets that were left over come from if this was simply a sharing of lunches? Also notice that Jesus supernaturally multiplied the bread; but did not waste any of it because the disciples picked up the small pieces to eat later. This multiplication of food was the exact temptation of the evil one in Matt. 4:1-4, to get Jesus to feed the needy humanity. One of the reasons why Jesus may have wanted to get alone to pray was this previous temptation. The people wanted to make Him the “bread king” (cf. John. 6:15).

14:18 “Bring them to Me” Jesus was doing this not only to feed the crowd, but to teach the disciples and to build their faith. This was the true purpose of many of His miracles. Compassion for the needy and the desire to build the faith of His disciples were the twin motivations of the miracles.

This feeding would also have had Jewish Messianic implications. The Jews expected the Messiah to perform acts like Moses. This new manna may have been one such act (cf. John. 6).

14:19 “ordering the people to sit down on the grass” Literally this says “to recline on the grass.” This was the normal eating posture in Palestine. They were in groups of hundreds and fifties (cf. Mark 6:39-40). The presence of this lush, green grass meant that it was probably in the spring time.

▣ **“looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food”** The normal position of prayer for the Jews was with the eyes and hands lifted up to heaven. It was unusual for them to kneel to pray. Our modern practice of bowing our heads and closing our eyes comes from the parable of the Pharisee and the sinner. If we are going to bow our head and close our eyes, to be truly biblical we should also beat our breasts (cf. Luke 18:9-14)!

14:20 “twelve full baskets” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE

Twelve has always been a symbolic number of organization

1. outside the Bible
 - a. twelve signs of the Zodiac
 - b. twelve months of the year
2. in the OT
 - a. the sons of Jacob (the Jewish tribes)
 - b. reflected in
 - (1) twelve pillars of the altar in Exod. 24:4
 - (2) twelve jewels on the high priest’s breastplate (which stand for the tribes) in Exod. 28:21
 - (3) twelve loaves of bread in the holy place of the tabernacle in Lev. 24:5
 - (4) twelve spies sent into Canaan in Num. 13 (one from each tribe)
 - (5) twelve rods (tribal standards) at Korah’s rebellion in Num. 17:2
 - (6) twelve stones of Joshua in Josh. 4:3,9,20
 - (7) twelve administrative districts in Solomon’s administration in I Kgs. 4:7
 - (8) twelve stones of Elijah’s altar to YHWH in I Kgs. 18:31
3. in the NT
 - a. twelve apostles chosen
 - b. twelve baskets of bread (one for each Apostle) in Matt. 14:20
 - c. twelve thrones on which NT disciples sit (referring to the 12 tribes of Israel) in Matt. 19:28
 - d. twelve legions of angels to rescue Jesus in Matt. 26:53
 - e. the symbolism of Revelation
 - (1) 24 elders on 24 thrones in 4:4
 - (2) 144,000 (12x12) in 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (3) twelve stars on the woman’s crown in 12:1
 - (4) twelve gates, twelve angels reflecting the twelve tribes in 21:12
 - (5) twelve foundation stones of the new Jerusalem and on them the names of the twelve Apostles in 21:14
 - (6) twelve thousand stadia in 21:16 (size of new city, New Jerusalem)
 - (7) wall is 144 cubits in 21:7
 - (8) twelve gates of pearl in 21:21
 - (9) trees in new Jerusalem with twelve kinds of fruit (one for each month) in 22:2

14:21 “There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children” This being a somewhat isolated place, there were probably not too many women or children present unless they were sick and had been brought to be healed. The full number may have been somewhere around six or seven thousand but this is uncertain.

Since the Gospel of Matthew is directed to Jewish readers, this may have addressed the cultural issue of men eating separately from women and children (cf. NASB Study Bible, footnote, p. 1389).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:22-27

²²Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. ²³After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. ²⁴But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

14:22 "Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat" Why Jesus forced the disciples into the boat is unspecified. It could have involved

1. the inappropriate actions of the crowd (cf. Mark 6:15)
2. another example of His supernatural power to build the disciples' faith (cf. Mark 6:45-51; John. 6:15-21)

▣ **"while He sent the crowds away"** They had become excited over this miraculous feeding and attempted to make Him king (cf. John. 6:15). This was exactly the temptation of the evil one in Matt. 4:1-4 regarding the turning of the stones to bread. It was for this very reason that Jesus needed to get away, pray and speak with the Father about His further ministry. There was great confusion among the people concerning His healings and, here, of the feeding of the multitude.

14:23 "He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray" This was His original intent back in v. 13. The Gospels repeatedly record Jesus getting alone to pray. If He, being God Incarnate, needed this, how much more do we?

14:24 "the boat was already a long distance from the land" Mark 6:47 says the boat was in the middle of the lake.

14:25

NASB, NKJV,

NJB "in the fourth watch of the night"

NRSV "early in the morning"

TEV "between three and six o'clock in the morning"

This was a technical term to designate the fourth Roman watch of the night, which was 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. (cf. Mark 13:35). Originally the Jews had only three watches during the night (cf. Jdgs. 7:19; Lam. 2:19), but during the Roman period they adopted this fourfold division. Notice that Jesus had been in prayer for most of the night.

▣ **"He came to them, walking on the sea"** Because the waves and the wind were up, He must have come in and out of sight as the waves lifted up the boat. Here again Jesus showed His power over nature. We learn from the other Gospels that Jesus meant to simply walk past them but, because of their fright, He had to get in the boat with them.

14:26 "it is a ghost" This is exactly what they would say in the Upper Room in Luke 24:37. They were terrified. Jesus' first words to them were "Stop being afraid" (PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE. These words of encouragement are repeated often (cf. Matt. 14:27; 17:7; 28:19; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; 12:32; John. 6:20; Rev. 1:17).

14:27 Jesus spoke to His disciples two commands.

1. NASB, "take courage"
NKJV, "be of good cheer"
NRSV, "take heart"
TEV, NJB, "courage1"
This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus spoke these words often to
 - a. a paralytic, 9:2
 - b. hemorrhagic woman, 9:22
 - c. the disciples in a boat, 14:27; Mark 6:50
 - d. a blind man, Mark 10:49
 - e. the disciples in the upper room, John 16:33
 - f. Paul, Acts 23:11
2. "Do not be afraid" - This is a PRESENT MIDDLE/PASSIVE DEPONENT IMPERATIVE. Jesus spoke these words to
 - a. disciples in a boat, Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50; John 6:20

- b. Peter after his great catch of fish, Luke 5:10
- c. disciples while teaching them, Luke 12:32
- d. at transfiguration, Matt. 17:7
- e. women at the tomb, Matt. 28:10
- f. Paul at Corinth, Acts 18:9
- g. Paul at sea, Acts 27:24
- h. John on Patmos, Rev. 1:17

These same words were spoken by angels to

- 1. Zacharias, Luke 1:13
- 2. Mary, Luke 1:30
- 3. shepherds, Luke 2:10
- 4. women at the tomb, Matt. 28:5

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:28-33

²⁸Peter said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” ²⁹ And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³² When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³ And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are certainly God’s Son!”

14:28 “Peter said to Him” This event is recorded only in Matthew’s Gospel. Peter was so impetuous. He was a mixture of great faith and great doubt.

☐ **“if it is you”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Peter recognized it was Jesus.

14:30 “seeing the wind” He saw and felt the wind and the waves and began to lose his faith focus.

☐ **“Lord, save me”** This is a good example of the word “saved” used in the OT sense of “physical deliverance” (cf. James 5:15).

14:31 “You of little faith” This is a recurrent theme in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 6:30; 8:26; 16:8). Many of Jesus’ miracles were done to increase the faith of the disciples. God works with those who have little faith. Amen!

14:32 “worshiped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God’s Son’” Jesus accepted this worship. How much they really understood concerning the term “Son of God” (see Special Topic at 27:54) and how much they understood by hearing and seeing the supernatural aspects of His ministry is uncertain. This obviously set the stage for the full theological confession of 16:16. Matthew’s Gospel does not exhibit the “Messianic secret” to the extent Mark’s Gospel does (i.e., Mark 6:52).

The term “Son of God” was used quite often in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 4:3,6; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40,43,54). There is no ARTICLE with the term here as in Luke 27:54. Many assumed that this implied that they did not have the full theological implication of the term, which implied full deity. This may be true. Their understanding was progressive and not instantaneous. But it is dangerous to build too much theology on the presence or absence of the Greek article!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:34-36

³⁴When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent *word* into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; ³⁶and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched *it* were cured.

14:34 “When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret” There is ambiguity in the words “crossed over.” In Mark 6:45 there was a place called Bethsaida which meant “house of fish.” There must have been two Bethsaidas or else there was some confusion in the geography of the various accounts of the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus was staying in the territory of Philip the Tetrarch and not going back to the territory of Herod the Tetrarch. Gennesaret was primarily a Gentile area. Maybe this was His way of getting away from the Jewish crowds as He would later at Caesarea Philippi.

14:35 “and when the men of that place recognized Him” The exact same thing that happened in v. 13 happens again and Jesus again took time to minister to needy people. They had the same kind of superstitious faith as the woman with the issue of blood

in 9:20—they wanted to touch the tassel of His prayer shawl (cf. v. 36). Jesus accepted and worked with even this weak faith. His compassion can be clearly seen even for these superstitious non-Jews.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are verses 3-12 thought to be a parenthesis?
2. Can you identify the different Herods mentioned in the New Testament?
3. Why was Herodias so angry with John the Baptist?
4. What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles?
5. Why did Jesus feed the multitudes twice after rejecting the Devil's temptation to do this in Matthew 4:1-4?
6. How is the fearful reaction of Peter and the disciples so helpful to us in our faith?

MATTHEW 15

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Tradition of the Elders	Defilement Comes From Within	Traditions of the Elders	The Teaching of the Ancestors	The Traditions of the Pharisees
15:1-9	15:1-20	15:1-9	15:1-2 15:3-9	15:1-9
(8-9)				(8-9)
			The Things that Make a Person Unclean	On Clean and Unclean
15:10-20		15:10-20	15:10-11 15:12 15:13-14 15:15 15:16-20	15:10-11 15:12-14 15:15-20
The Canaanite Woman's Faith	A Gentile Shows Her Faith	The Canaanite Woman	A Woman's Faith	The Daughter of the Canaanite Woman Healed
15:21-28	15:21-28	15:21-28	15:21-22 15:23 15:24 15:25 15:26 15:27 15:28	15:21-28
The Healing of Many People	Jesus Heals Great Multitudes	Healings	Jesus Heals Many People	Cures near the Lake
15:29-31	15:29-31	15:29-31	15:29-31	15:29-31
The Feeding of the Four Thousand	Feeding the Four Thousand	Four Thousand Fed	Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand	Second Miracle of the Loaves
15:32-39	15:32-39	15:32-39	15:32 15:33 15:34a 15:34b 15:35-38 15:39	15:32-39

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-11

¹Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." ³And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.' ⁵But you say, "Whoever says to *his* father or mother, 'Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,' ⁶he is not to honor his father or mother." And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

⁸THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,

BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

⁹BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,

TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'

¹⁰After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. ¹¹*It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.*"

15:1 "Pharisees" They were the most outwardly religious sect within first century Judaism. They had developed during the Maccabean period. The name may have meant "separated ones." Jesus did not condemn all Pharisees but only those who were outwardly legalistic without inner righteousness (Isa. 29:13). They emphasized absolute conformity to the oral tradition which was later codified into the Talmud. For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees see Special Topic at 22:15.

☐ **"scribes"** This was a professional group of religious lawyers, trained in the written law and oral tradition, who were contacted to make rulings on points of Jewish regulations related to daily life. See Special Topic at 12:38.

☐ **"from Jerusalem"** Jesus was in Galilee at this time so these men traveled a long way to hear Him. They were, if you please, a delegation from headquarters!

15:2 "your disciples" The disciples were from Galilee, where Judaism was not as strict as in the Jerusalem area.

☐ **"the tradition of the elders"** This was a reference to the large body of oral traditions called the *Mishnah*, which interpreted the Law of Moses and helped apply it to everyday life. The *Mishnah* was codified most completely by Rabbi Judah in A.D. 200 and later became part of the Talmud. It was believed by the rabbis to be as authoritative as the Torah (Gen.-Deut.), for it, too, was believed to have been given orally to Moses by God (cf. Deut. 4:14).

☐ **"they do not wash their hands when they eat"** Handwashing was not for hygienic purposes but for ceremonial cleanliness. The OT did not require washing before every meal, but tradition grew (1) from Exod. 30:19 where the priests were to wash and (2) Leviticus 15, where those who touched something unclean were to wash. By Jesus' time washing before meals had become a major part of Jewish religious life. One early rabbi was excommunicated for not washing properly! Not only was washing

before meals commanded, but washing after and even between the individual courses was also considered a religious ceremonial duty.

15:4 “God said” Mark 7:11 has “Moses said.” This shows Jesus’ view of the authority and inspiration of the OT (cf. 5:17-19).

▣ **“Honor your father and mother”** Jesus quoted one of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). “Honor” was a commercial term which meant “to give due weight to.”

▣ The second OT quote in v. 4 is from Exod. 21:17 or Lev. 20:9. The stability of the society demanded swift and strong action against those who violated covenant requirements. The family was/is based to society.

▣ **“HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.”** See Exod. 21:17 and Lev. 20:1.

15:5

NASB, NRSV “has been given to God”
NKJV “dedicated to the temple”
TEV “belongs to God”
NJB “dedicated to God”

The concept of vowing or dedicating unneeded resources to God was called *corban* (from Hebrew word for “gift,” cf. Lev. 1:2; 22:27; 23:14; Num. 7:25) or “under the ban” (cf. Mark 7:11). This vow thereby made these resources legally unavailable to be used to help aging parents (though they might be used for other personal reasons).

15:6

NASB “he is not to honor”
NKJV “is released from honoring”
TEV “they do not need to honor”
NJB “he is rid of his duty”

Although it is not expressed in English this phrase is

1. a strong double negative
2. implies a question
3. a quote from the teachings (or implication of) the Pharisees/Scribes

▣

NASB “invalidated”
NKJV “no effect”
NRSV “void”
NJB “ineffective”

This is a strong Greek word used only here and the parallel in Mark 7:13 and in Gal. 3:17. By their motives and actions the intent of the Scriptures was compromised to human greed! These people looked religious, but the evidence of the Fall remained (i.e., more for me at any cost).

▣ **“for the sake of your tradition”** This term (*pardosis*) is used in several senses.

1. in I Cor. 11:2,23 for gospel truths
2. in Matt. 15:6; 23:1ff; Mark 7:8; Gal. 1:14 of Jewish traditions
3. in Col. 2:6-8 of gnostic speculations
4. Roman Catholics use this verse as a biblical proof-text for Scripture and tradition being equal in authority

However, in this context it refers to Apostolic truth, either spoken or written (cf. II Thess. 3:6)

15:7 “you hypocrites” This was a theatrical term literally “to judge under” but in the sense of “to play a part behind a mask.”

15:8-9 “This people honor me with their lips” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 29:13. This powerful verse shows that a person’s personal faith is clearly revealed by their outward acts and words (cf. Rom. 4:3-6; James 2:14-26).

15:8 “far away” This phrase conveys the idea of holding something or someone at arm’s length.

15:10 “Jesus called the crowd to Him,” Jesus publicly denounced these religious leaders from Jerusalem.

15:11 “*It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man*” This related primarily to the question of hand washing (cf. vv. 18,20), but Mark 7:19 adds a phrase that related the statement to all foods (cf. Acts 10). The purity is from within and it guides/directs outward activities.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:12-14

¹²Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” ¹³But He answered and said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

15:12 “the Pharisees were offended” The disciples were shocked at Jesus’ treatment of these religious leaders, His statement about the oral traditions, and by implication, His negation of the food laws of Lev. 11.

15:13 “Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted” This referred either to the Pharisees’ teachings or to the Pharisees themselves. It showed that they were not of God (cf. 5:20; 16:6,11). Religiosity can be a dangerous thing (cf. Rom. 2:17-29). Peace at any price was not Jesus’ way!

It is possible that Jesus is drawing this plant imagery from Isa. 60:21; 61:3. Israel was described in agricultural terms (cf. Isaiah 5; John 15). Israel was YHWH’s chosen vine, chosen to reveal Himself to the nations! AS Israel failed, so too Pharisaic theology. The greatest sin besides unbelief is self-righteousness!

15:14 This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which refers to potential action.

☐ “blind” This is used metaphorically to describe the spiritual understanding of the Pharisees and their disciples (cf. Chapter 23, especially vv. 16,24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:15-20

¹⁵Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” ¹⁶Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? ¹⁷Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? ¹⁸But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, slanders. ²⁰These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

15:15-20 This speaks of the need for spiritual balance between freedom in Christ and self-limiting responsibility out of love for Christ and others (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; I Cor. 8; 10:23-33; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

15:16 “Are you still lacking in understanding also” This is a rare, emphatic Greek idiom. Even the disciples did not understand until after the resurrection (cf. Luke 24:45, see also Luke 24:16,31; Acts 16:14; I John 5:20).

15:18 What food one may or may not eat is not the issue but the person’s heart (cf. Matt. 12:34; Mark 7:20). By these statements Jesus negated the food laws of Leviticus 11! Jesus is usually said to have rejected the oral tradition of the rabbis, but affirmed the OT. However, in this instance and His treatment of divorce (cf. 5:31-32; 19:8-9) He changes OT Law. It is best to affirm Jesus’ right and inspiration to reinterpret both the OT and rabbinical tradition without turning this into a hermeneutical principle. Modern interpreters are not inspired but illumined. We affirm Jesus’ teachings, but dare not follow His hermeneutic technique!

☐ “heart” See Special Topic at 5:8.

15:19 “fornications” The English word “pornography” shares the same root word as this Greek term. It meant any inappropriate sexual activity: premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, and even a refusal of levirate responsibilities (a brother failing to sexually relate to the widow of a deceased brother in order to provide heirs).

In the OT there was a distinction between marital infidelity (adultery) and pre-marital promiscuity (fornication).

☐ “thefts” The English word “kleptomania” is derived from the same Greek root.

☐ “slanders” This whole list referred to the Ten Commandments. Blasphemy was to speak against God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN SPEECH

I. OPENING THOUGHTS FROM PROVERBS

- A. Speech is part of the image of God in mankind (i.e., creation is spoken into existence and God talks to His human creation). It is a vital part of our personhood.
- B. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life. Therefore, it reveals who we really are (Prov. 18:2; 4:23 [20-27]). Speech is the acid test of the person (Prov. 23:7).
- C. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow humans. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (Prov. 17:10) and negative (Prov. 12:18) ways.
- D. There is tremendous power in human speech (Prov. 18:20-21)—power to bless and heal (Prov. 10:11,21) and power to curse and destroy (Prov. 11:9).
- E. We reap what we sow (Prov. 12:14).

II. PRINCIPLES FROM PROVERBS ON HUMAN SPEECH

- A. The negative and destructive potential of human speech
 1. the words of evil men (1:11-19; 10:6; 11:9,11; 12:2-6)
 2. the words of the adulteress (5:2-5; 6:24-35; 7:5ff; 9:13-18; 22:14)
 3. the words of the liar (6:12-15,19; 10:18; 12:17-19,22; 14:5,25; 17:4; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18; 26:23-28)
 4. the words of the fool (10:10,14; 14:3; 15:14; 18:6-8)
 5. the words of false witnesses (6:19; 12:17; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18)
 6. the words of a gossip (6:14,19; 11:13; 16:27-28; 20:19; 25:23; 26:20)
 7. the words too quickly spoken (6:1-5; 12:18; 20:25; 29:20)
 8. the words of flattery (29:5)
 9. too many words (10:14,19,23; 11:13; 13:3,16; 14:23; 15:2; 17:27-28; 18:2; 21:23; 29:20)
 10. perverted words (17:20; 19:1)
- B. The positive, healing and edifying potential of human speech
 1. the words of the righteous (10:11,20-21,31-32; 12:14; 13:2; 15:23; 16:13; 18:20)
 2. the words of the discerning (10:13; 11:12)
 3. the words of knowledge (15:1,4,7,8; 20:15)
 4. the words of healing (15:4)
 5. the words of a gentle answer (15:1,4,18,23; 16:1; 25:15)
 6. the words of a pleasant answer (12:25; 15:26,30; 16:24)
 7. the words of the law (22:17-21)

III. THE OT PATTERN CONTINUES IN THE NT

- A. Human speech enables us to communicate to others how we feel about life; therefore, it reveals who we really are (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:2-23).
- B. We are social creatures. We are concerned with acceptance and affirmation. We need it from God and from our fellow man. Words have the power to meet these needs in both positive (II Tim. 3:15-17) and negative (James 3:2-12) ways.
- C. There is tremendous power in human speech; power to bless (Eph. 4:29) and power to curse (James 3:9). We are responsible for what we say (James 3:2-12).
- D. We will be judged by our words (Matt. 12:33-37; Luke 6:39-45) as well as our deeds (Matt. 25:31-46). We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:21-28

²¹Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began* to cry out, saying, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed." ²³But He did not answer a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us." ²⁴But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and *began* to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶And He answered and said, "It is not good to

take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷But she said, "Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.

15:21 "Tyre and Sidon" These were Phoenician coastal cities. In most of the OT they are associated with *Ba'al* worship and wickedness, however (1) Solomon did procure artisans and material for the Temple from Hiram, King of Tyre (cf. I Kgs. 7); and (2) Elijah helped a widow from this area (cf. Luke 4:25-26.)

15:22 "a Canaanite woman" This is the only use of this term in the NT, although a similar form is found in a name (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:18). In Mark 7:26 she was called a Syro-Phoenician woman, who in the modern world would be a woman from southern Lebanon. She was obviously non-Jewish. This account, like 8:5-13, showed Jesus' care for Gentiles. The healings summarized in vv. 29-31 took place in a predominately Gentile area (cf. Mark 7:31).

▣ **"began to cry out, saying"** Obviously this was done loudly and repeatedly. This IMPERFECT TENSE can mean (1) repeated action in past time or (2) the beginning of an act in past time.

▣ **"Have mercy on me"** The mercy and compassion of Jesus towards the poor, sick, and possessed had been told far and wide. Even a non-Jewish woman felt He would act on her behalf (cf. 9:27; 17:15).

This AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE is used in the sense of a prayer request, not a command.

▣ **"Lord"** This was either (1) a common use of "Sir" or (2) the theological use of "Master" and "Messiah"; only context can tell. Because it is combined with a Messianic title here, the second option is best.

▣ **"Son of David"** This was a Messianic title from II Sam. 7. She knew something about the Jewish faith and hope. See note at 9:27.

▣ **"my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed"** Demon possession was and is a reality that can even affect children (cf. Matt. 17:14-18). There is so much we don't know about this area!

I have struggled in this area of demon possession. I believe and affirm the biblical worldview. However, it bothers me that (1) exorcism is not listed as one of the spiritual gifts; (2) it is never discussed in any of the NT letters; (3) I am not informed by an inspired author about how to perform this spiritual rite. I am left to affirm the reality, but not able to identify it or know how to address it or remove it! See special topics on the demonic at 10:1.

15:23 "disciples came and implored Him" The VERB is also IMPERFECT TENSE. The disciples show their level of compassion in contrast to Jesus (cf. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32). Jesus' answer in v. 24 was addressed to them, not the woman. This phrase is left out in Mark because he was writing to Gentiles who would not have understood the disciples' reluctance in helping a Gentile.

15:24 "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" Remember Jesus helped other Gentiles, but within the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land. If Jesus had begun a healing ministry in a Gentile land, He would have been rejected by the Jewish populous in general because of their prejudices. The phrase "lost sheep of the house of Israel" shows the spiritual condition of the Jewish people (cf. 10:6; 9:36).

The "shepherding" imagery began in Num. 27:17 (cf. Zech. 10:2). Psalm 23; 78:52; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10 depict YHWH as the Shepherd of Israel. This imagery becomes Messianic in Micah 5:2; Zech. 11:4-17; and John 10:1-10. The bad shepherds are contrasted with the good shepherd in Ezekiel 34.

Sheep needed constant care and protection. They were helpless, defenseless, and easily influenced animals! Calling God's people sheep is not a compliment, but a spiritual reality!

Could I make one more comment on the word "only"! Jesus helped this needy Gentile, as He did several other Gentiles. These are foreshadowings of His world-wide goal (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). The Messiah came for all humans made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Genesis 3:15 is not a promise to Israel, but to humans. The call of Abraham included a concern for Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3). The giving of the law on Mt. Sinai included God's concern for the world (cf. Exod. 19:5)!

15:26 "dogs" This is the only use of this term in the NT. Its harshness is diminished by the fact that it is DIMINUTIVE in form, "puppies" (JB, "house-dogs"). The Jews called the Gentiles "dogs." This dialogue was intended to help the disciples overcome their prejudice against Gentiles. Jesus recognized and publicly affirmed that her faith was great (cf. v. 28)!

15:27 "crumbs" People often used bread to wipe their hands after eating.

15:28 “O woman, your faith is great” Jesus complimented Gentiles several times (cf. 8:10). This was to: (1) show His love for Gentiles, or (2) stimulate the disciples’ global world view.

☐ **“her daughter was healed at once”** Notice that this lady did not require ritual magic or Jesus’ physical presence (cf. 8:8-9). When He told her that her daughter was healed, she believed.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:29-31

²⁹Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. ³⁰And large crowds came to Him, bringing with them *those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them.* ³¹So the crowd marveled as they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

15:30 “large crowds” These large crowds were made up of the curious, the committed, the religious leaders, and the sick.

☐ **“He healed them”** This was a Messianic sign (cf. 11:5) which showed the heart of God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:32-38

³²And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, “I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” ³³The disciples said to Him, “Where would we get so many loaves in *this* desolate place to satisfy such a large crowd?” ³⁴And Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” ³⁵And He directed the people to sit down on the ground; ³⁶and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples *gave them* to the people. ³⁷And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven large baskets full. ³⁸And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

15:33 “the disciples said” How could the disciples have forgotten the feeding of the 5,000 so quickly (cf. 14:13-21)? The difference in the number, setting, and type of baskets used show that there were two separate feedings of multitudes, not just one recorded twice.

Although Jesus’ statements seemed to restrict His ministry to Jews, this feeding, like the healing of the Centurion’s family in chapter 8, healing of the Gentile woman’s child in vv. 21-28 and the summary statement of vv. 29-30, all refer to Gentiles.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:39

³⁹And sending away the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

15:39 “the region of Magadan” This location is unknown. In the Markan parallel the text has “Dalmanatha” (Mark 8:p10), but this site is also unknown. Some Greek manuscripts changed Magadan to Magdala which was a Semitic term for “tower.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the Pharisees and scribes travel to Galilee to see Jesus?
2. How can tradition be a dangerous thing?
3. Is it possible to be religious and not know God?
4. How do we balance our freedom as Christians with our responsibilities?
5. Why are Matthew's and Mark's lists in verse 19 different?
6. Why did Jesus not readily want to help this lady? Why was He reluctant or, was He reluctant?
7. How can children have demons?

MATTHEW 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Demand for a Sign 16:1-4	The Pharisees and Sadducees Seek a Sign 16:1-4	Demand for Signs 16:1-4	The Demand for a Miracle 16:1-4c 16:14d	The Pharisees Ask for a Sign from Heaven 16:1-4
The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees 16:5-12	The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees 16:5-12	Yeast of the Pharisees 16:5-12	The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees 16:5-6 16:7 16:8-11 16:12	The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees 16:5-12
Peter's Declaration about Jesus 16:13-20	Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ 16:13-20	Peter's Confession 16:13-20	Peter's Declaration about Jesus 16:13 16:14 16:15 16:16 16:17-19 16:20	Peter's Profession of Faith; his Pre-eminence 16:13-20
Jesus Foretells His Death 16:21-28	Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection 16:21-23 Take Up the Cross and Follow Him 16:24-28	On Discipleship 16:24-26 16:27-28	Jesus Speaks about His Suffering and Death 16:21 16:22 16:23 16:24-28	First Prophecy of the Passion 16:21-23 The Condition of Following Christ 16:24-26 16:27-28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent which, is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-4

¹The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. ²But He answered and said to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*’ ³And in the morning, ‘*There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.*’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times? ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.” And He left them and went away.

16:1 “the Pharisees and Sadducees” Matthew links these two groups together as the collective leadership of rabbinical Judaism (cf. 3:7; 10:1, 6, 11, 12; 22:34). For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees, see note at 22:15 and for the Sadducees see Special Topic at 22:23.

▣ **“testing”** This word (*peirasmos*) was used with the connotation of “test with a view toward destruction” (cf. 6:13; James 1:13). See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“a sign from heaven”** “From heaven” is a CIRCUMLOCUTION for “God.” They had seen His miracles but they wanted more (cf. 12:38-42). This was the same temptation offered by Satan in 4:5-6 about winning mankind’s allegiance by the use of the miraculous.

Apparently these Jewish religionists wanted evidence that Jesus was empowered by YHWH. They were calling the healings “Satan’s work,” so they wanted a sign that was indisputably from God (i.e., “heaven”). Exactly what that would be is not clearly stated. Jesus gives them that sign, but in a veiled and future way (i.e., His resurrection).

16:2b-3 These sentences are not in the most ancient uncial Greek manuscripts \aleph , B, X, and the Greek text used by Origen, the Greek manuscripts known to Jerome, nor in some Peshitta or Coptic versions, but they are found in the uncial manuscripts C, D, L and W. A similar passage is found in Luke 12:54-56. The textual critics behind the fourth edition of the Greek NT put out by the United Bible Societies could not make a decision about the originality of these verses (cf. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce Metzger, p. 41.)

16:3 “the signs of the times” Notice the PLURAL “times.” This refers to the two ages (see Special Topic at 12:31). These Jewish religionists could predict and understand some weather phenomena, but they could not/would not understand the coming of the new age of the Spirit in Jesus. He chides them for their lack of spiritual perception (cf. Isa. 6:9-10). Another sign/prophecy was fulfilled in them!

16:4 “adulterous generation” This phrase is used in the metaphorical sense of “unfaithful.” The metaphor (cf. 12:39; James 4:4) goes back to the OT usage related to idolatry and fertility worship (i.e., Jer. 3:8; 9:2; 23:10; 29:23; Ezekiel 23; Hosea 4:2-3; Mal. 3:5).

▣ **“the sign of Jonah”** They would have had no clue what He was talking about! This was an analogy of three days Jonah was in the great fish and Jesus would be in *Hades* (cf. I Pet. 3:19). Remember Jesus was in the tomb only about thirty-six to forty hours, but it was reckoned as three days in the Jewish counting system of Jesus’ day. Part of a day was counted as a whole day and a day began and ended at twilight (cf. Gen. 1). See notes at 12:39 and v. 21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:5-12

⁵And the disciples came to the other side of the sea, but they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷They began to discuss *this* among themselves, saying, “*He said that* because we did not bring any bread.” ⁸But Jesus aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets full you picked up? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many large baskets full you picked up? ¹¹How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning

bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”¹²Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

16:6, 11 “the leaven” It is possible that the Aramaic term “legal severity” was meant here (remember Jesus and the Jews of His day spoke Aramaic). The two words are similar in Aramaic; however, verse 12 demands the term “yeast” or “leaven.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: LEAVEN

The term “leaven” (*zumē*) is used in two senses in both the OT and the NT:

1. a sense of corruption and, therefore, a symbol of evil
 - a. Exod. 12:15; 13:3,7; 23:18; 34:25; Lev. 2:11; 6:17; Deut. 16:3
 - b. Matt. 16:6,11; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Gal. 5:9; I Cor. 5:6-8
2. a sense of permeation and, therefore, influence, not a symbol of evil
 - a. Lev. 7:13; 23:17; Amos 4:5
 - b. Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

Only context can determine the meaning of this word (which is true of all words!).

16:7 “They began to discuss. . .among themselves” Often in Matthew’s Gospel Jesus speaks to the discussion of others (cf. 3:9; 9:3,21; 16:7-8; 21:25,38). He took their questions and discussions as an opportunity to address theological issues.

It is uncertain whether He overheard their conversations or supernaturally knew their thoughts!

16:8 Jesus often referred to the Twelve as having little faith (cf. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). Those who heard Him and lived with Him did not always understand or have faith. Verses 7-10 are parenthetical. Jesus wanted to talk about the false faith of the Pharisees (cf. 5:20-48), but the disciples got mentally sidetracked over the lack of “bread.”

16:9 The disciples had the advantage of hearing Jesus speak and minister to the crowds and also the private the private discussions and interpretation afterward, but still they, like most of the hearers (cf. Matt. 13:13,14-15 [Isa. 6:9-10,19]), did not understand (i.e., 15:17; 16:11; Luke 2:50; 18:34; John 10:6; 12:16). Jesus’ message was so unique and different from the Jewish religion (i.e., “the leaven of the Pharisees”) they had grown up with that it took a supernatural Spirit-led opening of their minds to perceive (i.e., Luke 24:45). This occurred slowly during Jesus’ time with them (i.e., vv. 13-28), but not fully until

1. after the resurrection
2. in the upper room (cf. John 20)
3. by the seashore in John 21
4. Acts 1 when He ascended into heaven

16:12 It was their legalism and lack of love that caused Jesus’ sternest words of condemnation! Often, religiosity can be a barrier instead of a bridge!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:13-20

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.

16:13 “Caesarea Philippi” This was a city in Philip’s territory about 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This was Jesus’ second attempt to get away with the disciples alone (cf. Matt. 15).

☐ **“Son of Man”** This phrase was used several times in the OT. It implies humanity (Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1) and deity (Dan. 7:13). The phrase was not used by the rabbis of Jesus’ day; therefore, it had no nationalistic or militaristic implications. This was Jesus’ self-chosen designation because it combined the twin aspects of His person, fully God and fully man (cf. Phil. 2:6-8; I John. 4:1-3). See note at 8:20.

16:14 “John the Baptist” Herod Antipas guessed that Jesus was actually John the Baptist (cf. 14:1-2).

▣ **“Elijah”** This was from the prophecy of Mal. 3:1; 4:5 which said Elijah would prepare the way for the Messiah. It would have acknowledged the dawning of the new age of the Spirit.

▣ **“Jeremiah”** The rabbis held that he hid the Ark of the Covenant on Mt. Nebo and that he would bring it out just before the New Age began.

▣ **“one of the prophets”** This made Jesus a prophet like other OT figures. It could have related to the prophecy of Deut. 18:15-22 (cf. John. 2:2). All of these guesses involved a resurrection!

▣ **“But who do you say that I am”** “You” is PLURAL. Jesus asked all of His disciples this question. Peter answered first. His personality made him the spokesman for the group.

16:16 “You are the Christ” This had been expressed before by Andrew in John. 1:41, Nathaniel in John. 1:49, and Peter in John. 6:69. The Greek title “Christ” is the equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah” or “Anointed One.” See Special Topic: OT Titles For the Special Coming One at 8:20.

▣ **“the Son of the living God”** Peter did not fully understand Jesus’ Messiahship as is obvious from verses 21-23. Therefore, the blessing of verse 17 related to the phrase “Son of the living God.” The phrase “living God” was a paraphrase of YHWH which is from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:21.

16:17

NASB “Simon, Barjonah”

NKJV “Simon Bar-Jona”

NRSV, NJB “Simon son of Jonah”

TEV “Simon son of John”

This Aramaic “*Barjonas*” meant “son of John.”

▣ **“but My Father who is in heaven”** The content of Peter’s confession (v. 16) was not human discovery, but divine revelation. The Spirit is the person of the Trinity who is attributed this task, but here it is the Father, possibly because of the mention of “Son of God.”

The gospel cannot be comprehended nor responded to without divine aid (cf. John 6:44,65; 10:29). This does not eliminate the mandated human response (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but it does show that humans can only respond to the initiation from the spiritual realm. The cannot/do not initiate spiritual decisions! The verb tense related to the “binding” and “loosing” of v. 19 reflect this same truth!

16:18 “Peter” This is the Greek word “*petros*,” a MASCULINE NOUN. It referred to a detached boulder. For much of his life (i.e., vv. 22,23; Mark 14) he was anything but a “rock”!

▣ **“this rock”** This is the Greek work, “*petra*,” a FEMININE NOUN. It referred to bedrock (cf. 7:24). These two words (*petros* and *petra*) cannot grammatically link up to each other because of their GENDER. The disciples did not see this as a reference to Peter’s superiority because they continued to argue over who was greatest (cf. 18:1, 18; John. 20:21). These two terms are related but distinct in Greek. There is an obvious play between Peter’s faith and the faith of all the apostles. However, in Aramaic there is only one term, “*kepha*” (“Cephas, John 1:42; I Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5) for both of the Greek terms for “rock.” Jesus spoke Aramaic but His words are recorded by inspired writers in Greek. Therefore, we must deal with the Greek text, not a supposed Aramaic statement.

▣ **“church”** “*Ekklesia*” was the word used in the Septuagint for “the congregation of Israel” (*Qahal*, BDB 874, cf. Deut. 18:16; 23:2). One must be careful not to read post-Pentecostal definitions and forms into this very early and Jewish passage. These early disciples saw themselves as an extension of the OT people (i.e., *Qahal*) of God. They were the fulfillment of the OT people. The term itself implied a called gathering for some purpose. Its Greek background was a called town meeting (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41). This term does not occur in Mark, Luke, or John. It occurs in Matthew only three times (cf. 16:8; 18:17 [twice]). The Matt. 18:17 text obviously refers to a later period of time. The term does occur often in Acts and Paul’s writings.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (*EKKLESIA*)

This Greek term, *ekklesia*, is from two words, “out of” and “called,” therefore, the term implies the divinely called-out ones. The early church took this word from secular use (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41) and because of the Septuagint’s use of this term for “congregation” of Israel (*Qahal*, BDB 874, cf. Num. 16:3; 20:4). They used it for themselves as a continuation of the OT people of God. They were the new Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6), the fulfillment of God’s worldwide mission (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

This term is used in several senses in the Gospels and Acts:

1. secular town meeting, Acts 19:32,39,41
2. universal people of God in Christ, Matt. 16:18 and Ephesians
3. a local congregation of believers in Christ, Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11 (in these verses the church in Jerusalem)
4. the people of Israel collectively, Acts 7:38, in Stephen’s sermon
5. the people of God in a region, Acts 8:3 (Judah or Palestine)

▣ **“gates of Hades”** “Gates” can refer to (1) the idea of a city of death from which no one escapes, (2) a city council meeting held at the gate, or (3) an active scheme of evil against the Church. *Hades* was from the word “to see” negated, therefore invisible. It equals the OT “*Sheol*,” where the righteous and wicked alike go at the time of death. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:22.

▣ **“will not overpower it”** This word had an active connotation of “to assault, to gain control.” Death and evil have not overcome nor even comprehended (the two meanings of this term) the Church of the Living God.

16:19 “keys of the kingdom of heaven” This was a metaphor for ownership by gaining entrance. See Isa. 22:22; Rev. 1:18; 3:7. The keys are the proclamation of the gospel with an invitation to respond. This concept of Hades and heaven having gates like a city goes back to Isaiah (see Special Topic following). The author of Hebrews also uses this metaphor for heaven (cf. Heb. 11:10,16; 12:22; 13:4), as does John in Revelation (cf. Rev. 3:12; 21-22).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO CITIES

- A. Chapters 24-27 are a literary unit positioned at the conclusion of a series of judgment oracles against the surrounding nations found in Isaiah 13-23. Judgment is not the last word! The God of grace and mercy has an eternal, inclusive, redemptive plan!
- B. This entire section is a play on two cities.
1. the cities formed by the fallen human children of Cain, who try to meet their needs completely in their own resources (i.e., Genesis 10-11).
 2. the city of Zion, where God dwells (i.e., above the wings of the two Cherubim over the Ark of the covenant in the holiest inner shrine of the temple in Jerusalem) and where His people (Jew and Gentile) come to Him and worship Him (cf. 2:2-4; 19:18-25; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21:1-2).
- C. Cities represent people groups/nations.

Human Cities

1:7,8, burned Judean cities
1:21, the faithful city has become a harlot
6:11, Judean cities devastated
14:17,21, all cities devastated
14:31 cities of Philistia
17:1-3,9, cities of Syria ruined
19:2, cities of Egypt destroy each other
22:2,9, the exultant city, Jerusalem falls
23, Tyre destroyed

God’s City

1:26, the city of righteousness, a faithful city
19:18-22, Egyptian cities worship God
19:23-25, all Egypt and Assyria included in
God’s people

24:1-25:5, universal destruction of cities	25:6-9, banquet on God's mountain (i.e., Jerusalem)
25:10-12, Moab and her palace, fortified cities trampled	
26:5, the unassailable city, probably Moab	26:1, a strong city, Jerusalem, restored
27:10, fortified cities fall	
29:1, "Ariel" (Jerusalem)	
33:2,19, the jubilant city (Jerusalem)	
	45:13, My city (cf. 44:23)
48:2, the holy city, but in name only	
	52:1-6, the holy city
	60:14, the city of the LORD
	62:12, a city not forsaken
	66:6, a voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple

▣ **"kingdom of heaven"** Mark and Luke have, "kingdom of God." The difference is not one of substance, but a difference of recipients. See special topic on the Kingdom of God at 4:17.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, JB

"bind. . .loose"

TEV

"prohibit. . .permit"

These were rabbinical terms used for legal decisions of permitting or not permitting something. The tense of these two PERIPHRASTIC verbals is significant. They are both FUTURE INDICATIVES of "I Am" with PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES. They should be translated "shall have been bound" and "shall have been loosed" (cf. 18:18). This reflects the truth that what humans, led by the Holy Spirit, decide on earth about spiritual matters will have already been decided on in heaven. This passage does not express a human decision, but humans following God's lead (cf. 18:18; John 20:23).

16:20 "He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ" The gospel was not yet complete. The current Jewish notions about the work of the Messiah were incorrect. The disciples must wait (cf. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 17:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:21-23

²¹From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²²Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." ²³But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

16:21 "must" This was the word "*dei*" which meant moral necessity (Jesus came to die, Mark 8:31; 10:45; John 3:14,16). Jesus knew there was a divine plan for His life and ministry (cf. 12:15-21; Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 10:42; 17:31). He knew at the age of twelve (cf. Luke 2:41-49)!

▣ **"and suffer many things"** John had implied this by calling Jesus "the Lamb of God" (cf. John 1:29), but the disciples were not prepared for this truth. It was not in their first century Jewish notions about the Messiah. The rabbis emphasized the coming of the Messiah as an act of judgment and military triumph (cf. Rev. 19:11-16). They were not wrong in this assessment but they failed to recognize His first coming as the suffering servant (cf. Isa. 53), the humble one on the colt of a donkey (cf. Zech. 9:5), both of which seem to follow Gen. 3:15. See Special Topic: Bob's Personal Biases at 27:66.

This revelation of His suffering was so shocking that Jesus had to repeat it several times (cf. 17:9,12,22-23; 20:18-19). He did this so that when it happened the disciples, after their initial grief and confusion, would realize that Jesus was in control of His own destiny. This would embolden them for their called mission (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

▣ **"the elders, and chief priests, and scribes"** This was the phrase used to describe the Sanhedrin. It was the ruling body of the Jews made up of 70 leaders from the Jerusalem area. In Jesus' day it had been corrupted by Roman politics because the High Priesthood had become a purchased position.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SANHEDRIN

I. Sources of Information

- A. The New Testament itself
- B. Flavius Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*
- C. The Mishnah section of the Talmud (i.e., Tractate "Sanhedrin")

Unfortunately the NT and Josephus do not agree with the rabbinical writings, which seem to assert two Sanhedrins in Jerusalem, one priestly (i.e., Sadducean), controlled by the High Priest and dealing with civil and criminal justice and a second controlled by the Pharisees and scribes, concerned with religious and traditional issues. However, the rabbinical writings date from A.D. 200 and reflect the cultural situation after the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman general, Titus, in A.D. 70. The Jews reestablished their religious life at a city called Jamnia and later (i.e., A.D. 118) moved to Galilee.

II. Terminology

The problem with identifying this judicial body involves the different names by which it is known. There are several words used to describe judicial bodies within the Jewish community of Jerusalem.

- A. *Gerousia* – "senate" or "council." This is the oldest term which was used toward the end of the Persian period (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 12:3:3 and *II Maccabees* 11:27). It is used by Luke in Acts 5:21 along with "Sanhedrin." It may have been a way of explaining the term to Greek speaking readers (cf. *I Macc.* 12:35).
- B. *Synedrion* – "Sanhedrin." This is a compound from *syn* (together with) and *hedra* (seat). Surprisingly this term is used in Aramaic, but it reflects a Greek word. By the end of the Maccabean period this had become the accepted term to designate the supreme court of the Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 26:59; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66; John 11:47; Acts 5:27). The problem comes when the same terminology is used of local judicial councils outside Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 5:22; 10:17).
- C. *Presbyterion* – "council of elders" (cf. Luke 22:66). This is an OT designation for tribal leaders. However, it came to refer to the supreme court in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 22:5).
- D. *Boulē*– This term "council" is used by Josephus (i.e., *Wars* 2:16:2; 5:4:2, but not the NT) to describe several judicial bodies: (1) the Senate in Rome; (2) local Roman courts; (3) the Jewish supreme court in Jerusalem; and (4) local Jewish courts. Joseph of Arimathea is described as a member of the Sanhedrin by a form of this term (i.e., *bouleutēs*, which means "councilor," cf. Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50).

III. Historical Development

Originally Ezra is said to have set up the Great Synagogue (cf. Targum on Song of Songs 6:1) in the post-exilic period, which seems to have become the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day.

- A. The Mishnah (i.e., Talmud) records that there were two major courts in Jerusalem (cf. Sanh. 7:1).
 - 1. One made up of 70 (or 71) members (*Sand.* 1:6 even states that Moses set up the first Sanhedrin in Num. 11, cf. Num. 11:16-25).
 - 2. One made up of 23 members (but this may refer to local synagogue courts).
 - 3. Some Jewish scholars believe there were three 23-member Sanhedrins in Jerusalem. When the three got together they, along with the two leaders, constituted "the Great Sanhedrin" of 71 members (i.e., *Nasi* and *Av Bet Din*).
 - a. one priestly (i.e., Sadducees)
 - b. one legal (i.e., Pharisees)
 - c. one aristocratic (i.e., elders)
- B. In the post-exilic period, the returning Davidic seed was Zerubbabel and the returning Aaronic seed was Joshua. After Zerubbabel's death, no Davidic seed continued, so the judicial mantle passed exclusively to the priests (cf. *I Macc.* 12:6) and local elders (cf. Neh. 2:16; 5:7).
- C. This priestly role in judicial decisions is documented by Diodorus 40:3:4-5 during the Hellenistic period.
- D. This priestly role in government continued during the Selucid period. Josephus quotes Antiochus "the Great" III (223-187 B.C.) in *Antiquities* 12:138-142.
- E. This priestly power continued during the Maccabean period according to Josephus' *Antiquities* 13:10:5-6; 13:15:5.
- F. During the Roman period the governor of Syria (i.e., Gabinius from 57-55 B.C.) established five regional "Sanhedrins" (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 14:5:4; and *Wars* 1:8:5), but this was later annulled by Rome (i.e., 47 B.C.).
- G. The Sanhedrin had a political confrontation with Herod (i.e., *Antiquities* 14:9:3-5) who, in 37 B.C., retaliated and had most of the high court killed (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities* 14:9:4; 15:1:2).

- H. Under the Roman procurators (i.e., A.D. 6-66) Josephus tells us (cf. *Antiquities* 20:200,251) that the Sanhedrin again gained considerable power and influence (cf. Mark 14:55). There are three trials recorded in the NT where the Sanhedrin, under the leadership of the High Priest's family, executes justice.
1. Jesus' trial (cf. Mark 14:53-15:1; John 18:12-23,28-32)
 2. Peter and John (cf. Acts 4:3-6)
 3. Paul (cf. Acts 22:25-30)
- I. When the Jews revolted in A.D. 66, the Romans subsequently destroyed Jewish society and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Sanhedrin was permanently dissolved, although the Pharisees at Jamnia tried to bring a supreme judicial court (i.e. *Beth Din*) back into Jewish religious (but not civil or political) life.

IV. Membership

- A. The first biblical mention of a high court in Jerusalem is II Chr. 19:8-11. It was made up of (1) Levites; (2) priests; and (3) the heads of families (i.e., elders, cf. I Macc. 14:20; II Macc. 4:44).
- B. During the Maccabean period it was dominated by (1) Sadducean priestly families and (2) local aristocracy (cf. I Macc. 7:33; 11:23; 14:28). Later in this period "scribes" (Mosaic lawyers, usually Pharisees) were added, apparently by Alexander Jannaeus' wife Salome (76-67 B.C.). She is even said to have made the Pharisees the predominant group (cf. Josephus' *Wars of the Jews* 1:5:2).
- C. By Jesus' day the court was made up of
1. the families of the High Priests
 2. local men of wealthy families
 3. scribes (cf. 11:27; Luke 19:47)

V. Sources Consulted

- A. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, IVP, pp. 728-732
- B. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 268-273
- C. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 10, pp. 203-204
- D. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, pp. 214-218
- E. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 14, pp. 836-839

☐ **"on the third day"** Jesus specifically mentioned this time element several times, 12:40; 16:4, where it was related to the prophet Jonah and as a sign of His Messiahship. Paul implied in I Cor. 15:4 that it was predicted in the OT. The only two possibilities are Hos. 6:2 and Jonah 1:16. In the context of Jesus' usage it must relate to Jonah.

However, it was not a full 72 hours but only about 36-40. The Jews counted partial days as full days. Their days started at twilight. Jesus died at 3 p.m. on Friday and was buried before 6 p.m. This was counted as one day. He remained in Hades all of the Sabbath, 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Saturday. Then sometime before sunrise on Sunday He arose (see Special Topic: Resurrection at 27:63), thereby, three Jewish days.

16:22 "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him" Peter overstepped his bounds. Jesus used the term "rebuke" in several other strong contexts (cf. 8:26; 12:10; 16:20). Peter's personal feelings for Jesus were superseding God's plan of redemption.

☐ **"This shall never happen to you"** This is literally "mercy on you" which implied "May God have mercy on you so this never happens." This is a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE used for emphasis.

16:23 "Get behind Me, Satan" Peter, who moments before spoke a revelation from God, now speaks temptation from Satan. This was the same temptation Jesus faced in the wilderness, to bypass the cross (cf. Matt: 4:1-11). In this context, Peter was Satan's spokesman!

☐ **"stumbling block"** This referred literally to a baited trap-stick trigger on an animal trap. The word was used metaphorically of an obstacle.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:24-27

²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his

soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.”

16:24 “disciples” This meant “learner.” Jesus’ emphasis was not on an initial decision only but on a continuing and deepening discipleship (cf. 28:19).

☐ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Jesus assumes that people will want to follow Him.

☐ **“he must deny himself”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. There must be a decisive act. Believers must turn away from self-centered lives (the results of the Fall of Genesis 3) in all areas. This concept is similar to repentance.

16:24 “take up his cross” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This same emphasis is recorded in Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; John 12:25. Another decisive act is called for. Condemned criminals had to carry their cross bar to the place of crucifixion (cf. John. 12:24). This was metaphorical of a torturous death, in this context, the death of the self-life (cf. John. 12:24; II Cor. 5:13-14; Gal. 2:20; I John. 3:16).

☐ **“and follow Me”** This is PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. As the two previous phrases were decisive commands (AORIST IMPERATIVES) this one speaks of habitual living. Followership (rabbinical discipleship) in a first century Jewish context had specific requirements. As Jesus called the twelve disciples to be with Him, He calls believers of every age. Jesus poured His life into these men and they had to respond by pouring their lives into others (cf. II Tim. 2:2; I John. 3:16). Jesus often spoke of the radical continuing nature of followership (cf. Matt. 10:37-39; Mark 8:38-39; Luke 9:23-27; 14:25-27; 17:33; John. 12:25).

16:25 The new age is different from the current evil, self-centered age. Humans show that the transition has been made by how they live (cf. Matthew 7 and 13). Living right does not make one right with God (cf. Eph. 2:8-9); confession and faith do that (i.e., 16:16), but it does give evidence a change/transition has been made !

The term “life” (*psuchē*) is equivalent to *nepesh* (BDB 659), which denotes life on planet earth, in this case self-directing life (i.e., human). The new age calls for a radical new orientation. The old age is characterized by a pull toward self (cf. Genesis 3), but the new age is characterized by selflessness. The image of God in humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) was damaged in the Fall. Salvation restores the image so that fellowship with God (i.e., the purpose of creation) is restored! Self is replaced by service, sin by sanctification, me by ministry, more and more for me by less of me and more of Him!

16:26 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant potential future action. Some do gain worldly things but forfeit spiritual, eternal things.

☐ **“what will a man give in exchange for his soul”** Life selfishly lived ends in death, but life given away for Christ’s sake results in eternal life (cf. Mark 8:34-38). Believers are responsible stewards of the gift of physical life and spiritual life!

16:27 “The Son of Man is going to come. . .with His angels” This referred to the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 26:64; Acts 1:11; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 1:10; 4:16; II Thess. 1:7,10; 2:1,8; James 5:7-8; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4,12; I John 2:28; Rev. 1:7). Notice the angels of heaven could be the Father and/or the Son’s angels. This was another way to assert the deity of Jesus. Several times in Matthew the angels are the eschatological gatherers and dividers of humans (cf. 13:39-41,49; 24:31).

☐ **“in the glory of His Father”** In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) which meant “to be heavy.” That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 15:16; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Ex 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people (cf. Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; Num. 14:10).

☐ **“will then repay every man according to his deeds”** This is an allusion to Ps. 62:12 or Pro. 24:12. This judgment of deeds is seen in Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-6; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12. Our life shows our allegiance ! I John and James assert

that how we live gives evidence of the validity of our profession of faith. No fruit—no root! Jesus came as Savior (cf. John 3:16-21), but He will return as Judge (cf. Revelation 19)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:28

²⁸“Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

16:28 This is a difficult verse to interpret. In context it seems to refer to the Second Coming, but Matthew, writing forty plus years after Jesus’ death, realized this was incorrect. It could refer to

1. Jesus’ ascension
2. the kingdom which was already present in Jesus
3. the Parousia or Second Coming
4. the Spirit’s coming and equipping at Pentecost
5. the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman General Titus
6. the transfiguration recorded in the next chapter (note the proximity in Mark 9:1 and 9:2)

Because of the immediate context of chapter 17, the sixth option is best. See special topic on the Kingdom of God at 4:17 and Reigning in the Kingdom of God at 5:3.

▣ **“Truly”** See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ **“taste death”** This is a Hebraic idiom for dying (cf. I Sam. 15:32).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are vv. 13-20 so pivotal for the Roman Catholic Church?
2. Did the disciples recognize Peter’s supremacy?
3. What is Jesus referring to by the word “church”? (v. 18)
4. Does verse 18 imply an active or passive attack on the church?
5. What are the keys of the kingdom? (v. 19)
6. Why did Jesus insist that they tell no one He was the Messiah, God’s son?
7. Why did the disciples balk at Jesus’ revelation of His future?
8. What does it mean to die to self?
9. How do you understand verse 28?

MATTHEW 17

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Transfiguration of Jesus	Jesus Transfigured on the Mount	The Transfiguration	The Transfiguration	The Transfiguration
17:1-8	17:1-13	17:1-8	17:1-4 17:5	17:1-8
17:9-13		Prophecies About Elijah 17:9-13	17:6-8 17:9 17:10 17:11-12 17:13	The Question about Elijah 17:9-13
The Healing of a Boy with a Demon	A Boy is Healed	An Epileptic Child Healed	Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon	The Epileptic Demoniac
17:14-20	17:14-21	17:14-20	17:14-16 17:17-18 17:19 17:20-21	17:14-18 17:19-20
17:21		17:21		17:21 (not included)
Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection	Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection	The Passion Foretold a Second Time	Jesus Speaks Again about His Death	Second Prophecy of the Passion
17:22-23	17:22-23	17:22-23	17:22-23b 17:23c	17:22-23
Payment of Temple Tax	Peter and His Master Pay Their Taxes	Money for the Temple Tax	Payment of the Temple Tax	The Temple Tax Paid by Jesus and Peter
17:24-27	17:24-27	17:24-27	17:24 17:25a 17:25b 17:26a 17:26b-27	17:24-27

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF VERSES 1-27

- A. The transfiguration, v. 1-13 (cf. Matt. 17:1-11; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36; II Pet. 1:16-18)
- B. Healing of the demonized boy, v. 14-23 (cf. Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-42)
- C. The Temple tax for Peter and Jesus, v. 24-27 (this was unique to Matthew)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1-8

¹Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ²And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. ³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” ⁶When the disciples heard *this*, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. ⁷And Jesus came to *them* and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” ⁸And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

17:1 “six days later” The parallel passage in Mark 9 also has six days, but Luke 9:28 records eight days. This is not so much a contradiction as it is two different ways of describing a week.

☐ **“Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother”** These men made up an inner circle, not of Jesus’ favorites, but of those who possibly were more spiritually attuned and teachable (cf. 2:13; 4:5; 12:45). James died early. God is no respecter of persons. See chart at 10:2.

☐ **“and led them up on a high mountain by themselves”** Matthew apparently deliberately compares Moses on the mountain in Exod. 19:24; 24:1 and this transfiguration experience of Jesus. The four areas of comparison would be

1. they both were up on a mountain
2. God spoke out of the cloud in both instances (cf. Exod. 24:16)
3. Moses’ face shone, (cf. Exod. 34:29), and Jesus’ whole body shone
4. those around Moses were afraid, as were those accompanying Jesus

There has been much discussion about which mountain this was. The traditional site is Mt. Tabor, but this is much too far from Caesarea Philippi. Some say it was Mt. Hermon, which is quite possible. More probably it was Mt. Miron, the highest mountain in the boundary limits of the Promised Land; it is also located on the way from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum.

17:2 “and He was transfigured before them” This is a compound Greek term from “after” (*meta*) and “form” (*morphē*). The term “transfiguration” comes from the Latin Vulgate. We get the English term metamorphosis from the Greek compound term. The theological connotation is that Jesus’ eternal divine nature broke through His human nature. The term is also used of what happens in a spiritual sense to believers (cf. Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 3:18).

We learn from Luke 9:28 that this occurred while they were praying. It may have even been at night after a long walk up this mountain; therefore, the disciples would have been tired and sleepy. This event has some parallels to the Garden of Gethsemane experience.

▣ **“His face shone like the sun”** This seems to be another feature of Matthew’s Gospel that attempts to present Jesus as the new Moses, Moses’ face also glowed (cf. Exod. 34:29-35).

This is not to be understood as an equivalency .

1. Moses’ face faded
2. Moses concealed the fading
3. Moses received the word of God, Jesus is the word of God (cf. 5:17-48)

▣ **“His garments became as white as light”** White is uniquely associated with heaven/heavenly beings/glorified saints.

1. Jesus’ transfiguration
2. angels at His tomb, Matt. 28:3
3. angels at His ascension, Acts 1:8
4. angels (lit. “elders”) around the throne, 4:4
5. angelic heavenly army, Rev. 19:14
6. glorified saints, Rev. 3:4-5,18; 6:11; 7:9,13

17:3 “Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him” There has been much discussion as to why it was Moses and Elijah. Some say this represents the Law and the Prophets. They were both eschatological figures, Moses out of Deuteronomy 18 and Elijah out of Malachi 4. Others say that both of them had unusual deaths. Both of them represented the old order and were encouraging Jesus as He was inaugurating the new order. How the disciples knew that it was Moses and Elijah is uncertain unless they were dressed in a characteristic way, by their speech, or Jesus told them.

Like the miracles and predictions of Jesus, this experience was as much for these disciples’ faith and spiritual growth (cf. v. 5) as it was for Jesus’ encouragement.

Just one added point, this shows the believers of the OT were still alive! It affirms a conscious afterlife after a physical death.

17:4 “Peter said to Jesus” Peter interrupted and answered a question that was never asked, which was characteristic of Peter.

▣ **“I will make three tabernacles here”** The implication was “Let’s stay up here (FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE). This experience was so wonderful and spiritual.” In some ways this functions like the temptation experiences in Matthew 4—another way for Jesus to bypass the cross. This was possibly the reason why this account was preserved for us—Jesus showing Himself to be truly God to the disciples and their attempt to turn Him away (cf. 16:22-23) from His predestined death (cf. Mark 10:45). In the same literary context (cf. Matt. 19:16-17), Jesus tells again of His impending death (cf. 17:9-13, 22-23).

17:5 “a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud said” This bright cloud was related to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory of the Old Testament, which was a symbol of the personal presence of God. This cloud appeared once before at Jesus’ baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17). Peter alludes to it later in II Pet. 1:17-18. There may even be some connection between God speaking out of this cloud and the rabbinical concept of the *bath kol*, which was the way during the interbiblical period of confirming the will of God since there was no prophet.

This phrase “overshadowed them” is from the same Greek root used to refer to the conception of Jesus by the Spirit in the virgin Mary in Luke 1:35.

What God said is significant. The parallel in Luke it combined a quote from Ps. 2:7 (My Son) and Isa. 42:1 (My Chosen One, cf. Luke 9:35). Psalm 2 is a royal Davidic Psalm and Isaiah 42 is the beginning of the Servant Songs of Isaiah. Here we have the full deity of Jesus combined with the ministry of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (cf. Mark 9:28; Luke 9:28-36). This reflects the prophecy of Gen. 3:15.

▣ **“listen to Him”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE which reflects Deut. 18:15,18-19 and is implied in Isa. 42:1. To be a follower of Jesus not only invoked a theological understanding of His person and mission, but also an obedience (note. Deut. 18:20)!

17:6 “they fell face down to the ground and were terrified” The people of the Bible believed that to see God was to die (cf. Exod. 33:20-23; Jdgs. 6:22-23; 13:22; John. 1:18; 6:46; Col. 1:15; I Tim. 6:16; I John. 4:12). God’s voice terrified these Apostles as it had earlier terrified the people of God at Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 19:16). Remember, Matthew presented Jesus as the second law giver, or the second Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15).

17:7 “Jesus came to them and touched them” They were asleep (cf. Luke 9:32). This may have been a nighttime experience where the glory of Jesus may have shone all the more brilliantly against the background of the night sky. This touch was a gesture of Jesus’ care for them.

☐ **“Get up, and do not be afraid”** These are both IMPERATIVES. They address the issue at hand.

1. no we can not stay here on the mountain (AORIST IMPERATIVE)
2. do not be afraid of this experience of the closeness of God (PRESENT IMPERATIVE)

This experience was to promote action, not inaction, and courage in the task, not fear!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:9-13

⁹As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.” ¹⁰And His disciples asked Him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹¹And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹²but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” ¹³Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

17:9 “Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead’” This is the Messianic secret (cf. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; Mark 1:44; 3:12; 5:47; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9; Luke 4:41; 5:14; 8:56; 9:21). “Tell” is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE used in an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE sense. Luke 9:30 says that they told no one. The problem was, what were they going to tell? Jesus was already having problems being known as a miracle healer and the gospel was not yet finished. There would come a time, as Jesus mentioned in v. 9, after He had been raised from the dead (He told them this several times in several ways, but they never seemed to hear it or get its implications), that the theological content of this encounter would be understandable.

Verse 9 also implies that this was a reference to the sufferings of Jesus (cf. 16:21 ff), which shows that Peter’s attempt to keep them on the mountain was another subterfuge of Satan.

17:10 “His disciples asked Him, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first’” This referred to the prophecy of Mal. 3:1 and 4:5. There has been much discussion about the answer which Jesus gave. He stated specifically that Elijah had already come in the ministry of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:10, 14; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:17). However, when the Pharisees asked John in the Gospel of John (1:20-25) if he was Elijah, he flatly denied it. This seeming contradiction can be handled by the fact that John denied that he was a resuscitated Elijah, but Jesus affirmed that John symbolically fulfilled the preparation ministry of Elijah. They both dressed and acted in similar ways, so the identification would be obvious in the minds of the Jews who knew about Elijah and who heard and saw John the Baptist (Luke 1:17).

☐ **“So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands”** This is a recurrent theme after Peter’s confession (cf. 16:21; 17:9, 12, 22-23; 20:18-19). He told them about His suffering, but if they could have heard, He also told them of His resurrection. A suffering Messiah was so alien to their Jewish traditions that they simply could not receive it!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:14-18

¹⁴When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, falling on his knees before Him and saying, ¹⁵“Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

17:15 “Lord, have mercy on my son” The title “Lord” (*kurios*) can simply mean “sir” or “mister” (lit. *kurie*), yet in some contexts it taken on theological connotations. This is probably one of them.

The man’s request is an implied question. Will Jesus have mercy (AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE) as the man requested? This is the question which the OT had predicted, the Messiah would have mercy (cf. Isa. 35:2-6; 61:1-2). Jesus’ power and compassion (cf. 9:27; 15:22; Mark 10:47,48; Luke 17:13) were the “signs” that the Jewish leadership sought!

☐

NASB, JB “he is a lunatic”
NKJV, NRSV,
TEV “he is an epileptic”
NJB “he is demented”

A much more detailed account of this ailment is found in Mark 9:18-20. The term “epilepsy” was literally the term “moon struck” or “lunatic.” This particular illness was caused by a demon (cf. v. 18). There is a major attempt in the New Testament to differentiate between demon possession, which often causes physical ailments, and physical disease itself (cf. 4:24). This was an account of an exorcism, not a healing.

17:16 “I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him” This was highly unusual, for 10:1,8 tells us they had this delegated power. The exact reason for their failure in this instance was specified as their lack of faith and prayer. A much more detailed account of the dialogue between the father and Jesus is recorded in Mark 9:21-24.

17:17 “and Jesus answered and said, ‘You unbelieving and perverse generation’” This was an allusion to Deut. 32:5,20. In Jesus’ temptation experience (i.e., Matthew; Luke 4), He quoted Deuteronomy three times. He must have known and loved this book.

The textual question is to whom Jesus is speaking.

1. the disciples (cf. vv. 19-20)
2. the man/the crowd/that generation
3. the Jewish leaders
4. fallen humanity in general

It is interesting that “generation” often has a negative connotation (cf. Exod. 1:6; Deut. 1:35; 32:5; Ps. 12:7). Notice how these unbelievers are characterized.

1. evil and adulterous, Matt. 12:39
2. faithless and perverse, Matt. 17:17
3. adulterous and sinful, Mark 8:38
4. unbelieving or faithless, Mark 9:19
5. wicked, Luke 11:29
6. crooked, Acts 2:40
7. crooked and perverse, Phil. 2:15

17:18 “the boy was cured at once” For a much more graphic account, see Mark 9:26. It must be remembered that each of the Gospel writers recorded these accounts in his own way for his own unique purposes and audiences. Therefore, it is important to try to understand each of them individually before consulting the others and combining the information (cf. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart in *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 113-134).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:19-21

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” ²⁰And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” ²¹“But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”]

17:19 “Why could we not drive it out” Jesus answers this question in v. 20 where He said, “You have so little faith.” This was a repeated comment by Jesus (cf. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). The Apostles were not super saints. There are no super saints!

17:20

NASB	“the littleness of your faith”
NKJV	“your unbelief”
NRSV	“your little faith”
TEV	“do not have enough faith”
NJB	“you have so little faith”

The oldest Greek manuscripts, including \aleph and B, have “little faith” (*olieopistis*), while others including C, D, L & W, have “unbelief” (*apistis*). Because the first term was so rare it was probably original. The UBS⁴ gives it an “A” rating.

☐ **“if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move over here to there’”** The mustard seed was the smallest seed known to the Jewish people. Jesus was not emphasizing the power of human faith itself, but the object of their faith. Jesus was not disparaging their need for faith; it is crucial (cf. Heb. 11:1). From 21:21 it seems that “little faith” is characterized by Jesus as “doubt.” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE; He assumed they would have faith. The concept of a mountain being moved was a proverbial way of referring to a major problem. This can be seen in Isa. 40:4; 49:11; 54:10. Some believe that Jesus gestured to the mountain where He had just been transfigured the night before.

17:21 Verse 21 is not found in the Greek text of either Siniaticus (\aleph) or Vaticanus (B). It seems to have been incorporated by very early copyists from the parallel account in Mark 9:29, where it is included in the original text. The UBS⁴ gives its exclusion an “A” rating.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:22-23

²²And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; ²³and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved.

17:22

NASB “while they were gathering together in Galilee”
NKJV “while they were staying in Galilee”
NRSV “as they were gathering in Galilee”
TEV “when the disciples all came together in Galilee”
JB “one day when they were together in Galilee”

There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point. The ancient manuscripts \aleph , and B and the Greek text used by Origen have “all came together,” while C, D, L & W have “abode.” The first term was misunderstood by early scribes and changed to the more familiar text. The reason the twelve were divided into four groups of three was that they took turns traveling with Jesus and returning home for brief periods to check on their families. This verse speaks of the disciples and Jesus meeting at a certain place.

17:22-23 “the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised again on the third day” Jesus showed His prophetic insight about His suffering and death (cf. 16:21ff.; 17:9,12; John 10:11,15,17,18). Jesus was beginning to lay the foundation for the disciples’ understanding of what was going to occur during the last week of His life. From this passage we learn that Jesus would be turned over to the Gentiles (i.e., the Romans, cf. 20:19).

17:23 “and they were deeply grieved” Both of the Gospel parallels in Mark (9:32) and Luke (9:45) add that they did not understand but were afraid to ask. It is amazing that the Sanhedrin understood Jesus’ prediction about His resurrection but the disciples were absolutely surprised by His appearance in the upper room (cf. Luke 24:36-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:24-27

²⁴When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the two-drachma *tax* came to Peter and said, “Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma *tax*?” ²⁵He said, “Yes.” And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?” ²⁶When Peter said, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are exempt. ²⁷However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.”

17:24

NASB “the two-drachma *tax*”
NKJV, NRSV,
TEV “the temple tax”
NJB “the half shekel”

This referred to a half shekel tax which was voluntarily given annually by Jewish men between the age of twenty and fifty. It was to pay for temple maintenance. It was due some time in March and, therefore, if our understanding of the time setting of this passage is correct, Jesus was late paying this tax. This tax was possibly based rabbinically on Moses’ appeal in Exod. 30:11-16 for the Tabernacle. Although it was a voluntary tax, it was considered to be important and obligatory by orthodox Jews. The coin found in the fish’s mouth would pay the tax for both Peter and Jesus.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COINS IN USE IN PALESTINE IN JESUS’ DAY

A. Copper coins

1. *cherma* - little value (cf. John 2:15)
2. *chalchos* - little value (cf. Matt. 10:9; Mark 12:41)
3. *assarion* - a Roman copper coin worth about 1/16 of a *dēnarius* (cf. Matt. 10:29)
4. *kodrantes* - a Roman copper coin worth 1/64 of a *dēnarius* (cf. Matt. 5:26)
5. *lepton* - a Jewish copper coin worth about 1/128 of a *dēnarius* (cf. Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2)
6. *quadrans/farthing* - a Roman copper coin of little value

B. Silver coins

1. *arguros* (“silver coin”) - much more valuable than copper or bronze coins (cf. Matt. 10:9; 26:15)
2. *dēnarius* - a Roman silver coin worth a day’s labor (cf. Matt. 18:28; Mark 6:37)
3. *drachmē* - a Greek silver coin equivalent in value to a *dēnarius* (cf. Luke 15:9)
4. *di-drachmon* - a double *drachmas* equaled a Jewish ½ shekel (cf. Matt. 17:24)
5. *statēr* - a silver coin worth about four *dēnarii* (cf. Matt. 17:27)

C. Gold coins - *chrysolos* (“gold coins”) - most valuable coins (cf. Matt. 10:9)

D. General terms for weights of metals

1. *minna* - Latin *mina*, a weight of metal equivalent to 100 *dēnarii* (cf. Luke 19:13)
2. *talanton* - a Greek unit of weight (cf. Matt. 18:24; 25:15,16,20,24,25,28)
 - a. silver worth 6,000 *dēnarii*
 - b. gold worth 180,000 *dēnarii*
3. *sheqel* - Jewish OT weight of silver (cf. Gen. 23:15; 37:28; Exod. 21:32)
 - a. *pīm* - 2/3 shekel
 - b. *beka* - ½ shekel
 - c. *gerah* - 1/20 shekel

Larger units

- a. *maneh* - 50 shekels
- b. *kikkar* - 3,000 shekels

17:25-27 This verse shows Jesus claiming exemption from the tax because of who He was, yet He paid the tax in order to fulfill all righteousness (cf. 3:15). Jesus wanted to reach His contemporary Jewish culture.

17:25 “Jesus spoke to him first” Did Jesus overhear the conversation or was He using His foreknowledge? This question comes up again and again in the Gospels!

☐ **“customs or poll-tax”** In this paragraph there are three different taxes addressed.

1. the Jewish tax (two drachma, v. 24)
2. local taxes (customs, v. 25)
3. poll-tax (Roman imperial tax, cf. 22:17)

17:26 “the sons are exempt” This is a powerful statement of Jesus’ royal Messiahship. He is the true, ideal Davidic King and His followers are the royal children who pay no taxes! What is surprising is that the Jews (i.e., the Jewish collection of the temple tax) are depicted as not children!

17:27 Many have criticized this account because it seems to be Jesus using His Messianic powers for personal purposes. It was the ongoing exercise of Jesus’ miraculous powers that was used to train the disciples and increase their faith. In this account, Jesus showed His power over nature and His foreknowledge, which would help Peter in the days to come when he experienced difficult times in his own pilgrimage of faith. It was recorded for us!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are the same events recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels?
2. Why do the details sometimes differ between these accounts in the other Gospels?
3. Why did Jesus choose an inner circle of disciples?
4. Why did Moses and Elijah appear to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration?
5. What is the significance of God's statement in combining Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42?
6. How is chapter 17 related to chapter 16 in the prediction of Jesus' suffering and death?
7. Why is the phrase "Son of Man" so applicable to Jesus?
8. Was John the Baptist Elijah reborn?
9. How is faith related to exorcism and healing?
10. What are demons? Are they still in our world?
11. Does the term "mountain" in v. 20 refer to physical manipulation of objects or to dealing with life's problems?
12. If Jesus predicted His own betrayal, death and resurrection so often, why were these events so surprising to the disciples?

MATTHEW 18

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Greatest in the Kingdom 18:1-5	Who is Greatest? 18:1-5	Sayings on Humility and Forgiveness 18:1-5	Who is the Greatest? 8:1 18:2-5	Who is the Greatest? 18:1-4
Temptations to Sin 18:6-9	Jesus Warns of Offenses 18:6-9	Warnings of Hell 18:6-7 18:8-9	Temptations to Sin 18:6-7 18:8-9	On Leading Others Astray 18:5-7 18:8-9
The Parable of the Lost Sheep 18:10-14	The Parable of the Lost Sheep 18:10-14	The Lost Sheep 18:10-14	The Parable of the Lost Sheep 18:10-11 18:12-14	18:10 18:11 (not included) The Lost Sheep 18:12-14
A Brother Who Sins 18:15-17 18:18-20	Dealing With a Sinning Brother 18:15-20	Discipline Among Followers 18:15-20	A Brother Who Sins 18:15-17 Prohibiting and Permitting 18:18 18:19-20	Brotherly Correction 18:15-17 18:18 Prayer in Common 18:19-20
The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant 18:21-35	The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant 18:21-35	Forgiveness 18:21-22 18:23-35	The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant 18:21 18:22-27 18:28-34 18:35	Forgiveness of Injuries 18:21-22 Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor 18:23-35

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This context is not addressed to children, but to new believing adults using children as an object lesson.
- B. This context does not relate to winning the lost, but to the characteristics of believers.
- C. The Church discipline of verses 15-19 is related to the issue of our love for one another in Christ, cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; I Corinthians 8; 10:23-33.
- D. The parable of verses 21-35 is related to believers' treatment of weak or new Christians based on God's treatment of believers in Christ. Forgiveness issues in forgiving! It is not the basis but the result of God's action in our lives!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-6

¹At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²And he called a child to Himself and set him before them, ³and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

18:1 "the disciples came to Jesus" This shows that Jesus was speaking to believers, not unbelievers!

▣ **"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven"** This question set the stage for all that followed. See Mark 9:33-34; Luke 9:46-48. The question showed that the disciples still radically misunderstood the nature of the kingdom. It also shows that the disciples did not consider Peter as greatest!

18:2 "a child" Mark 9:33 suggests that this was Peter's child.

18:3 "Truly" See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ **"unless you are converted"** "Convert" denotes a conversion experience whereby an inner repentance is expressed in a change of lifestyle (NRSV, NJB). In John 12:40 this word is used to translate Isa. 6:10, where it refers to "repentance" (Hebrew *shub*, BDB 996). Notice that in v. 4 "humility" is parallel with "convert." Children innocently trust and depend on others. They are readily teachable and obedient to authority (here divine authority).

This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The AORIST TENSE implied a decisive act, while the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD showed there was an element of contingency and choice involved. The PASSIVE VOICE implied God's initiative (cf. John. 6:44,65).

▣ **"you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"** This is a STRONG DOUBLE negative meaning, "never, no never under any circumstances." Also note that entrance into the Kingdom is immediate! Trusting Jesus and His message is tantamount to entering to new age! The Kingdom was available to all who heard and responded to Jesus.

18:3,4,6 “and become like children. . .child. . .one of these little ones” These statements all relate to new, innocent, immature believing adults, and not to children. However, the trusting dependence of children is the proper attitude for adults.

18:34 “you will not enter into the kingdom. . .of heaven” In context this referred to (1) how someone comes to Christ and (2) how one continues in Christ.

18:5 This is similar to the emphasis of 10:40. Also notice Matt. 10:40; 25:35-45; Luke 10:16; Acts 9:4; and I Cor. 8:12. Jesus is fully identified with His followers!

18:6 “it would be better” Death, though traumatic, is a one-time event, but judgment has eternal consequences (cf. 25:31-46). Another “it would have been better” statement is found in II Pet. 2:20-22.

▣ **“a heavy millstone”** This referred to the large top stone pulled by animals for grinding grain.

▣ **“to be drowned in the depth of the sea”** The Jews were fearful of water, as are many desert people. Therefore, this phrase related to a terrible physical death which was better than leading new believers to sin (cf. vv. 8-10; Rom. 14). See Special Topic: Degrees of Rewards and Punishments at 5:12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:7

⁷Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!

18:7 “woe to the world. . .woe to that man” This was put in the literary form of the OT prophets, a funeral dirge which symbolized the judgment of God (cf. 11:21; 18:7; 23:13,15,16,23,25,27,29; 24:19; 26:24; Luke 17:1-2). Causing new believers to stumble has eternal consequences!

▣ **“stumbling blocks”** This same NOUN (*skandalon*, cf. Luke 17:1) was used in 16:23 for Peter’s statements. It refers literally to a baited animal trap trigger (cf. LXX of Amos 3:5). New believers are vulnerable to deception and trickery by false teachers (Jewish and later false Christian teachers, cf. 7:15-27; I Tim. 4:1-5; II Tim. 2:14-26; 3:1-9; II Peter 2).

The VERB is recurrent in Matthew’s Gospel (cf. 5:29,30; 11:6; 13:21,57; 15:12; 17:27; 18:6,8,9; 24:10; 26:31,33). Problems and temptations are always present!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:8-9

⁸If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. ⁹If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

18:8-9 “If. . .if” These are both FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. These shocking hypothetical statements stress the seriousness of personal sin, as well as sinners that causes others to stumble (cf. vv. 6,7).

18:8,9 “cut it off. . .pluck it out” These were not meant to be taken literally, but to show the seriousness of sin and its consequences (cf. Matt. 5:29-30).

▣ **“eternal fire”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ETERNAL

Robert B. Girdlestone, in his book *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, has an interesting comment on the word “eternal”:

“The adjective *aiōnios* is used more than forty times in the N.T. with respect to *eternal life*, which is regarded partly as a present gift, partly as a promise for the future. It is also applied to God’s endless existence in Rom. 16.26; to the endless efficacy of Christ’s atonement in Heb. 9.12, 13.20; and to past ages in Rom. 16.25, 2 Tim. 1,9, Titus 1.2.

This word is used with reference to *eternal fire*, Matt. 18.8,25. 41, Jude 7; *eternal punishment*, Matt. 25.46; *eternal judgment or condemnation*, Mark 3.29, Heb. 6.2; *eternal destruction*, 2 Thess. 1.9. The word in these passages implies *finality*, and apparently signifies that when these judgments shall be inflicted, the time of probation, change, or the chance of retrieving one's fortune, will have gone by absolutely and for ever. We understand very little about the future, about the relation of human life to the rest of existence, and about the moral weight of unbelief, as viewed in the light of eternity. If, on the one hand, it is wrong to add to God's word, on the other we must not take away from it; and if we stagger under the doctrine of eternal punishment as it is set forth in Scripture, we must be content to wait, cleaving to the Gospel of God's love in Christ, while acknowledging that there is a dark background which we are unable to comprehend" (pp. 318-319).

18:9 “the fiery hell” Gehenna is from two Hebrew words *ge* meaning “valley” and *henna* meaning “sons of Hinnom” (cf. II Kgs. 23:10; II Cor. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31). This was the valley outside of Jerusalem where the Phoenician fire god was worshiped by child sacrifice (the practice was called *molech*). The Jews turned it into a garbage dump. See Special topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:22. Jesus Himself used this place metaphorically to describe Hell. Only Jesus uses this term (except one verse in James 3:6).

This is a frightening verse. However, one must remember the use of overstatement (hyperbole) in Jesus' teaching. The context relates to followers, believers. Yet Jesus wants to warn even His own followers of the need for a continuing and loving faith (cf. Matt. 5:22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:10-11

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” ¹¹“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”]

18:10 “see that you do not despise one of these little ones” This whole section (i.e., vv. 9,10-11) expresses this same truth.

☐ **“their angels”** This could be understood to teach that all believers have an individual guardian angel (cf. Ps. 91:11; Acts 12:15; Heb. 1:14). This is an interesting concept, but there is so little biblical evidence on which to build a doctrine. Psalm 24:7 is the same truth, but in a corporate sense.

18:11 This verse is not in the ancient Greek manuscripts \aleph , B, L, or the Greek texts used by Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome. Nor is it found in the Syriac and Coptic versions. It was possibly not an original part of Matthew. It is an addition from Luke 19:10 by early copyists. The UBS⁴ rates its exclusion as “B” (almost certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:12-14

¹²“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? ¹³If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. ¹⁴So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.”

18:12-14 “a hundred sheep” This parable relates in context to believers who have become backslidden and then returned to God. Believers are to help and restore one another (cf. Gal. 6:1-3). In Luke 15:4-7 this same parable refers to the spiritually lost, self righteous Pharisees. This shows that Jesus used the same parables in different ways to different audiences.

18:13 “if” Both verses 12 and 13 are THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, which meant possible future action.

☐ **“Truly”** See Special Topic at 5:18.

18:14 “the will of your Father who is in heaven” See Special Topic at 7:21.

☐ **“that one of these little ones perish”** There are several Special Topics that relate to this phrase.

1. Destruction (*appollumi*) at 2:13
2. Apostasy (*aphistami*) at 7:21
3. Perseverance at 10:22

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:15-18

15“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. **16**But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. **17**If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. **18**Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

18:15-17 “go and show him his fault in private” This THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is followed by two IMPERATIVES.

1. Go, PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
2. Reprove, AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (only here in Matthew, but note its use in John 3:20; 8:46; 16:8; and by Paul in Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 5:20)

This is practical wisdom on how to deal with sin in a congregation. It relates to a later period in church history. Notice the steps.

1. go to the offender privately (v. 15)
2. take one or two witnesses and go again
3. bring the matter before the whole congregation
4. cut off fellowship

These guidelines were not addressed to leadership only, but to all believers. We are our brother’s keeper (cf. Luke 17:3; Gal. 6:1-2). The goal of church discipline must always be redemptive not punitive. However, the reputation of the body and the peace of the body as well as the health (spiritual and physical) of the sinning saints must be dealt with.

18:15 “If your brother sins” This paragraph deals with church discipline in light of verses 1-14. This is a series of THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, 15 (twice), 16, 17 (twice). This refers to possible future action.

▣ “sins” There is a Greek manuscript variation here. The earliest complete Greek uncial New Testaments, \aleph and B, do not have “against you” after “sins.” It does appear in the uncial manuscripts D, L, and W, as well as the Vulgate and Armenian translations. The UBS⁴ text includes it in brackets and gives its inclusion a “C” rating.

▣ “you have won your brothers” This phrase parallels James 5:15,19-20.

18:16 “so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses” This is a quote from Deut. 19:15. The OT required at least two witnesses to confirm a matter in court (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6).

18:17 “the church” For a discussion of the origin of *ekklesia* see note at 16:18. This seems like a reference to a later period when groups of believers must discipline their members. Several of Jesus’ statements do not fit this early period of His ministry, but are prophetic of the church’s future needs. Matthew, living in this later period, would be reminded (by the Spirit) of Jesus’ earlier statements, which only after Pentecost did he fully understand.

The term “church” appears only in the Gospels, two times in Matthew. The term is common in Acts, which shows that Luke was conscious of a change after Pentecost.

▣ “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” Matthew was written to Jews. Gentiles were regarded as unclean and tax-collection was a profession despised by the Jews (cf. 5:46; 9:10-11; 11:19). This phrase with its two descriptive examples, would have been misunderstood by Gentiles, so it is not in the other Gospels.

18:18 “Truly” See Special Topic at 5:18.

▣ “I say to you” “You” is PLURAL. Jesus was addressing the Twelve not just Peter as in 16:19.

▣ “bind. . . loose” These words might alternatively be rendered “forbid” and “permit.” They were both rabbinical terms for legal decisions about how the Law should be applied to a current situation. See discussion at 16:19. In John 20:23 these terms also refer to the forgiveness of sins, as it does here!

▣ “shall have been bound in heaven. . . shall have been loosed in heaven” These PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES were a roundabout way of saying that something already is. This passage does not assert human’s initiative in spiritual matters, but God’s will being fulfilled on earth by the Spirit’s guidance of His people (cf. Matt. 16:19-20; John. 20:23). Church discipline should always be redemptive (cf. Gal. 6:1-10), following God’s dealing with believers.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:19-20

¹⁹"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

18:19 "if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask" This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which meant potential future action. The context relates this promise to church discipline and our treatment of other believers.

18:19 This verse must be taken in the context of God's will being revealed by the Spirit from v. 18. Believers are only promised answers under certain spiritual circumstances. The worst thing that could happen to most modern believers is that God answer their selfish, materialistic prayers.

The Bible presents a paradoxical view on prayer. Some passages speak of its unlimited scope and promise of answers (cf. Matt. 18:19; John 14:13-14; 15:7,16; 16:23). Other passages speak of prayer being limited by

1. our persistence (cf. Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8)
2. our attitude (cf. Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:23-24; Luke 18:9-14; James 1:6-7; 4:1-10)
3. the will of God (cf. I John. 3:22; 5:14-15)

Theologically believers agree that

1. God is affected by His children's prayers
2. the greatest gift is not the answer but the fellowship with the Father
3. all prayer is answered
4. prayer does change our lives and the lives of those we pray for

However, when all is said and done, there is still "mystery" in prayer. It is best summed up by the truth that God has chosen in His sovereignty to limit Himself to the prayers of His children. We have not because we asked not or asked amiss.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAYER, UNLIMITED YET LIMITED

A. The Synoptic Gospels

1. believers are encouraged to persevere in prayer and God will provide "good things" (Matt.) or "His Spirit" (Luke) Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13)
2. in the context of church discipline believers (two) are encouraged to unite in prayer (Matt. 18:19)
3. in the context of the judgment of Judaism believers are to ask in faith without doubting (Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:23-24)
4. in the context of two parables (vv. 1-8, the unrighteous judge and vv. 9-14, the Pharisee and the sinner) believers are encouraged to act differently from the godless judge and self-righteous Pharisee. God hears the humble and repentant (Luke 18:1-14)

B. John's writings

1. in the context of the man born blind whom Jesus heals, the true blindness of the Pharisees is revealed. Jesus' prayer (as anyone's) are answered because He knew God and lived accordingly (John 9:31).
2. John's Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)
 - a. 14:12-14 - believing prayer characterized by
 - 1) coming from believers
 - 2) asking in Jesus' name
 - 3) desiring that the Father be glorified
 - 4) keeping commandments (v. 15)
 - b. 15:7-10 - believers prayer characterized by
 - 1) abiding in Jesus
 - 2) His word abiding in them
 - 3) desiring that the Father be glorified
 - 4) producing much fruit
 - 5) keeping commandments (v. 10)
 - c. 15:15-17 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) their election
 - 2) their fruit bearing

- 3) asking in Jesus' name
- 4) keeping command to love one another
- d. 16:23-24 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) asking in Jesus' name
 - 2) desiring that joy be made full
- 3. John's first letter (I John)
 - a. 3:22-24 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) keeping His commandments (vv. 22,24)
 - 2) living appropriately
 - 3) believing in Jesus
 - 4) loving one another
 - 5) abiding in Him and He in us
 - 6) having the gift of the Spirit
 - b. 5:14-16 - believers' prayer characterized by
 - 1) confidence in God
 - 2) according to His will
 - 3) believers pray for each other
- C. James
 - 1. 1:5-7 - believers confronted with various trials are called on to ask for wisdom without doubting
 - 2. 4:2-3 - believers must ask with proper motives
 - 3. 5:13-18 - believers faced with health problems are encouraged
 - a. to ask elders to pray
 - b. to pray in faith will save
 - c. to ask that their sins will be forgiven
 - d. to confess sin to one another and pray for one another (similar to I John 5:16)

The key to effective prayer is Christlikeness. This is what praying in Jesus' name means. The worst thing God could do for most Christians is to answer their selfish prayers! In one sense all prayers are answered. The most valuable aspect of prayer is that the believer has spent time with God, trusting God.

18:20 The number mentioned is the same as verse 16. This could be a husband and wife (family setting) or two or more believers (worship or disciple setting). However, it may be implied (i.e., an application) that when believers meet to pray Jesus is there (i.e., 28:20)!

☐ **“in My name”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

This was a common NT phrase for the personal presence and active power of the Triune God in the church. It was not a magical formula, but an appeal to God's character.

Often this phrase refers to Jesus as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:11)

- 1. at the profession of one's faith in Jesus at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Cor. 1:13,15; James 2:7)
- 2. at an exorcism (cf. Matt. 7:22; Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 19:13)
- 3. at a healing (cf. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 9:34; James 5:14)
- 4. at an act of ministry (cf. Matt. 10:42; 18:5; Luke 9:48)
- 5. at the time of church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15-20)
- 6. during preaching to Gentiles (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 9:15; 15:17; Rom. 1:5)

7. in prayer (cf. John 14:13-14; 15:2,16; 16:23; I Cor. 1:2)

8. a way of referring to Christianity (cf. Acts 26:9; I Cor. 1:10; II Tim. 2:19; James 2:7; I Pet. 4:14)

Whatever we do as proclaimers, ministers, helpers, healers, exorcists, etc., we do in His character, His power, His provisions—in His Name!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:21-22

²¹Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

18:21

NASB, NKJV,

TEV

“seventy times seven”

NRSV, NJB

“seventy-seven times”

Peter was trying to be generous by using seven times (cf. Luke 17:4)! The Babylonian Talmud had three times as the maximum (cf. Amos 1:3, 6; 2:6). Jesus took forgiveness to the new metaphorical height of 7 x 70 (or possibly 77). This does not mean on the 491st time believers do not forgive, but that covenant brothers must always be ready to forgive other covenant brothers (cf. Luke 17:4) as God forgives them (cf. v. 35). The new covenant has a radically new orientation to life (cf. v. 15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:23-35

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell to *the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ ²⁷And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began to choke him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ ²⁹So his fellow slave fell to *the ground* and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ ³⁰But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. ³¹So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. ³²Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all the debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. ³⁵My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

18:23 “a king” This parable is unique to Matthew. In Aramaic (Jesus spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew) this term could have meant “a king’s official.”

18:24 “ten thousand talents” This was a huge amount. Six hundred talents was the yearly Roman tax for southern Palestine. This parable is purposeful oriental exaggeration (hyperbole). Often Jesus used this literary technique to drive home the point of His parables. See Special Topic at 17:24.

18:25 People (and their families) could be sold into slavery for debts (cf. Lev. 25:39; II Kgs. 4:1; Neh. 5:5; Isa. 50:1). The king’s threat was a real threat!

18:26,29 “have patience with me and I will repay you everything” These are the exact words of both vv. 26 and 29. This is the heart of the parable. In v. 30 he has no mercy on another human who pleads for it!

18:34 “the torturers” In Aramaic this was possibly “jailers.”

18:35 “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant potential future action. Forgiveness should/must result in forgiving (cf. Matt. 5:7; 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 10:8; Luke 6:36; Col. 3:13; James 2:13; 5:9). Forgiveness is not the basis of our salvation but a sure

evidence of being forgiven. However, Jesus leaves open the question about those who claim to know Him, but refuse to forgive other believers! Parables cannot, do not, answer all the theological questions!

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic at 5:8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this passage define children’s relationship with God?
2. What two examples are given us in the passage to show the radical nature of our personal sin?
3. Does this parable in verses 12-14 convey the same truth as in Luke 15:4-7?
4. What is the parable of verses 23-25 saying to us about forgiveness?

MATTHEW 19

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Teaching on Divorce	Marriage and Divorce	Marriage and Divorce	Jesus Teaches About Divorce	The Question About Divorce
19:1-2	19:1-10	19:1-2	19:1-2	19:1-2
19:3-12		19:3-9	19:3	19:3-6
			19:4-6	
			19:7	19:7-9
			19:8-9	
				Continenence
		19:10-12	19:10	19:10-12
	Jesus Teaches on Celibacy			
	19:11-12		19:11-12	
Little Children Blessed	Jesus Blesses Little Children	Blessing the Children	Jesus Blesses Little Children	Jesus and the Children
19:13-15	19:13-15	19:13-15	19:13-14	19:13-15
			19:15	
The rich Young Man	Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Man	The Rich Young Man	The Rich Young Man	The Rich Young Man
19:16-22	19:16-22	19:16-22	19:16	19:16-22
			19:17	
			19:17a	
			19:18b-19	
			19:20	
			19:21	
			19:22	
	With God All Things Are Possible			The Dangers of Riches
19:23-30	19:23-30	19:23-26	19:23-24	19:23-26
			19:25	
			19:26	The Reward of Renunciation
		19:27-30	19:27	19:27-29
			19:28-30	
				19:30

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The Pharisees were not really interested in the question of divorce but they were trying to reduce Jesus' popularity by splitting His following over a disputed issue (cf. Mark 10:2-12). Jesus' answer must be interpreted in this confrontational context. This is not a neutral teaching passage.
- B. Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18 and I Corinthians 7:12-14 must also be taken into consideration when discussing the issue of divorce. This passage concerns the legal grounds for divorce and remarriage in Moses' writings.
- C. When interpreting a hot social issue such as this, be careful of:
 1. being influenced too heavily by your own culture and age
 2. being influenced by your own existential situation and experiences
 3. being influenced by your presuppositions (denominationalism)
 4. making hard and dogmatic rules for every situation

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-2

¹When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; ²and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

19:1 "When Jesus had finished these words" This phrase is apparently a textual marker for Matthew's structuring of Jesus' teachings (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 26:1).

▣ **"He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea"** This period of Jesus' ministry is often called His Perea ministry. It covered chapters 19-20. Many Jews would not pass through Samaria but would cross over into the trans-Jordan area of Perea, then south toward Jerusalem and cross back over the Jordan at Jericho into Judea. This was because of their hatred of Samaritans. They believed them to be half Jews, half pagans. This was the result of the Assyrian exile under Sargon II of the Northern Ten Tribes in 722 B.C. and the resettlement of pagans into the region.

19:2 "and large crowds followed Him" These were possibly pilgrims going to Jerusalem, but they could also be persons looking for healing or curiosity seekers.

▣ **"and He healed them there"** Jesus' healings were intended to confirm His message, to help show the future bliss of heaven, and the heart of God. He did not come primarily to heal, but to teach; however, whenever He saw people hurting from the ravages of sin, He acted; and He still does!

SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD’S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?

1. Healing was a significant aspect of the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.
2. It was intended primarily to confirm their radically new message about God and His kingdom.
3. It shows the heart of God for hurting people.
4. God has not changed (Mal. 3:6) and He still acts in love in healing.
5. There are examples where healing did not take place.
 - a. Paul, II Cor. 12:7-10
 - b. Trophimus, II Tim. 4:20
6. Sin and sickness were associated in the rabbis (cf. John. 9:2 and James (cf. James 5:13-18)).
7. Healing is not a guarantee of the New Covenant. It is not part of the atonement described in Isa. 53 and Ps. 103.
8. There is true mystery about why some are healed and some are not.
9. It is possible that although healing is present in every age, there was a significant increase during Jesus’ lifetime; this increase will occur again just before His return.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:3-9

³Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” ⁴And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, ⁵and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” ⁷They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her* AWAY?” ⁸He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. ⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

19:3 For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees see the Special Topic at 22:15.

▣ “testing Him” This term (*peirazō*) had a negative connotation of “testing with a view toward destruction.” See Special Topic at 4:1. This was not a theological discussion in a neutral setting!



NASB	“for any reason at all”
NKJV	“for any reason”
NRSV	“for any cause”
TEV	“for whatever reason he wishes”
NJB	“on any pretext whatever”

In Mark 10:2 the question was about divorce, but here the question concerned the grounds for divorce. The conservative rabbinical school of Shammai picked up on the phrase “some indecency” from Deut. 24:1, while the liberal rabbinical school of Hillel picked up on the phrase “she finds no favor.” So the first school said the grounds were only for adultery or some other forbidden sexual act; the second said for any cause. Later, Rabbi Akiba, of the school of Hillel, even said that one could divorce his wife if he found someone prettier!

The Pharisees are asking Jesus a question, not for information but to hurt Him

1. with some portion of His followers (factions within Judaism)
2. with Herod Antipas (John the Baptist condemned Herod’s divorce and remarriage)

19:4 “Have you not read” Jesus expected that Jewish people had read God’s book (cf. 12:3; 19:4; 21:16; 22:31). Knowledge of Scripture was foundational for godly living. Jesus expects modern believers to “have read” it also! The Jewish traditions twisted and annulled Scripture, as does modern denominational traditions, usually quoting one text or part of a text out of context and ignoring all other parallel passages!

▣ “created” This PARTICIPLE (*ktisas*) is in the uncial MS B, but the VERB “made” (*poiēsas*) is in MSS N, C, D, L, W, Z. It follows the Septuagint of Gen. 1:27. However, the UBS⁴ thinks the first option is original (i.e., a “B” rating, meaning “almost certain”).

▣ **“from the beginning”** This quote is from Gen. 1:27 and 5:2 of God’s creation of both men and women. Marriage is God’s idea and it is to be monogamous (cf. Gen. 2:23-24) and permanent (cf. v. 6).

19:5 “for this reason. . .leave his father and mother” This is a quote from Gen. 2:24. Notice both parents are mentioned, but also the radical break with one’s nuclear family that marriage demanded. In the ancient world families lived with multiple generations in one house. The priority and independence of each generation is affirmed.

▣ **“the two shall become one flesh”** The SINGULAR form but with a PLURAL sense is also found in Gen. 2:24, Deut. 6:4, and Ezek. 27:17. Love merges individuals!

19:6 “what therefore God has joined together” This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which expressed completed action. By stating “what,” not “who,” the institution of marriage was emphasized. The term “joined together” meant “yoked together.”

19:7 “Moses commanded to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away” This is from Deut. 24:1-4. Jesus said that Moses did it, not because God wanted it, but because of the hardness of the peoples’ hearts. Moses had compassion for the wife’s societal plight. This certificate (1) required several days, (2) required legal help, (3) may have required return of the dowry, and (4) implied remarriage.

What really bothers me about Jesus’ rejection of Moses’ words is how do I know what else is contained in OT Scripture that God rejects. I would never have known this unless Jesus expressly stated it here. All my life I have revered Scripture, used it to guide my life and actions, but now Jesus says part of it was never God’s will!! This gives me pause and forces me to cling to the NT and not the OT. The OT must be viewed through its interpretation by Jesus and His inspired Apostles! Jesus is Lord of Scripture (cf. Matt. 5:17-48)!

19:9

NASB “except for immorality”

NKJV “except for sexual immorality”

NRSV “except for unchastity”

TEV “other than her unfaithfulness”

JB “I am not speaking of fornication”

NJB “I am not speaking of an illicit marriage”

The Greek term is *porneia*, which comes into English as “pornography.” This could have referred to fornication (pre-marital sexual activity), adultery (extra-marital sexual activity), or other inappropriate sexual acts such as bestiality and homosexuality (forbidden sexual activity).

▣ **“and marries another woman”** Only Jewish men had the right of divorce during this period of time. In Mark and Luke, who were writing to a Gentile audience, women are also addressed (cf. Mark 10:12).

▣ **“commits adultery”** This is PRESENT PASSIVE (deponent) INDICATIVE (cf. Mark 10:11-12). There are some textual variations in this verse probably caused by scribes referring to Matt. 5:32. The VERB tenses from 5:32 shed light on this passage. In 5:32 the translation should be “causes her to become an adulteress.” This PASSIVE VOICE has also been found in Matt. 19:9 in the Greek manuscripts B and C*. This possibly referred to the social stigma which was put on the divorced woman by her Jewish culture, which designated her as an adulteress by the fact that she was put away.

At this point F. F. Bruce’s comment on this text in his book *Answers to Questions*, p. 55, is relevant to the use of this text today:

“He was not giving His disciples occasion for instituting a new legalism on the basis of His ruling, as some of them have tried to do. What He said about the Sabbath law could be said of the marriage law: it was made for human beings, and not vice versa.”

See Dr. Utley’s audio tapes on “divorce” online at www.freebiblecommentary.org in the “Difficult and Controversial Texts” section.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:10-12

¹⁰The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹But He said to them, “Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept it.

19:10 “disciples said. . . it is better not to marry” Jesus’ statement shocked them. They had the views of their culture ingrained in their minds. So do we! Marriage is God’s will for humans (this is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE). It is a great blessing but also a great responsibility. In days of frequent divorces the witness of a strong, godly marriage is very powerful to a lost world.

19:10-11 Marriage is the norm (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:17), but celibacy is a godly option (cf. I Cor. 7:7,17). A believer’s prayerful desires will guide him/her in this area. If one chooses to be single, it should be for service to God (cf. I Cor. 7:32).

The Jews of Jesus’ day rejected singleness as a godly option. Jesus is challenging the standards of His culture in several areas.

1. the husband’s total authority
2. couples should remain together and work out their problems
3. singleness is a godly option

19:12 Jesus discusses the different types of singles.

1. born that way
 - a. birth defect
 - b. personal tendency
2. forceful castration (eunuchs, i.e., Esther 2:3; possibly Daniel and his friends, Acts 8:27)
3. personal choice of singleness for the purpose of ministry (I do not think this demands physical castration although some early church leaders did it to themselves, i.e., Origen)

Notice how v. 12 is framed

1. verse 11, all men cannot be single
2. verse 12c, some men can accept this lifestyle

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR VERSES 13-15

- A. Verses 13-15 are paralleled in Mark 10:13-31 and Luke 18:15-30.
- B. The New Testament does not discuss children’s spiritual relationship with God.
- C. Matt. 18 does not discuss the spiritual status of children but uses them as an example for new believers.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:13-15

¹³Then *some* children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” ¹⁵After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

19:13 “children” Jesus was a friend to the socially outcast, ostracized, and/or underprivileged. He befriended the common person, slaves, the poor, women, and children.

☐ **“so that He might lay His hands on them and pray”** This was the traditional rabbinical blessing for children. This has nothing to do with salvation. Jewish parents saw their children as already members of the congregation of Israel by birth.

19:14 “Let the children alone” This is AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Jesus was emphatic in His desire to be available to all.

☐ **“do not hinder them from coming to Me”** This is PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE. This grammatical construction implies to stop an act which was already in process.

☐ **“for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these”** This did not refer to the children themselves, but those (1) with child-like characteristics or (2) who see themselves in a low or receiving position who will enter the kingdom of God (cf. 18:2-4). This is not a verse on the salvation of children. The NT is written to adults!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:16-22

¹⁶And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” ¹⁷And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸Then he said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS; ¹⁹HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” ²⁰The young man said to Him, “All these things I have

kept; what am I still lacking?” ²¹Jesus said to him, **“If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”** ²²But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

19:16 “someone came to Him” From v. 20 we know that he was young, from v. 22 we learn that he was rich, and from Luke 18:18 we learn that he was a ruler (cf. Mark 10:17-22).

▣ **“Teacher”** The parallels in Mark 10:17 and Luke 18:18 have “good Teacher.” The better uncial MSS (i.e., \aleph , B, D, L) omit it here (UBS⁴ rates its exclusion as “A,” meaning “certain”).

▣ **“what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life”** This Jewish man had the common conception of salvation held by most Jews of his day, which was a works righteousness based on one’s conformity to the Mosaic Law and Oral Tradition (cf. Luke 10:25; Rom. 9:30-33). He saw eternal life as the result of his religious performance.

▣ **“eternal life”** This was an OT concept of the life (*zōē*) of the age to come (cf. Dan. 12:2). The term addressed both the quality of the new life and its duration.

In this one context several different expressions are used to describe a person’s relationship with God.

1. obtain eternal life, v. 16
2. to enter into life, v. 17
3. to be complete, v. 21
4. to enter the kingdom of God, vv. 23,24
5. be saved, v. 25
6. will inherit eternal life, v. 29

19:17 “There is only One who is good” Jesus was not making a statement about His lack of goodness, but was showing this man the standard of goodness that was required to be right with God. This verse should not be used as a proof-text depreciating Jesus’ deity or sinlessness.

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. There is nothing in this context to imply that this man was trying to tempt, try or trick Jesus.

▣ **“keep the commandments”** This is AORIST IMPERATIVE (Nestle Greek text has a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE). This obviously referred to the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. This was the heart of the Jewish Law.

19:18-19 This is a partial list of the second half of the Ten Commandments which dealt with person’s relationship to his fellow covenant brother. This listing is different from the Masoretic Hebrew text and the Septuagint. See Special Topics at 5:21, 5:27, 15:4, and the following Special Topic.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INSIGHTS TO EXODUS 20:12-16

- I. General Information, Exodus 20:15
 - A. Like all other regulations in the Decalog, our faith, love, and respect for God must be seen in the sacred and secular aspects of our daily lives. It is an abomination to God to claim to know Him and then exploit our covenant partner (cf. I John 4:20-21; 2:7-11).
 - B. This command is meant to help maintain the fellowship of the covenant community. The quality of this spiritual fellowship will attract a confused and seeking world to our God, which is the purpose of Scripture.
 - C. As other commandments have focused on God’s ownership of all of life, so too, this one! We are stewards, not owners. Our fallen drive toward possessions, without cost, is behind this prohibition (cf. Ps. 50:10-12).
- II. Word and Phrase Study
 - A. This is the third command in the second half of the Decalog, which is made up of only two words in Hebrew.
 - B. The object of the prohibition is absent. This is usually supported by:
 1. the context of the two previous commands relating to capital offenses.
 2. the presence of applicable parallel passages, both immediate (Exod. 21:16) and remote (Deut. 24:7). Also see Genesis 37.

- C. However, the short form is also defensible.
 - 1. It is recorded for us by inspiration.
 - 2. It widens the scope of the injunction.
 - 3. There is also a parallel passage in the immediate context which relates to theft - Exod. 22:1ff.
 - 4. Jesus apparently quotes this passage in reference to stealing (cf. Matt. 19:18).
- D. Theft is also dealt with in the other ancient Law codes, but usually the penalty is death, mutilation, or thirty times restitution.
- E. There are some significant parallel passages which define and explain this truth:
 - 1. Lev. 19:1-18 – “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”
 - a. Our lifestyle must reflect the family characteristics of our Father and our God (cf. v. 18).
 - b. Our faith must impact our lives daily, both in positive actions and negative prohibition, both informed by proper motives (cf. v. 17).
 - c. Compassion for the ostracized and needy, vv. 9-10,13, is as significant as refusal to rip off our neighbors, v. 11.
 - 2. Amos 8:4-7 - God hates exploitations!
 - 3. Micah 6:6-8 - God wants proper motives in all of our actions. Why we don't steal is the issue!
 - 4. Exodus 22:1ff - Often the missing truth in our modern discussion of robbery is restitution! Sin always costs!

III. Application Truths

- A. Joy Davidman, C. S. Lewis' wife, has written a delightful book on the Decalog. She translates this command, “Thou shalt not try to get something for nothing.” This assuredly widens the scope beyond possessions. She also says that “property is neither sin nor inalienable right, but a loan, a trust from God.”
- B. Theft, like all other sins of the fallen heart, are dealt with by a new heart, Eph. 4:28. It is amazing how the old nature of “take” turns into the new nature of “share!”
- C. Our respect for God is clearly seen in our respect for other covenant partners! This truth overshadows the Decalog.
- D. Modern man steals in many ways.

IV. Exodus 20:16

- A. Background
 - 1. This command, as all others, focuses on our covenant partner. God's reputation and our faith in Him are evident in how we treat our covenant partners.
 - 2. The legal terms found in v. 16 imply that this prohibition originally related to testimony in a law court.
 - 3. The wider focus of this command relates to our private conversations, as well as our legal testimony.
 - 4. Falsifying is not just something we do, it is something we are.
 - 5. A lying witness was the subject of many of the ancient law codes, especially the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi and the Roman Code, “The Twelve Tables.”
- B. Word and Phrase Study
 - 1. There is a slight difference between Exod. 20:16 and Deut. 5:20. It involves the term for “false.” Exodus has the term *shager*, which means “deceive.” The noun form is translated as “deception” or “falsehood.” The same root consonants have the meaning of “lie” in the Assyrian language. However, the term in Deut. 5:20 is *shaw*, which means “empty, vain, or nothingness.” Both of these terms are used in the OT to refer to idolatry (cf. Jer. 10:14). They imply not just an untruth, but a person of untruth or falsehood. The tragedy is not in the untruth, but in the crookedness of a covenant partner. The term “vain” links the command with taking God's name in vain, Exod. 20:7 and “false witnessing,” Exod. 20:16.
 - 2. The term “answer,” “witness,” or “testimony” is *anah*. It, like the other term in Exod. 20:16, referred to a legal court scene. This term is used 316 times in the OT and is usually translated “answer,” but it is used in the specialized sense of legal witness about 22 times: Gen. 30:33; Exod. 20:16; 23:2; Num. 35:30; Deut. 5:20; 19:15-21; 31:21; I Sam. 12:3; II Sam. 1:16; Ruth 1:21; Neh. 14:7; Job 9:14-15; 15:6; 16:8; Prov. 23:16; Isa. 3:9; 59:12; Jer. 14:7; Hos. 5:5; 7:10; Micah 6:3; Zech. 4:5.
- C. Significant Parallel Passages
 - 1. Court Aspects
 - a. Other lists which relate to this command and refer to lying in court are Jer. 7:9 and Hos. 4:2.

- b. This command must relate, in context, to legal testimony in a court. In the ancient world most crimes carried the death penalty. Therefore, two or three witnesses were needed to corroborate the testimony (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15-19).
 - c. It is interesting to note that the Deut. 19:15-19 passage also requires an investigation by the priest and, if there is a false witness, they must pay the penalty of the crime for which they falsely accused a covenant partner.
 - d. Also, at this point, Deut. 17:7 stipulates that the witness must participate in the punishment, even being the first to begin it (throwing the first stone in the case of stoning). If they lied they were guilty of shedding innocent blood!
 - e. The same significance of life and death concerning a false or true witness is found in Prov. 14:5,25; 25:18.
 - f. Also, the failure to testify is condemned in Lev. 5:1. Because a man's life was at stake, the omission of relevant testimony was a serious offense.
2. Wider Aspects
- a. Exodus 23:1 provides a bridge between a false witness and a tale bearer.
 - b. Proverbs 6:17 also forms a bridge to the wider concept.
 - c. Elton Trueblood, in his book, *Foundations for Reconstruction*, paraphrases this verse as "Thou shalt be trustworthy."
- D. Application Truths
1. We reveal our true self by the words we speak: Mark 7:15ff; Matt. 15:11ff; 12:36-37; James 3:1ff.
 2. To attack another covenant partner falsely is to undermine the very foundation of the covenant and its God. We can kill both literally and figuratively with our tongues.
 3. Gossip is a characteristic of fallen man's ego problem:

"The ninth commandment is almost universally broken and is probably more often broken than any other, with the exception of the tenth. Thousands of highly respectable persons, who would never dream of committing murder or robbery, engage in tale-bearing and detraction every day of their lives. It is so easy and so pleasant to sit with one's friends and discuss a third party, especially if the conversation is mildly derogatory. It is such a pleasant form of sin, since it is not one for which anyone can be sent to jail, and yet it gives a bit of excitement along with the sense of relative virtue in one's self. Just to talk of the shortcomings of another makes the conversationalist feel virtuous by contrast" (from Elton Trueblood's translation of the Decalog in *Foundations for Reconstruction* (pp. 92-93).

19:18 "murder" The King James Version (KJV) and the Jerusalem Bible (JB) render this verb as "kill," which is an unfortunate translation of this Hebrew word for "non-legal premeditated murder." The NKJV has "murder." The "eye for an eye" law code of Israel provided a blood-avenger to exact justice from one who killed a family member (cf. Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:6,12; Josh. 20:1-9). This served to prevent feuds or unlimited retaliation. See Special Topic at 5:21.

19:20 "the young man" In Jesus' day a man was considered young until he was forty years old. Luke 18:18 adds that the man was a "ruler," which meant the leader of a local synagogue or of a local town council.

☐ **"all these things I have kept"** In Phil. 3:6 Paul makes the same claim. This is not a contradiction of Rom. 3:23, but shows the legalistic nature of the Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament to which Jesus spoke in Matt. 5:20-48. Righteousness was seen as performance of a legal code. This man felt he had performed all the religious duties of his day and culture.

☐ NKJV adds "from my youth," which is found in Mark 10:20 and the uncial MSS C and W and many versions. In Jewish society a person was not responsible to keep the Law until after a time of personal study and commitment (i.e., *Bar Mitzvah* at age 13 for boys and *Bat Mitzvah* for girls at age 12). This is parallel to the concept of "the age of accountability" in Christianity.

☐ **"what am I still lacking"** This shows the restlessness of this man's heart. Even after keeping all of the Mosaic laws and their interpretations, he still felt empty.

19:21 "If" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true by the author for his literary purposes.



NASB “complete”
NKJV, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “perfect”

This word meant “full,” “mature,” “fully equipped for the assigned task” (from *telosi*). It did not imply sinlessness.



“go and sell your possessions” This shows the radical nature of the Christian’s faith (cf. Luke 14:33). It is a total commitment. For this man the choice was in the area of possessions. This man’s possessions possessed him! This is not a requirement for all believers, but a radical, ultimate commitment to Jesus is!

There is a series of IMPERATIVES.

1. go, PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
2. sell, AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
3. give, AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
4. come, ADVERB used as an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
5. follow, PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE

These commands (i.e., #4, 5) are like Jesus’ call to the Twelve. Jesus was inviting this man to become part of His nucleus!



“give to the poor” From I Cor. 13:1-3, we see that attitude is the key!



“you will have treasure in heaven” See notes at Matthew 6:19-20.



“and come, follow Me” Jesus perceived this man’s priority structure and He demanded first place. His wealth was not the problem, but its priority (cf. I Tim. 6:10). Notice the radical personal commitment demanded for following Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:34-39).

19:22 “he went away grieving” Jesus loved this man but would not lower the standards of the Kingdom. The Bible is silent on this man’s salvation. This is shocking when we realize that (1) he came with good motives, (2) he came to the right person, (3) he came with the right questions, and (4) Jesus loved him (Mark 10:21), but he went away!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:23-26

²³And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵When the disciples heard *this*, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁶And looking at *them* Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

19:23 “Truly” See Special Topic at 5:18.

19:24 “a camel to go through the eye of a needle” There has been much discussion over this phrase. Is it literal or figurative? There was never a small gate in Jerusalem which camels had to kneel to enter! It was an oriental exaggeration, in which it would be impossible for rich people to be saved! But with God, all things are possible (v. 26). Jesus is addressing the situation of the rich, young ruler. He seemed to be blessed by God in an OT sense, but he was not right with God. Riches and possessions can be (and often are) a curse!



“it is hard for a rich man” See Special Topic: Wealth at 6:24.



“the kingdom of God” This was a rare use of this phrase in Matthew because of the Jewish fear of taking God’s name in vain (cf. Exod.20:7; Deut. 5:11). This phrase appears often in the Gospel parallels of Mark and Luke written for Gentiles.

19:25 “the disciples. . .were astonished” The OT taught that God blessed the righteous and temporally punished the wicked (cf. Deut. 27-28). The book of Job, Psalm 73, and Jer. 12:1-4 react against this traditional view. Often the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Wealth, position and health are not always signs of God’s favor!

19:26 This saying may go back to the OT (i.e., Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17,27). It is an idiomatic way of asserting the powerlessness of humans and the powerfulness of YHWH. God’s purposes and plans cannot be thwarted (cf. Job 42:2; Luke 1:37)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:27-30

²⁷Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” ²⁸And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many *who are* first will be last; and *the* last, first.

19:27 “what then will there be for us” Peter had left all but he still was thinking about it! The disciples still expected an earthly kingdom with a special reward for themselves (cf. 20:21,24).

19:28 “the Son of Man” See the full note at Matthew 8:20.

▣ “you who have followed Me. . . shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” This must refer to the original Twelve Apostles (cf. Luke 22:30), while v. 29 expands the benefits of abundant blessings and eternal life to all believers (cf. Matt. 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30).

To whom does this phrase “the twelve tribes of Israel” refer?

1. the new Israel, the church (cf. Rom. 2:28,29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6)
2. the believing Israel of the eschaton

It seems to me the verse is emphasizing that the Twelve will share Jesus’ glory and reign. Verses like this should not be used to build elaborate theories of the nature of the eschaton!

See Special Topic: the Number Twelve at 14:20.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REIGNING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The concept of reigning with Christ is part of the larger theological category called “the Kingdom of God.” This is a carry-over from the OT concept of God as the true king of Israel (cf. I Sam. 8:7). He symbolically reigned (I Sam. 8:7; 10:17-19) through a descendant from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10) and the family of Jesse (cf. II Sam. 7).

Jesus is the promised fulfillment of OT prophecy concerning the Messiah. He inaugurated the Kingdom of God with His incarnation at Bethlehem. The Kingdom of God became the central pillar of Jesus’ preaching. The Kingdom had fully come in Him (cf. Matt. 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 16:16; 17:20-21).

However, the Kingdom was also future (eschatological). It was present but not consummated (cf. Matt. 6:10; 8:11; 16:28; 22:1-14; 26:29; Luke 9:27; 11:2; 13:29; 14:10-24; 22:16,18). Jesus came the first time as a suffering servant (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12); as humble (cf. Zech. 9:9), but He will return as King of Kings (cf. Matt. 2:2; 21:5; 27:11-14). The concept of “reigning” is surely a part of this “kingdom” theology. God has given the kingdom to Jesus’ followers (see Luke 12:32).

The concept of reigning with Christ has several aspects and questions:

1. Do the passages which assert that God has given believers “the kingdom” through Christ refer to “reigning” (cf. Matt. 5:3,10; Luke 12:32)?
2. Do Jesus’ words to the original disciples in the first century Jewish context refer to all believers (cf. Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30)?
3. Does Paul’s emphasis on reigning in this life now contrast or complement the above texts (cf. Rom. 5:17; I Cor. 4:8)?
4. How are suffering and reigning related (cf. Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11-12; I Pet. 4:13; Rev. 1:9)?
5. The recurrent theme of Revelation is sharing the glorified Christ’s reign
 - a. earthly, 5:10
 - b. millennial, 20:5,6
 - c. eternal, 2:26; 3:21; 22:5 and Dan. 7:14,18,27

▣	
NASB, NKJV	“in the regeneration”
NRSV	“at the renewal of all things”
TEV	“in the New Age”
NJB	“when everything is made new again”

The word means “rebirth.” Philo used it for the rebirth after the flood. It was used by Greek thinkers for the new world order. Here it refers to the rebirth at the consummation of the New Age of the Spirit. The disciples still thought this would happen in their lifetime. They were surprised by the two-stage coming of the Messiah.

Initial creation was damaged; the recreation after Noah’s flood was also polluted, but the rebirth of the Messianic consummation will be pure, ideal (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Micah 5:2-5a; Revelation 21-22).

19:29

NASB “many times as much”

NKJV, NRSV “a hundredfold”

TEV “a hundred times more”

NJB “a hundred times as much”

There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point. The term “hundredfold” is in the uncial MSS \aleph , C and D, while “manifold” is in MSS B and C. The first option follows Mark 10:29 and the second Luke 18:30. Most scholars assume that Matthew and Luke follow the structure of Mark. One’s commitment to Jesus must supercede his devotion to family, possessions and even life itself (cf. Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 12:51-53).

The new age of righteousness is described in agricultural hyperbole (as in the OT). The Bible is not clear on what heaven will be like.

1. renewed Garden of Eden
2. agricultural abundance
3. beautiful city
4. new spiritual realm

What this text does reveal is that personal faith in Jesus now secures the blessing of heaven in the future. No personal sacrifice now will go unnoticed or unrewarded! The key blessing is “eternal life” with God in Christ! All else pales into insignificance.

We must be careful of holding a theology of sacrifice now for abundance later! True wealth is intimacy with God. Jesus’ statements are

1. hyperbolic
2. addressed to the disciples’ current understanding
3. showing the radical, selfless decision involved in “following” Him!

I think Jesus’ words here are hyperbolic and related to OT agricultural imagery. He expressed Himself this way because of the Apostles’ misunderstanding of the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God. It does not make sense to me for believers to reject materialism in this life only to claim it in the next (“pie in the sky, by and by Christianity”). Jesus is trying to encourage them on a level they can comprehend. This is not a text to base one’s views of heaven on! The afterlife, both hell and heaven, are veiled. Earthly metaphors are used to describe both, but only because of our current blindness caused by the Fall (i.e., “we see through a glass darkly,” I Cor. 13:9-12). We must always guard against “what’s in it for me” Christianity. Heaven, like the Kingdom, is all about Him!

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS’ INHERITANCE

The Scriptures talk about believers inheriting many things because of their relationship with Jesus who is heir of all things (cf. Heb. 1:2), and they as coheirs (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7) of

- the kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:34, I Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50)
- eternal life (cf. Matt. 19:29)
- God’s promises (cf. Heb. 6:12)
- God’s protection of His promises (cf. I Pet. 1:4; 5:9).

19:30 Things are not as they appear to us (cf. Matt. 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30). God’s ways of evaluation are different from ours (cf. Isa. 55:8-11). Child-like disciples are received, while the wealthy and privileged are rejected (i.e., Matt. 8:10-12). Biblical faith causes an unexpected reversal of the creation!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is divorce always a sin?
2. What biblical principle did Jesus advocate in response to the Pharisees' question?
3. Why did Moses allow remarriage if God was against it? What about today?
4. Is celibacy spiritually superior to marriage?
5. Define the Bible's teachings about children and salvation.
6. Do verses 13-15 deal with salvation?
7. Why does Jesus not claim "goodness" in v. 17? Does this affect the doctrine of Jesus' deity or sinlessness?
8. Did this man really keep all of the commandments? Was he sinless? (v. 20)
9. Are riches evil?
10. Why were the disciples dumbfounded concerning the rejection of a wealthy man? (v. 25)

MATTHEW 20

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Workers in the Vineyard 20:1-16	The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard 20:1-16	Laborers in the Vineyard 20:1-16	The Workers in the Vineyard 20:1-7 20:8-15 20:16	Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard 20:1-16
A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection 20:17-19	Jesus a Third Time Predicts His Death and Resurrection 20:17-19	Passion Foretold a Third Time 20:17-19	Jesus Speaks a Third Time About His Death 20:17-19	Third Prophecy of the Passion 20:17-19
The Request of James and John 20:20-28	Salome Asks a Favor 20:20-28	James and John Seek Honor 20:20-23 20:24-28	A Mother's Request 20:20 20:21a 20:21b 20:22a,b 20:22c 20:23 20:24-28	The Mother of Zebedee's Sons Makes Her Request 20:20-23 Leadership with Service 20:24-28
The Healing of Two Blind Men 20:29-34	Two Blind Men Receive Their Sight 20:29-34	Two Blind Men of Jericho 20:29-34	Jesus Heals Two Blind Men 20:29-30 20:31 20:32 20:33 20:34	Two Blind Men of Jericho 20:29-34

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. In interpreting parables (see Special Topic in Introduction to chapter 13) it is crucial to take the historical and literary context into consideration. In this particular parable the historical context is related to the closing phrase of Matt. 19:30, which is repeated at the close of Matthew 20:16. This literary parallel shows that the parable under discussion is primarily related to the subject of wealth and rewards. The larger literary context is seen in 18:1 and 20:20-21, 24, where the disciples were concerned about who was greatest among them.
- B. Many have interpreted this parable as referring to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and, from the larger context of the entire New Testament (or when the Gospels were written), this is possible. But, from the immediate context, this parable has to do with the relationship between the disciples themselves. The kingdom of God has a totally different standard of evaluation than the world (cf. Isa. 55:8-11; Matthew 5-7). God's new kingdom (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) is based solely on grace and not human merit. This is not meant to depreciate or discredit an active life of religious discipleship; rather, grace is foundational to salvation and righteous living (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Discipleship must be motivated by gratitude, not merit (cf. Rom. 3:21-24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).
- C. We need to be reminded that when interpreting parables, the central truth and context are far more important than pushing the details into a theological system. The key to parables is to look for the unexpected, or culturally shocking statement.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-7

¹"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; ⁴and to those, he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went. ⁵Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing *around*; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' ⁷They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'"

20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven" The parable was given as an example of how the material rewards offered by this world were totally different from the spiritual rewards of the kingdom of God. This parable is unique to Matthew. The "kingdom of heaven" was a central topic in Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry. It referred to the reign of God in human hearts now which will one day be consummated over the earth (cf. 6:10). The present yet future aspects of the kingdom of God are the origin of the "already" and "not yet" tension and paradox of the two comings of Christ and the Christian life.

▣ **"landowner"** This is a compound term "house" plus "master" (*despotēs*). It translates a Hebrew phrase, "the owner of the land." Matthew uses this designation often (cf. 10:25; 13:27,52; 20:1,11; 21:33; 24:43).

In this passage it reflects the grace of God in dealing with His human creation. In Matt. 10:24-25 Jesus is the true "household master," but they call Him *Beelzebub*" (head demon or Satan).

Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 244 has an interesting comment.

"God appears in several guises in the parables as king, father, landowner, employer, father and judge. Throughout, the picture is of one who graciously and mercifully offers forgiveness, but at the same time demands decision. . .salvation is present and insistently demanding response. God's rule is typified by grace but that grace challenges the hearer to recognize the necessity of repentance."

▣ **"vineyard"** Many assume that this was a reference to the nation of Israel. It is true that a vineyard often stood for Israel in the OT (cf. Isa. 5, Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ps. 80:8-13), but that does not mean it does in every context in the NT. In this context, it seems to simply be the setting of the parable and does not have major symbolic truth.

20:2 “when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day” This first group of laborers was the only one for whom a set pay for a day’s work was discussed. The term “denarius,” like all monetary values in translations, is linked to one’s own historical equivalent. It would be much better to see this monetary amount in light of its usage in the first century, as a day’s wage for a soldier or an agricultural worker. It was enough money to provide food and the necessities of life for a day for a Palestinian family.

20:3

NASB, NKJV,

NJB “about the third hour”

NRSV, TEV “about nine o’clock”

All of the designations (vv. 3,5,6) for time in the parable are based on the assumption of the day beginning at 6 a.m. (Roman time); therefore, it was nine o’clock in the morning. The Jews began their day at 6 p.m. (I.e., Gen. 1:5).

One question why the vineyard owner would hire so many people throughout the day. It has been assumed by scholars that it was the peak of the grape harvest and the Sabbath was close at hand; therefore, it was urgent that as many of the grapes as possible be gathered before they ruined.

20:6 “found others standing around” Although in English this phrase sounds derogatory, as if the vineyard owner were chiding these people for not working all day, in reality he simply had found some workers who had not been hired earlier. There is no hint that these were lazy or indifferent workers, but ones who had not been able to find work for that day (cf. v. 7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:8-16

⁸When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.’ ⁹When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. ¹⁰When those hired first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, ¹²saying, ‘These last men have worked *only* one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.’ ¹³But he answered and said to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous? ¹⁶So the last shall be first, and the first last.’

20:8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages”

We learn from the Mosaic Law that laborers were to be paid at the close of the work day so that they could buy food for their families (cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:15; Mal. 3:5). Often landowners tried to withhold the wages until the next day in order to assure that their labor force would return, but this was against the Mosaic Law.

20:10 “When those hired first came, they thought they would receive more” The workers hired first were assuming that they deserved more money because those who worked less time received what they had contracted for (cf. v. 2). This parable shows how the ways of God are so different from the ways of this world. We see from v. 11 that when they did not receive more money, they grumbled continually. Their attitude of being grateful even to be employed turned to anger because they did not get all that they expected. They rationalized that because they had worked all day in the heat, they deserved more pay. The implication of this is striking in relationship to religious people and spiritual rewards (cf. 19:30; 20:16).

20:13-15 The landowner answers with three rhetorical questions. The landowner has freedom to act as he will (cf. Romans 9), but he chooses to act in grace!

20:15 This verse is the theological heart of the parable. God is sovereign and He has the right to act (i.e., Romans 9-10). He chooses to act in undeserved grace (cf. Romans 11). Can anyone fault Him for that? This is theologically parallel to the Prodigal Son recorded in Luke 15:11-32. Should God’s mercy to some offend those who have also experienced His mercy?

▣

NASB, NRSV “Or is your eye envious because I am generous”

NKJV “Or is your eye evil because I am good”

TEV “Or are you jealous because I am generous”

JB “Why be envious because I am generous”

This relates to the Ancient Near Eastern metaphor of “the evil eye” (cf. Deut. 15:9; I Sam. 18:9). In this context it referred to jealousy or envy (cf. Mark 7:22). See Special Topic at 6:22-23.

20:16

NASB

“So the last shall be first, and the first last”

NKJV

“So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen”

NRSV

“So the last will be first and the first will be last”

TEV

“So those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last”

JB

“Thus the last will be first, and the first, last”

There is a phrase at the end of this verse “for many are called, but few chosen,” which is found in the KJV, but is omitted in the NASB, NKJV, TEV, and JB. It seems to have been added from Matt. 22:14. It does not appear in the Greek manuscripts \aleph , B, L, or Z. The UBS⁴ gives its exclusion an “A” rating (i.e., certain).

There is an obvious relationship between 19:30 and 20:16. Rewards are not based on merit but on grace. This has been understood in two ways.

1. All believers will not receive equal rewards, but equal standing in the kingdom. This is the biblical tension between a free salvation and Christ-like discipleship.
2. The Jews who received the promises of God first will not receive greater rewards or blessings than Gentile believers (cf. Luke 13:30).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What are the guidelines for interpreting parables? (See *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, by Fee and Stuart, p. 135-148)
2. What is the literary context of this parable?
3. What does this parable have to say to the relationship between God’s children and rewards?
4. What do you think is the relationship between this parable and the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15)?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR 20:17-18

- A. The parallel of this account, found in Mark 10:32ff., sets the stage for the attitude and actions of the disciples.
- B. It is obvious from this account that the disciples still had a fundamental misunderstanding of the Messianic kingdom. This was possibly related to Jesus’ statement in 19:28.
- C. This is the third and most detailed prediction of Jesus’ death and resurrection to the disciples (cf. Matt. 16:21; 17:9,22-23). He knew why He came! He controlled His own history (cf. John 10:17-18)!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:17-19**

¹⁷As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve *disciples* aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, ¹⁸“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify *Him*, and on the third day He will be raised up.”

20:17 “as Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem” Mark 10:32 says He had set his face toward Jerusalem and was walking out ahead of the disciples.

20:18 “the Son of Man” See the note at Matt. 8:20.

▣ **“the chief priests and scribes”** This was a reference to the Sanhedrin. It was made up of 70 leaders of the Jewish community in Jerusalem. The full title was “the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders,” (cf. 16:21). This was the final authority in religious and political matters for the Jews, although it was extremely limited in a political sense by the Roman occupation forces.

See Special Topic: The Sanhedrin at 16:21.

20:19 “and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him” This was a reference to Jesus’ humiliation and abuse by the Roman authorities. The soldiers took out their animosity toward the exclusivism of the Jewish population by transferring it to Jesus.

This VERB “hand over” (*paradidōmi*) often refers to Jesus being given into the legal authority of a group or person for judgment.

1. to the high priests and scribes, Matt. 20:18
2. to men, Matt. 17:22
3. to the Gentiles (*ethnē*), Matt. 20:19
4. to Pilate, Matt. 27:2
5. for crucifixion, Matt. 26:2

Because of Jesus’ statement of Matt. 10:24-25, believers will also be “handed over” (cf. 10:17; 24:9; Luke 21:12).

▣ **“crucify”** The horror of this form of execution was not only in its public humiliation and pain, but in its relation to Deut. 21:23; according to the rabbis of Jesus’ day “the curse of God” was upon those who are hung upon a tree. Jesus became “the curse” (Lev. 26; Deut. 27-28; Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14) for sinful mankind!

▣ **“on the third day”** In I Cor. 15:4 Paul mentioned that this was an essential element of the gospel. However, when we look at the OT, it is difficult to find an allusion to the “three days.” Some try to use Hos. 6:2, but this seems extremely doubtful. Because of Matt. 12:38-40 many use Jonah’s time in the belly of the great fish (cf. Jonah 1:17). This seems to be the most appropriate.

For the Jews of Jesus’ day any part of a day was counted as a full day. Remember Jews start their day at twilight (cf. Gen 1:5). Therefore Jesus’ death late Friday afternoon (3 p.m.) and burial before 6 p.m. was counted as one day. Friday at twilight until Saturday at twilight (the Sabbath) was the second day; from Saturday at twilight until sometime before sunrise on Sunday was the third day. See note at 16:21.

▣ **“He will be raised up”** Usually the resurrection (see Special Topic at 27:63) is spoken of as an act of the Father’s will which showed His approval of the life, ministry, and death of Jesus. However, in John. 10:17-18 Jesus asserted His own authority in His resurrection. Rom. 8:11 says the Spirit raised Jesus. Here is a good example of all the persons of the Trinity involved in the acts of redemption.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:20-23

²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. ²¹And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.” ²²But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.” ²³He said to them, “My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.”

20:20 “the mother of the sons of Zebedee” From Mark 10:35 we learn that James and John were also active in this request. When one compares Matt. 27:56 with Mark 15:40 and John. 19:25 it is quite possible that Salome, Zebedee’s wife, was the sister of Jesus’ mother.

▣ **“bowing down”** This was not an act of worship but an act of selfish family ambition. How often do Christians kneel before God just to get what they want? They try to trade faith for favors (cf. Job. 1:9-11)!

▣ **“making a request of Him”** Mark records “do for us whatever we ask of you.” This sounds like the request of an immature child.

20:21 “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left” Every time Jesus tried to discuss His death, the disciples began to argue over who was greatest. This shows a fundamental misunderstanding not only of the person and work of Christ, but of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Luke 18:34).

20:22 “but Jesus answered, ‘You’” The “you” of v. 21 is SINGULAR, addressing the mother, but in v. 22 it is PLURAL, addressing James and John.

☐ **“Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink”** The term “cup” was used in Ugaritic literature to mean destiny. In the Bible, however, it seems to mean the experiences of life whether good or evil. It was usually used in the sense of judgment (cf. Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17-23; Jer. 25:15-28, 49:12, 51:7; Lam. 4:21-22; Ezek. 22:31-34; Hab. 2:16; Zech. 12:2; Rev. 14:10, 16:19, 17:4, 18:6). However, it was also mentioned in a few passages as blessings (cf. Ps. 16:5, 23:5, 116:13; Jer. 16:7).

The added phrase found in the King James Version (KJV) referring to Jesus’ baptism is simply not a part of the original Greek text of Matthew, nor the ancient Latin, Syriac, or Coptic translations. It came from Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50, which was later inserted into Matthew by copyists as is the same addition in v. 23. The UBS⁴ rates their exclusion as “A” (certain).

20:23 “My cup you shall drink” James was the first martyr of the apostolic band (cf. Acts 12:2). John lived long enough to be exiled by the Roman government to Patmos (Rev. 1:9) and died of old age in Ephesus (according to church tradition).

The KJV adds a phrase, “and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with,” but it is an addition from Mark 10:39. Scribes tended to make the Gospels parallel!

☐ **“for whom it has been prepared by My Father”** This is PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Here is another example of Jesus’ submission to the Father’s will and purpose. The Father is in control of all things (cf. I Cor. 15:27-28).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:24-28

²⁴And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

20:24 “And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers” They were angry because they did not ask first! But they also put on a show of anger as though they knew the question was out of place but secretly wanted to ask the same question.

20:26 “whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave” Jesus did not condemn their ambition for greatness, but defined its true parameters in light of one’s commitment to Him. In Jesus’ kingdom leadership is servanthood (cf. 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43)! Believers are saved to serve! Believers are saved from the service of sin to the service of God (cf. Romans 6)!

20:28 “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” Here is the practical truth of who is greatest (cf. Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10). Jesus knew that He came to (1) reveal the Father; (2) give mankind an example (i.e., selfless service) to follow; and (3) die a substitutionary death

☐ **“and to give His life”** There is a price to be paid for spiritual greatness and it is in service—even sometimes ultimate service, which is laying down your life for a friend (cf. John. 15:13; II Cor. 5:14-15; I John. 3:16).

☐ **“a ransom”** This term (*lytron*) found only twice in the NT, here and Mark 10:45, implied a price paid to purchase the freedom of a slave or prisoner of war. It is used in the LXX to translate *koper* (BDB 497 I), which denotes a life given to cover sin (i.e., Num. 35:31,32). Jesus did something for believers that they could never have done for themselves. The price was paid to reconcile the justice of God and the love of God (cf. Isa. 53; II Cor. 5:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. Gaal, which basically means “to free” by means of a price paid. A form of the term *go’el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Lev. 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Prov. 23:1; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).

2. *Padah*, which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
 - a. the redemption of the first born, Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17
 - b. Physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption, Ps. 49:7,8,15
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion, Ps. 130:7-8

B. The theological concept involves three related items

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
 - a. of the nation, Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go’el*).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
 - a. Father
 - b. Husband
 - c. Near Kin

Redemption was secured through YHWH’s personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.

1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:34). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus’ substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the “curse” of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all! In Jesus, God’s justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
3. *Luō*, “to set free”
 - a. *Lutron*, “a price paid” (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus’ own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutroō*, “to release”
 - (1) to redeem Israel, Luke 24:21
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people, Titus 2:14
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute, I Pet. 1:18-19
 - c. *Lutrōsis*, “redemption, deliverance, or liberation”
 - (1) Zacharias’ prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna’s praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus’ better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
4. *Apolytrōsis* (cf. Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7,14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15)
5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14), which links release to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice; the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

B. The theological concept in the NT implies

1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
2. Mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Rom. 6).

4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and physical intimacy with the Triune God.

▣ **“for many”** This is an allusion to Isa. 53:11-12. The term “many” was not used in a restrictive sense of a special few, but the natural result of Christ’s work. The rabbis and the Qumran community used the term “many” for the community of faith or the elect. By comparing Isa. 53:6c with 53:11d and 12e, we can see the central play between “all” and “many.” This same play is used by Paul in Rom. 5:17-19. Verses 18 and 19 are parallel, which means “all” and “many” are synonymous. This cannot be a proof-text for strict Calvinism! See discussion in NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 96-97.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:29-34

²⁹As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. ³⁰And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!” ³¹The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” ³²And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³³They said to Him, “Lord, *we want our eyes to be opened.*” ³⁴Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

20:29-34 This was another healing miracle of Jesus that displayed His compassion and power. Again characteristically for Matthew there were two blind men healed (and not only one as in Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43).

20:29 “as they were leaving Jericho” It is interesting that both Matthew and Mark (10:46-52) place this healing as Jesus left Jericho, while Luke (18:35-43) places it as He was entering. There was an old Jericho and a new Jericho. It is possible that both accounts are accurate.

▣ **“two blind men”** The healing of the blind was an OT Messianic sign (cf. Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7,16,18). Jesus had compassion on those who others regarded as “throw-away” people (cf. 20:31).

20:30 “Son of David” See note at 9:27. Matthew records the use of this Messianic title often (cf. 1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9,15; 22:42,45).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. In every context where Jesus foretells his death, what do the disciples discuss?
2. Where is the third day mentioned in the OT concerning Jesus resurrection?
3. Is James and John’s mother related to Jesus?
4. Why is verse 28 so important?
5. Explain how “all” and “many” can mean the same.

MATTHEW 21

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem	The Triumphal Entry	Palm Sunday	The Triumphant Entry Into Jerusalem	The Messiah Enters Jerusalem
21:1-11	21:1-11	21:1-11	21:1-3	21:1-9
(5)			21:4-5	(5)
(9b)			21:6-9	(9b)
			21:10	21:10-11
			21:11	
The Cleansing of the Temple	Jesus Cleanses the Temple	Cleansing the Temple	Jesus Goes to the Temple	The Expulsion of the Dealers from the Temple
21:12-13	21:12-17	21:12-13	21:12-13	21:12-17
21:14-17		21:14-17	21:14-15	
			21:16a	(16b)
			21:16b	
			21:17	
The Cursing of the Fig Tree	The Fig Tree	Fig Tree Cursed	Jesus Curses the Fig Tree	The Barren Fig Tree Withers, Faith and Prayer
21:18-22	21:18-19	21:18-22	21:18-19	21:18-22
	The Lesson of the Withered Fig Tree			
	21:20-22		21:20	
			21:21-22	
The Authority of Jesus Questioned	Jesus' Authority Questioned	Jesus' Authority	The Question about Jesus' Authority	The Authority of Jesus is Questioned
21:23-27	21:23-27	21:23-27	21:23	21:23-27
			21:24-25a	
			21:25b-27a	
			21:27b	
The Parable of the Two Sons	The Parable of the Two Sons		The Parable of the Two Sons	Parable of the Two Sons
21:28-32	21:28-32	21:28-32	21:28-31a	21:28-32
			21:31b	
			21:31c-32	
The Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants	The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers	Parable of the Vineyard	The Parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard	Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen
21:33-44	21:33-46	21:33-41	21:33-39	21:33-43
			21:40	

		21:41	
(42b)	21:42-44	21:42	(42)
		21:43-44	
21:45-46	21:45-46	21:45-46	21:45-46

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR 21:1-17

- A. The Triumphal Entry was a significant prophetic act. It, along with the cleansing of the temple, proclaimed Jesus to be the promised Messiah. These two events are paralleled in
 1. Triumphal Entry, Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:29-44, and John. 12:12-19
 2. Cleansing of the temple, Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47
- B. There is a paradoxical aspect to the Triumphal Entry. Jesus was obviously fulfilling the prediction of Zech. 9:9, and the shouts of the crowd were an affirmation of His Messiahship. However, it must be remembered that these Hallel Psalms (i.e., 113-118) were used to welcome the pilgrims every year as they came to Jerusalem for the Passover. The fact that they were applying them to a particular person was the uniqueness of this event. This is clearly seen in the consternation of the religious leaders.
- C. The cleansing of the Temple recorded in vv. 12-17 was possibly a second cleansing by Jesus. The first one was recorded in John. 2:13-16. I personally do not accept the tenets of literary criticism that telescope these two events into one. Although there is a problem in unifying the chronology of the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John, it still seems best to me, because of the differences between the two accounts, to hold to two cleansings, one early in His ministry and one near the end. This (along with Jesus' parables of the leadership's rejection) explains the growing animosity of the religious leaders of Jerusalem.
- D. The cleansing of the temple had several theological purposes.
 1. to assert Jesus' authority and Kingship
 2. as an act of judgment on Israel's leaders (foreshadowing of A.D. 70)
 3. as a clarification of the purpose of the temple to be a house of prayer for all people (cf. Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8)
 4. to bring the confrontation between Himself and the Jewish leaders to a climax which would result in His arrest and death (cf. Mark 10:45)
 5. to show that the Jews gloried and trusted in the temple (cf. Jeremiah 7), but needed to glory in God and trust in His Messiah/King (Jesus).

6. to set the stage for the parables of the rejection of
 - a. Israel
 - b. Israel's leadership

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-11

¹When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²instructing them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION,
 BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU,
 GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY,
 EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.”

⁶The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, ⁷and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. ⁸Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. ⁹The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,

Hosanna to the Son of David;
 BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;
 Hosanna in the highest!”

¹⁰When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

21:1 “Bethphage” This name meant “house of figs.” This village was located somewhere between Bethany and Jerusalem on the long ridge known as the Mount of Olives.

▣ “Mount of Olives” It is uncertain where Jesus spent the nights the last week of His life. Some assert that He went back to Bethany and stayed with Lazarus; others say that He bivouacked on the Mount of Olives, possibly in the specific location of the Garden of Gethsemane. Reality is probably the combination of both (cf. John. 12:1-10).

21:2-3 This is one of those accounts that is either a miracle of Jesus’ supernatural knowledge or a pre-arrangement. There are accounts of both in the New Testament. In context it seems to be a pre-arranged meeting.

21:2 “a donkey tied *there* and a colt with her” In John. 12:14 a donkey is mentioned but not a colt. The reason that the colt is significant is because of the symbolism of the donkey to Israel. The donkey was the mount of the king (i.e., II Sam. 18:9). The king had a royal donkey on which no one but he ever rode. The fact that Jesus came riding on a donkey, particularly on one that had never been ridden, is a fulfillment of the prophecy mentioned in v. 5, from Zech. 9:9, with a possible allusion to Isa. 62:11. Some late Greek manuscripts add “Zachariah” before “prophet,” while some of the editions of the Vulgate and the Coptic translations add “Isaiah.” The donkey was not only a symbol of royalty, but the colt a symbol of humility and peace.

21:3 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which denotes potential action.

21:5 This is a quote from Isa. 62:11 and Zech. 9:9.

21:7 “and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats” This act of placing their coats on the two animals is much like our festival saddles used during a parade. It is obvious that Jesus rode on the colt although the Greek text is somewhat ambiguous. “Them” in the Greek texts referred to the coats on both animals, not the animals.

21:8 “spread their coats in the road” This was another aspect of a royal parade which is similar to our modern expression of “rolling out the red carpet” for a distinguished visitor. There is even a historical allusion to this same act being done to (1) Jehu in II Kgs. 9:13, and (2) Simon Maccabeus in I Mac. 13:51 and II Mac. 10:7.

▣ **“and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road”** Although this symbolic act was regularly done during the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Lev. 23:13-20), those branches were much larger than these. The branches used here were smaller and are comparable to the modern custom of spreading rose petals before a bride as she walks down the aisle. These three acts: (1) the coats on the animals, (2) the coats spread in the road, and (3) the branches spread in the road show that they were honoring Jesus as the coming royal, Davidic King (Messiah).

21:9 “The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting” The term “shouting” is an IMPERFECT TENSE which implied that they shouted repeatedly. The quote comes from Ps. 118:26-27. It was part of the Passover liturgy known as the Hallel Psalms (cf. Ps. 113-118). These were used every year at the place where the road rose to Jerusalem to welcome the pilgrims to the Feast of Passover, but this year there was unique expectation in the person of Jesus. These verses applied uniquely to Him! He was their fulfillment!

▣

NASB, NKJV,
NRSV, NJB “Hosanna”
TEV “Praise to”

The term may have been an Aramaic idiom meaning “royal power to.” Literally, this term in Hebrew was “*Hosanna*” (BDB 446, cf. Ps. 118:25), which came to be used as a regular greeting. Originally it meant “save us now.” The first usage referred to Jesus and the second (Ps. 118:26; v. 10) to God the Father, praising Him for sending the Messiah.

▣ **“in the highest”** This was a CIRCUMLOCUTION for heaven or the presence of God.

▣ **“Son of David”** This was a Messianic title (cf. Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 22:42). This was an allusion to II Samuel 7, which predicted that there would always be a descendant of the Davidic line on the throne. This was the necessary fulfillment of the Messiah being from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10; Ps. 60:7; 108:8).

▣ **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD”** The parallel in Luke adds “He that is king” and this was the explicit implication.

21:10 “and when He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, ‘Who is this’” It is true that many people had heard about the mighty works of Jesus and attributed to Him the title of prophet (cf. v. 11). But it needed to be clearly revealed that He was not only a prophet, but the predicted Messiah. The events that follow will clearly reveal this to anyone who had spiritual eyes to see.

At this point Luke 19:41-44 inserts Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem; however, Matthew does not record this until 23:37-39. The Gospel writers had the ability under inspiration to select, adapt, arrange and summarize Jesus’ words and teachings. The Gospels are not a western chronological history but a theological tract to win the lost and teach the saved.

21:11 “the crowds were saying, ‘This is the prophet Jesus’” The recognition of Jesus’ divine inspiration and power relates to the Messianic prophecy of Deut. 18:15-19. The people freely admitted that Jesus was a prophet of God (cf. Luke 7:16; 24:19; John. 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17). This context also asserted His Messiahship. See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at 11:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:12-13

¹²And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. ¹³And He said to them, “It is written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you are making it a ROBBERS’ DEN.”

21:12 “and Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves” This was the second cleansing of the Temple (cf. John. 2:15). The High Priest and his family were the owners of these particular booths. They purchased the right from the Roman authorities. They originally had been set up to aid those pilgrims from foreign lands who were unable to bring sacrificial animals and the right type of money (shekel) that the temple required. These booths charged outrageous prices. If a man did bring his own animal, the priestly inspectors would find some defect in it so that they had to purchase an animal from the booth operator for a highly inflated price.

The Temple only accepted shekels (cf. Exod. 30:13). There were no longer any Jewish shekels available, but there were Tyrian ones. Pilgrims were charged exorbitant prices for exchanging into this coinage. The doves were available for the poorest people so that they could make a sacrifice (cf. Lev. 1:14; 5:7,11; 12:8; 14:22; Luke 2:24), but the High Priests were charging exorbitant prices even for them.

This is an example of Jesus' anger at the religious exploitation by the Jewish leaders of His day. If anger is a sin, Jesus would have sinned (cf. Eph. 4:26).

21:13 “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’” All of this buying and selling was taking place in the Court of the Gentiles, which was meant to be a place to attract the nations to the worship of YHWH. Jesus quoted Isa. 56:7 and made an allusion to Jer. 7:11. In Mark's parallel (cf. 11:17), he adds the phrase, 'shall be a house of prayer for all nations.' Matthew, writing to Jews, left out this universal emphasis while Mark, writing to Romans, included it.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:14-17

¹⁴And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant ¹⁶and said to Him, “Do You hear what these *children* are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF?’” ¹⁷And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

21:14 “And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them” Verses 14 and 15 are unique to Matthew, but they do show that, even at this late date, Jesus was still trying to confirm His message to the religious leaders by performing miraculous acts of love and compassion right in the Temple area. These were OT signs of the Messiah.

1. sight to the blind (cf. Isa. 29:18; 42:7,16)
2. help to the lame (cf. Isa. 40:11; Mic. 4:6; Zeph. 3:19)
3. both signs together in Jer. 31:8 and Isa. 35:5-6

If they simply had spiritual eyes to see, they would have seen His authority, compassion, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but they did not.

21:15 “but when the chief priests and scribes” The usual designation of the Sanhedrin (see Special Topic at 20:18) included the High Priest, scribes, and elders (cf. v. 23; 16:21). This was a way of referring to those in places of leadership in Jerusalem of Jesus' day.

▣ **“the children who were shouting in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they became indignant”** Apparently the children (used of Jesus at twelve, cf. Luke 2:43) had heard the Hallel Psalms applied to Jesus the day before and they were repeating the refrain which had upset the Pharisees earlier.

21:16 “and said to Him, ‘Do You hear what these children are saying’” In Luke 19:39 other Pharisees complained about this same thing. Jesus accepted these titles as another way of affirming His Messianic claims.

▣ **“Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; have you never read’”** This was a strong statement which implied that they were not familiar with their own Scriptures. Jesus used irony and sarcasm several times in relation to the religious leaders (cf. 12:3; 19:4; 21:42; 22:31). Jesus, at this point, quoted Ps. 8:2. This was not necessarily a Messianic Psalm, but it is a Psalm which asserted that children (nursing ones, possibly up to three years of age or older) will speak the truth before adults even understand it.

21:17 “He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there” In John. 12:1-10, Jesus stayed with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha several nights during this last week of His life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive

1. Why is the Triumphal Entry so significant?
2. Why is it important that Jesus rode on the colt of a donkey?
3. Explain the significance of Psalm 118:26-27. What was unique about this year's welcoming parade?
4. Why was Jesus so upset with the buyers and sellers in the Temple?
5. Why did the religious leaders not rejoice in Jesus' miracles?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR 21:18-46

- A. Chapter 21 begins with the Triumphal Entry and closes with the second of three parables. It was an attempt to discuss Jesus' Messiahship with the Jewish leaders.
- B. It is extremely difficult to be certain whether Jesus is rejecting (1) the Jewish nation, (2) her leaders, or (3) both.
- C. The cleansing of the Temple in vv. 12-17 was an act of rejection. The cursing of the fig tree in verses 18-22 was an act of rejection. The parable of the two sons in vv. 28-32 was a parable of rejection. The parable of the wicked tenants, vv. 33-46, was a parable of rejection. The parable of the King's wedding feasts, chapter 22:1-14, was a parable of rejection. The question remains, were the leaders symbolic of all the nation or was it rabbinical Judaism in particular that Jesus was rejecting?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:18-19

¹⁸Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. ¹⁹Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be *any* fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.

21:18 "Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city" The time sequence in Mark is slightly different (cf. Mark 11:12-14, 20-21). Apparently Jesus was returning from Bethany, which was two miles from Jerusalem (cf. Mark 11:12).

21:19 "Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it" It was legal for a traveler to stop and take food from a fruit tree or a field (cf. Deut. 23:24-25).

☐ **"and found nothing on it except leaves only"** Mark 11:13 adds "it was not the time for figs." This makes this a prophetic act of rejection of the Jewish leaders or of the nation. Outwardly they looked prosperous, spiritual, and religious but there was no supernatural fruit (cf. Col. 2:21-23; II Tim. 3:5; Isa. 29:13).

☐ **"No longer shall there ever"** Jesus spoke Aramaic but thought in Hebrew terms. See Special Topic following for the words "ever" or "forever" taken from my OT commentaries.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOMS, 'OLAM)

The etymology of the Hebrew term *'olam*, עולם (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
 - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
 - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
 - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16
 - d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
 - e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
2. future time
 - a. one's life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
 - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
 - c. continuous existence
 - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
 - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:5
 - d. existence of God
 - (1) Gen. 21:33
 - (2) Exod. 15:18

- (3) Deut. 32:40
- (4) Ps. 93:2
- (5) Isa. 40:28
- (6) Jer. 10:10
- (7) Dan. 12:7
- e. the covenant
 - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
 - (2) Exod. 31:16
 - (3) Lev. 24:8
 - (4) Num. 18:19
 - (5) II Sam. 23:5
 - (6) Ps. 105:10
 - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
 - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
- f. special covenant with David
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
 - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
 - (3) II Chr. 13:5
 - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
 - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
- g. God's Messiah
 - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
 - (2) Isa. 9:6
- h. God's laws
 - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
 - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
 - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
 - (4) Ps. 119:89,160
- i. God's promises
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
 - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
 - (3) Ps. 18:50
 - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
 - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:18; 48:4
 - (2) Exod. 32:13
 - (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
 - (1) Exod. 12:14; 12:14,17,24
 - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
 - (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
 - (1) I Kgs. 8:P13
 - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
 - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
 - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
 - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13

- (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
 - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
 - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
 - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:7; 89:1
 - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
 - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
 - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
3. both backward and forward in time (“from everlasting to everlasting”)
- a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
 - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
 - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term’s meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

☐ **“and at once the fig tree withered”** Mark 11:20 records that the withering happened the next morning. There is a related parable found in Luke 13:6-9. This was an object lesson against the ostentatious religious exhibitionism of the Jewish leaders and the abominable absence of love and commitment to God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:20-22

²⁰Seeing *this*, the disciples were amazed and asked, “How did the fig tree wither *all* at once?” ²¹And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen. ²²And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

21:21 “Truly” See note and Special Topic at 5:18.

☐ **“if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant potential future action.

☐ **“have faith and do not doubt”** This theme is crucial (cf. 17:20; James 1:6-8) because the new age of the Spirit is different from the current evil age. It is an age of faith/trust in God, His word, and His Son! This verse does not relate to the will of individual believers, but to the revealed will of God acted out in life. Israel failed the faith test! There were consequences to this failure! This event is theologically parallel to the cleansing of the temple earlier in the chapter.

☐ **“this mountain”** This referred to the Mt. of Olives, which would have been in clear view.

☐ **“the sea”** This referred to the Dead Sea, also visible from the Mt. of Olives. In the OT this action of lowering the mountains and raising the valleys was usually associated with the Gentiles having physical access to YHWH in Jerusalem. The context then should not be interpreted as advocating power miracles through faith but is idiomatic of spiritual access to God for the Gentiles which the Jewish leaders actions had stifled (i.e., court of Gentiles used primarily for merchant booths). This context must be seen as one of a series of rejection passages (vv. 12-17; vv. 28-32; vv. 33-46; 22:1-14).

21:22 “And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” Notice the unconditional promise linked to mankind’s conditional response. This was a quite common way to express biblical truth but it is difficult for western-oriented people, who like clear cut black and white statements, to deal with biblical, dialectical paradoxes. Answered prayer must be linked to God’s will and mankind’s faith (compare Matt. 18:19; John. 14:13-14; 15:7,16; 16:23; I John. 3:22; 5:14-15 with Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8; 18:9-14; Mark 11:23-24; and James 1:6-7; 4:3).

The worst thing that God could do for faithless children is answer their selfish, materialistic requests. Those believers who seek the mind of Christ ask for things that please God and extend His kingdom. See Special Topic on Prayer at 18:19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:23-27

²³When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John was from what *source*, from heaven or from men?” And they *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, “Then why did you not believe him?” ²⁶But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all consider John to be a prophet.” ²⁷And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

21:23 “the chief priests and elders of the people” Notice in verse 15 they are called “chief priests” and “scribes.” These three groups made up the Sanhedrin. Whether they were an official or unofficial delegation is uncertain, but they represented the Jewish leadership. The phrase “elders of the people” is unique to Matthew (cf. 21:23; 26:3,47; 27:1).

▣ **“while He was teaching”** Jesus taught under Solomon’s portico (cf. Acts 3:11; 5:12) in the Court of the Gentiles within the Temple area. He was still trying to reach the Jewish leadership.

▣ **“By what authority are You doing these things”** This was the central question! “These things” could refer to the cleansing of the Temple (cf. vv. 12-16), Jesus’ rejection of oral tradition, or His public miracles. They could not deny the miraculous acts, so they attacked the source of His authority. Apparently the religious leaders of Jesus’ day thought Jesus was an extremely powerful demon possessed person (cf. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; John. 7:20; 8:48,52; 10:20-21).

21:24-27 This discussion sets the stage for the three parables that follow. It shows the compromising position of the religious leaders. These men had been trying to catch Jesus on the “horns of a dilemma” for several months. Now He reversed their strategy.

21:24, 25, 26 There are three THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, which meant potential future action.

21:26 “a prophet” See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at 11:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:28-32

²⁸“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not.’; but afterward he regretted it and went. ³⁰The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing *this*, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.”

21:28 “a man had two sons” This parable is unique to Matthew. The ancient Greek manuscripts vary on the order of the two son’s response. The order is really not significant in seeing the relationship of this parable to vv. 23-27. The comparison is made between the religious leaders and the common people of the land.

21:31 “the tax-collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you” This was such a startling statement to the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day. It must have truly shocked them as Matt. 5:20; 8:11-12; 19:24-25,30 and 20:16 did. The leaders recognized that Jesus was unambiguously asserting their rejection and the welcoming of sinners and the common person (and by implication the Gentiles).

Matthew predominately used the term “the Kingdom of Heaven,” because he was writing to Jewish hearers who were fearful of using God’s name; however, in 6:33, 12:28, and 21:31, the phrase most common in Mark and Luke was used by Matthew. Possibly it was used to shock the Jews into listening.

21:32 “for John came to you in the way of righteousness” Jesus and John represented two approaches. John came in the tradition of the elders and was rejected (v. 24-26). Jesus came as a friend of sinners and was accused of being a wine-bibber (cf. Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Both of them were rejected!

The term “way” was an OT idiom of a lifestyle of faith (i.e., Exod. 32:8; Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28). It was the first title of the church, “The Way” (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22).

☐ “you did not believe him. . .did believe him” Behind this imagery is the need to believe Jesus and it is open to any and all humans made in God’s image!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:33-41

³³“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. ³⁴When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. ³⁵The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. ³⁷But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ ³⁹They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?” ⁴¹They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons.”

21:33 “listen to another parable” The parable is paralleled in Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19. This is the strongest parable on God’s rejection of Israel and her leaders!

☐ “who planted a vineyard” This has an obvious connection to Isa. 5. The vineyard has always been a symbol for the nation of Israel. This parable is the most allegorical of the three. The slaves represent the prophets. The son represents the Messiah (notice there is a son in each of the parables in this chapter, but used in different senses). The tenants represent the nation of Israel or at least her leaders.

In the immediate context the new tenants refer to the common people of the land, but in the larger context it referred to the Gentiles (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46; Acts 1:8).

21:41 The crowd answers the question and seals their own doom. There is a word play which is translated “those wretches (*kakous*) to a wretched (*kakōs*) end.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:42-44

⁴²Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures,
‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER STONE;
THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’?”

⁴³Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it.
⁴⁴And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

21:42 “Did you never read in the Scriptures” This was a quote from Ps. 118:22-23. Originally this referred to the nation of Israel rejected by the Gentiles. How ironical that it now refers to the nation of Israel rejected by God and His acceptance of the common person and by implication the Gentiles.

☐ “stone” The “stone” was a title of God in the OT (cf. Ps. 18). It was used of the Messiah as the only sure foundation in Isa. 28:16. It was used as a metaphor of the coming Messianic kingdom in Dan. 2:34,44-45. The Messiah can be both a sure and sturdy foundation sent by God or a destructive judgment sent by God! Resurrection Day will also be Judgment Day! See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE

I. OT Usages

- A. The concept of a stone as a hard durable item which made a good foundation was used to describe YHWH (cf. Ps. 18:1).
- B. It then developed into a Messianic title (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16).
- C. It came to represent a judgment from YHWH by the Messiah (cf. Isa. 8:14; Dan. 2:34-35,44-45).
- D. This developed into a building metaphor.

1. a foundation stone, the first placed, which was secure and set the angles for the rest of the building, called “the cornerstone”
2. it could also refer to the final stone put in place, which holds the walls together (cf. Zech. 4:7; Eph. 2:20,21), called “the cap stone” from the Hebrew *rush* (i.e., head)
3. it could refer to the “key stone,” which is in the center of the doorway arch and holds the weight of the entire wall.

II. NT Usages

- A. Jesus quoted Ps. 118 several times in reference to Himself (cf. Matt. 21:41-46; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17)
- B. Paul uses Ps. 118 in connection with YHWH’s rejection of faithless, rebellious Israel (cf. Rom. 9:33)
- C. Paul uses the concept of a “corner stone” in Eph. 2:20-22 in reference to Christ
- D. Peter uses this concept of Jesus in I Pet. 2:1-10. Jesus is the cornerstone and believers are the living stones (i.e., believers as temples, cf. I Cor. 6:19), built on Him (Jesus is the new Temple, cf. Mark 14:58; Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-20).

The Jews rejected the very foundation of their hope when they rejected Jesus as Messiah

III. Theological Statements

- A. YHWH allowed David/Solomon to build a temple. He told them that if they kept the covenant He would bless them and be with them, but if they did not the temple would be in ruins (cf. I Kgs. 9:1-9)!
- B. Rabbinical Judaism focused on form and ritual and neglected the personal aspect of faith (this is not a blanket statement; there were godly rabbis). God seeks a daily, personal, godly relationship with those created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Luke 20:17-18 contains frightening words of judgment.
- C. Jesus used the concept of a temple to represent His physical body. This continues and expands the concept of personal faith in Jesus as the Messiah as key to a relationship with YHWH.
- D. Salvation is meant to restore the image of God in human beings so that fellowship with God is possible. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness now. Believers are to become living stones built on/patterned after Christ (the new temple).
- E. Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the cap stone of our faith (i.e., the Alpha and Omega). Yet also the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. To miss Him is to miss everything. There can be no middle ground here!

21:43 “and given to a nation” This passage and the parable found in Matt. 22:1-14 lead one to believe that these three connected parables deal with the rejection of the nation of Israel, not only its leaders. At the least it was a rejection of rabbinical Judaism. The word for Gentiles was literally “the nations.”

21:44 The NASB and NRSV include verse 44 while the RSV, TEV and JB only put it in a footnote. This verse is similar to Luke 20:18 and the RSV, JB and TEV translation committees assumed it was transferred to Matthew by a copyist. UBS⁴ gives it a “C” rating. However, the Greek text in Luke and Matthew are not exact. This verse was also included in many ancient Greek uncial manuscripts: \aleph , B, C, K, L, W & Z and also in the Latin, Syriac, Coptic and Armenian translations, as well as the Greek texts used by Chrysostom, Cyril, Jerome and Augustine. As a matter of fact, the earliest Greek manuscript that omits it is the sixth century manuscript, D (*Bezae*). It should be included.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:45-46

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

⁴⁶When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

21:45 “when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them”
The religious leaders of Jesus’ day recognized completely what Jesus was saying. What terrible irony! The disciples did not understand, but the Sadducees and Pharisees did!

21:46 “prophet” See Special Topic at 11:9.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the relationship between the cleansing of the Temple, the cursing of the fig tree, and the three parables?
2. Was Jesus rejecting rabbinical Judaism, the religious leaders, or national Israel? Why?
3. How is it possible that non-religious, socially ostracized sinners, such as tax-collectors and prostitutes, can possibly be saved while such pious, conservative, biblical-oriented religious leaders are spiritually lost? (cf Matt. 5:20,48)
4. Explain how Psalm 118:22-23 is related to Jesus' statements about His rejection.
5. How are vv. 43-46 related to 8:11-12, 19:30, and 20:16?

MATTHEW 22

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Marriage Feast 22:1-14	The Parable of the Wedding Feast 22:1-14	The Marriage Feast 22:1-10 22:11-14	The Parable of the Wedding Feast 22:1-10 22:11-13 22:14	Parable of the Wedding Feast 22:1-14
Paying Taxes to Caesar 22:15-22	The Pharisees: Is It Unlawful to Pay Taxes to Caesar? 22:15-22	Paying Taxes to Caesar 22:15-22	The Questions About Paying Taxes 22:15-17 22:18-19a 22:19b-20 22:21a 22:21b 22:22	On Tribute to Caesar 22:15-22
The Question About Resurrection 22:23-33	The Sadducees: What About the Resurrection? 22:23-33	Question About the Resurrection 22:23-28 22:29-33	The Question About Rising From Death 22:23-28 22:29-32 2:33	The Resurrection of the Dead 22:23-33
The Great Commandment 22:34-40	The Scribes: Which is the First Commandment of All? 22:34-40	The Great Commission 22:34-40	The Great Commandment 22:34-36 22:37-40	The Greatest Commandment of All 22:34-40
The Question About David's Son 22:41-46 (44)	Jesus: How Can David Call His Descendant Lord? 22:41-46	David's Son 22:41-46	The Question About the Messiah 22:41-42b 22:42c 22:43-45 22:46	Christ Not Only Son but Also Lord of David 22:41-46 (44)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR 22:1-14

- A. This is the last of three parables that Jesus addressed to the religious leaders in Jerusalem (cf. 21:23). The parables are found in the context of Jesus' cleansing the Temple (cf. 21:12-17) and cursing the fig tree (cf. 21:18-22), both of which are signs of God's rejection of the Jewish leadership, rabbinical Judaism, or the nation.
- B. One of the major questions one must answer in interpreting these parables is to whom do they refer and apply?
 1. Jewish leadership v. Jewish common man (cf. 21:31)
 2. Jews v. Gentiles (cf. 21:41, 43; 22:3-5, 8, 9, 10)
 3. Unrepentant and apathetic people v. repentant humble people
- C. There are possibly two parables in vv. 1-14. This is because:
 1. The term "parables" in verse 1 is plural.
 2. There seem to be internal and contextual problems between vv. 1-10 and 11-14, especially relating to the wedding garments.
- D. There is also the related question of how many speakers are represented in verses 1-14:
 1. obviously, the king
 2. obviously, the king's servants
 3. possibly the Gospel writer himself in v. 7
 4. possibly Jesus Himself commenting in v. 14
- E. The three parables in this literary context are possibly related:
 1. The first parable is the rejection of God's messenger, i.e., John the Baptist.
 2. The second parable is the rejection of God's son, the Messiah.
 3. The third parable is the rejection of God's grace.
- F. It is possible that verses 1-10 relate to God's undeserved, unmerited grace toward fallen humanity, while verses 11-13 relate to human responsibility after experiencing the grace of God. The parable is too ambiguous to build doctrine at this point, but the same truth is reflected in Eph. 2:8-9, 10. This would then emphasize the truth that salvation begins with the grace of God, but must continue with initial and life-long repentance and faith. We are not saved by works, but we are saved unto good works.
- G. This parable is similar in several ways to Luke 14:16-24. Critical scholarship has asserted that it is two accounts of the same teaching session. Jesus used the same teaching stories in many different contexts. The Gospel writers did not have the freedom to put words in Jesus' mouth. They did have the freedom, under inspiration, to select from, combine, and summarize His teachings. A good example would be Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount," (cf. Matt. 5-7) when compared to Luke's "Sermon on the Plain" (cf. Luke 6).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-10

¹Jesus spoke to them, again in parables, saying, ²"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴Again he sent out other slaves saying, "Tell those who have been invited, 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are *all* butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast. ⁵But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find *there*, invite to the wedding feast.' ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests."

22:1 "in parables" Note the PLURAL, which can mean one of three things

1. Matthew has combined several parables of Jesus
2. Jesus used the same stories at different times to express different truths
3. Jesus was simply speaking to them in parabolic fashion (cf. Mark 4:10-12)

22:2 "the kingdom of heaven" This topic was a recurrent theme in Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry (see Special Topic at 4:17). It is both a current reality and a future hope. Basically, it is the reign of God in men's hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth. This phrase was synonymous with "the kingdom of God" in Mark and Luke. Matthew, writing to Jews, is more reluctant to use the name of God.

☐ **"a king. . . his son"** Although it is inappropriate to turn parables into allegories, it does seem that this royal motif is related to God. It is also interesting that in all three parables in Matt. 21:28-22:14 "a son" plays a part in the story. It is true that it is a minor part in this parable, but it is still present. One is tempted to see God as the King and Jesus as the royal son. The wedding feast then becomes an allusion to the Messianic banquet (cf. Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29; 14:15; 22:16; Rev. 19:9,17).

22:3 "those who had been invited" This was literally "call the called." It was customary in the Ancient Near East for two invitations to be given: an original invitation and an announcement that the feast was ready.

☐ **"but they were unwilling to come"** This IMPERFECT TENSE implies a repeated refusal.

22:4 "I have prepared my dinner" The term referred to the first of two daily meals (cf. Luke 14:12). In this time and culture, there was a meal at mid-morning (9 a.m.-12 p.m.) and one at twilight (3 p.m.- 6 p.m.). This meal would have begun a feast which lasted several days.

22:5 "But they paid no attention" This implied an apathy or indifference to the royal invitation. There is an easy and obvious transition to fallen humanity's attitudes toward the gospel.

☐ **"one to his farm, another to his business"** This is similar to Luke 14:18-19. Their actions were not wicked, but indifference to God's call in Christ is a serious mistake.

22:6 The violence of this verse is shocking. One is surprised by this type of reaction in response to the rejection of an invitation to a wedding feast. To refuse a king's invitation to anything in the Middle East was considered an inexcusable insult. This is probably a literary technique showing a relationship to the previous parable (cf. 21:35). Some ignore God's call; some are violent in their rejection (i.e., Saul of Tarsus).

22:7 The reaction of the King also seems out of place. Many have assumed that a rejection of the royal invitation was really rebellion against the King. Some commentators have noted the similarity of verse 7 to the historical destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman General, and later Emperor, Titus. Some have asserted that Matthew added this to Jesus' parable. I feel uncomfortable with this extension of Matthew's freedom in dealing with the words of Jesus. Although I would allow the Gospel writers the freedom to select, adapt, rearrange, and summarize the teachings of Jesus under inspiration, I cannot allow them to put words in His mouth which He never spoke.

22:8 This, too, is similar to Luke 14:21-23.

22:9 The King wanted his son's wedding feast to be well attended. Those who should have come refused. From the context and verse 15, the Jewish leadership realized Jesus was addressing them.

22:10 "and gathered together all they found, both evil and good" The question has always been, "To whom does this refer?" In context it seems to refer to the ostracized Jewish poor. The terms "good and evil" would then refer to their willingness and ability to keep or not keep the oral traditions of the elders (i.e., 15:2). The obvious implication is that God freely accepts sinners. Some recognize their need and some do not! The invitation has been issued, now who will respond?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:11-14

¹¹"But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes,¹² and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless.¹³ Then the king said to his servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen."

22:11 "wedding clothes" Through the years many commentators have noted the problems between vv. 9-10 and 11. It does not mention banquet preparation in 9-10, but demands it in v. 11. Augustine, following some limited historical evidence, assumed that the host provided a special party garment. This would mean the man refused it or entered in an inappropriate way. The inappropriately dressed man seems to recognize his position by his lack of response in v. 12.

22:13 As earlier in vv. 6 and 7, v. 13 is a shocking statement. Possibly all of these verses are meant to be Oriental overstatements (hyperboles); however, the severity of the punishment fits the crime of rejecting God's gracious offer (cf. vv. 6-7) and refusing to walk in God's grace (cf. v. 13).

☐ "throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" This was a common idiom used often in Matthew to describe the condition of humans who reject God (cf. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). It implied a current (cf. Luke 16:19-31) as well as eschatological setting (cf. 24:51).

22:14 This is a difficult verse to interpret. Many say it relates to vv. 2-10, but not 11-13. It seems to focus on God's gracious gift extended to all (i.e., John 1:12; 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9). However, fallen mankind must respond appropriately. God does choose, but He has chosen that mankind must respond by repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21) to the gospel of Jesus mediated through the wooing of the Holy Spirit (cf. John. 6:44,65).

This verse may relate to God's revelation to the children of Abraham (cf. Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16; 2:9). They rejected God's offer in Christ, so the gospel was given to the Gentiles who eagerly embraced it (i.e., Romans 9-11). This entire context expresses the truth that the expected outcome in spiritual matters was going to be reversed (cf. 19:30; 20:16)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this parable related to chapter 21?
2. How many parables are there in verses 1-14?
3. To whom does the phrase "invited guests" in verses 3-5 refer?
4. To whom does the phrase "both the good and bad" of verse 10 refer?
5. How do you explain the presence of such violence in verses 6, 7, and 13?
6. How does verse 14 relate to verses 1-14?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:15-22

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. ¹⁷Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show Me the coin *used* for the poll-tax.” And they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹They said to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²And hearing *this*, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away.

22:15 “Pharisees” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PHARISEES

The term had one of the following possible origins.

- A. “To be separate.” This group developed during the Maccabean period. (This is the most widely accepted view.)
- B. “To divide.” This is another meaning of the same Hebrew root. Some say it meant an interpreter.
- C. “Persian.” This possibility is taken from an Aramaic root. Some of the doctrines of the Pharisees have much in common with Persian Zoroastrian dualism.

They developed during the Maccabean Period from the “Hasidim” (“pious men”). Several different groups, like the Essenes, came out of the anti-Hellenistic reaction to Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Pharisees are first mentioned in Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 8:5:1-3.

Their major doctrines:

- A. Belief in Coming Messiah, which was influenced by inter-biblical Jewish apocalyptic literature like I Enoch.
- B. God active in daily life. This was directly opposite from the Sadducees. Much of Pharisaic doctrine is a theological counterpoint to the Sadducees’ doctrines.
- C. An after-life based on earthly life which involved reward and punishment. This may have come from Dan. 12:2.
- D. Authority of the OT and the Oral Traditions (Talmud). They were conscious of being obedient to the OT commands of God as they were interpreted and applied by rabbinical scholars (i.e., Shammai, the conservative, and Hillel, the liberal). The rabbinical interpretation was based on a dialogue between rabbis of two differing philosophies, one conservative and one liberal. These oral discussions over the meaning of Scripture were finally written down in two forms: the Babylonian Talmud and the incomplete Palestinian Talmud. They believed that Moses had received these oral interpretations on Mt. Sinai. The historical beginning of these discussions being written down was Ezra and the men of the “Great Synagogue” (later called the Sanhedrin).
- E. Highly developed Angelology. This involved both good and evil spiritual beings. This is revealed from Persian dualism and inter-biblical Jewish literature.

☐ **“plotted together”** This term is used by Matthew to document the numerous times and ways that the religious leaders gathered together to plan to thwart Jesus’ ministry (cf. 12:14; 22:15; 26:4; 27:1,7; 28:12).

In this instance Pharisees even consulted with Herodians to trick Jesus. They hated each other, but they both felt threatened by Jesus and His teachings. Hate makes strange “bedfellows”!

22:16 “Herodians” See Special Topic at 2:1.

☐ **“Teacher”** This group of religious leaders is trying to flatter Jesus in order to trick Him (cf. v. 15). Notice how they characterize Him.

1. we know You are truthful
2. we know You teach the way of God in truth
3. we know You defer to no one
4. we know You are not partial to any (lit. “do not lift the face”)

If these Pharisees and Herodians really believed these statements, why did they reject His teachings?

22:17 **“Is it lawful”** This meant according to the oral traditions which interpreted the Mosaic Law (i.e., “traditions of the elders,” 15:2). Jesus changed the question from an “either/or” to a “both/and” (cf. v. 21).

☐ **“poll-tax”** This was a Roman tax that went directly to the Emperor. It was levied on every male 14-65 years old and every female 12-65 years old who lived in the imperial provinces.

22:18 “testing” This Greek term had the connotation of “to test with a view toward destruction.” See Special Topic at 4:1. These Jewish leaders knew that the Jewish population was not in support of this tax. If Jesus answered one way He would be in trouble with the Roman authorities; if the other, the Jewish population.

☐ **“hypocrites”** This compound term meant “to judge under” (cf. 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7; 16:3; 23:13,15,25,26,27,29; 24:51). It referred to people who acted one way while truly living or feeling another.

22:19 “Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax” This coin was a “denarius.” It was a day’s wage for soldiers and laborers. On the front was a picture of Tiberius with the saying, “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the Divine Augustus.” On the back was a picture of Tiberius seated on a throne and an inscription, “Highest Priest.” Tiberius ruled the Roman Empire from A.D. 14-37. Coinage was a symbol of who was in governmental control. See Special Topic: Coins in Use in Palestine in Jesus’ Day at 17:24.

22:21 “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” The Bible is clear that believers are to pray for and support the governmental authority they live under regardless of its form unless it usurps the place of God in the life of the believer (cf. Rom. 13:1ff.; Tit. 3:1; I Pet. 2:13). Jesus changed the word “pay” of v. 17 to “pay back.”

☐ **“and to God the things that are God’s”** The government, although ordained by God, cannot demand allegiance as a divine power. Believers must reject all ultimate claims of authority, for God alone is the ultimate authority. We must be careful of basing our modern political theory of separation of church and state on this passage. The Bible does not clearly speak on this issue, but western history does!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Can you list and define all the religious and political groups within Judaism of Jesus’ day mentioned in the NT?
2. Why were these groups trying to trick Jesus?
3. What is the implication of Jesus’ statement in verse 21 for our day?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:23-33

²³On that day *some* Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, ²⁴asking, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.’ ²⁵Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; ²⁶so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. ²⁷Last of all, the woman died. ²⁸In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had *married* her.” ²⁹But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. ³¹But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: ³²I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB? HE IS NOT THE GOD OF THE DEAD BUT OF THE LIVING.” ³³When the crowds heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

22:23 “Sadducees” See Special Topic at 2:4.

▣ **“questioned Him”** This question also was meant to force Jesus to deal with a controversial topic, and thereby, alienate Himself from a segment of the Jewish population.

22:24 “Moses said” This is a reference to Deut. 25:5-6.

▣ **“if”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which meant potential future action.

▣ **“HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE”** This dealt with the concept of “Levirate marriage” (cf. Deut. 25:5-6; Ruth 4:1-2). This term comes from the Latin term for “brother-in-law.” In ancient Israel the land was a major theological emphasis (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). God had divided the land by lot under Joshua into tribal allocations. When a male descendant died without an heir the question arose about the fate of his land. The Jews developed a way for the widow to have a child, if possible, by a near relative so that the deceased man’s property would go to an heir. This child would be considered the child of the deceased brother (cf. Numbers 27 and Ruth 4).

22:25 “seven brothers” This shows that the Sadducees did not really want theological information but grounds for accusations! No doubt they had used this theological argument many times to confuse and embarrass the Pharisees.

22:29 “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God” This accusation must have really embarrassed these religious leaders (cf. 21:42)! However, it is uncertain to which OT Scripture Jesus was referring to provide this information.

22:30 “For in the resurrection” Jesus was asserting His agreement with the Pharisees concerning a future resurrection (cf. Dan. 12:1-2 or possibly Job 14:7-15; 19:25-27).

▣ **“they neither marry nor are given in marriage”** This was a new truth not disclosed elsewhere in Scripture. It implies that sexuality is only an aspect of time. It was part of God’s will for creation (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:17), but not for eternity! This seems to imply that the wonderful one flesh fellowship between a man and wife will be superseded by an even closer fellowship between all of God’s children in eternity.

▣ **“but are like the angels in heaven”** This states that angels do not have a sexual aspect to their existence. They do not reproduce themselves in this way. Many commentators have used this verse to interpret Gen. 6:1-4 as not referring to the sexual activity of angels, but rather a special group of angels mentioned in Jude 6 and possibly I Pet. 3:19-20, who are kept in prison (Tartarus, which was the name for the wicked part of hades).

22:32 “I am the God of Abraham” Jesus was using a rabbinical word play on the implied PRESENT TENSE of the supplied Hebrew verb “I AM” of Exod. 3:6 to assert that God was and is still Abraham’s and the Patriarchs’ God. Abraham still lives and God is still his God! Jesus used a text from the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy) in which the Sadducees claimed to be authoritative.

22:33 They were astonished because Jesus used the OT without reference to the rabbinical traditions (cf. 7:28; 13:54). He was His own authority (cf. 5:21-48).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:34-40

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” ³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

22:35 “a lawyer” Matthew usually called these legal experts “scribes.” He never used this term “lawyer” anywhere else in his Gospel. This term may have been an assimilation by a copyist from Luke 10:25. Luke used the term often (cf. 7:30; 10:25; 11:45,46,52; 14:3). It is not found in the parallel in Mark 12:28. However it is present in almost all ancient Greek manuscripts. Jewish religious lawyers developed during the Babylonian exile. Ezra typified this group (cf. Ezra 7:10). In many ways they took the place of the local Levites. Basically they answered practical questions related to the written Law and the oral law (Talmud) as they applied to common life.

▣ **“testing Him”** This VERB (*peiraze*), rendered alternately “tempt,” “try,” “test” or “prove,” has the connotation of “to test with a view toward destruction” (see Special Topic at 4:1, cf. 4:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; the NOUN in 6:13; 26:41).

22:36 “which is the great commandment in the Law” The rabbis had asserted that there were 248 positive and 365 negative commandments in the writings of Moses (Genesis - Deuteronomy) for a total of 613 commands.

22:37-38 The greatest commandment is stated in Deut. 6:5. There is a slight difference between the Masoretic Hebrew text and Jesus’ quote, but the essence is the same. This verse is not concerned with the dichotomous (cf. Heb. 4:12) or trichotomous (cf. I Thess. 5:23) nature of man but rather deals with a person as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7; I Cor. 15:45): a thinking and feeling, physical and spiritual being. It is true that because humans are earthly animals they depend upon this planet for food, water, air, and all the other things animal life needs to survive. Humans are also spiritual beings who relate to God and the spiritual realms. However, it is a false interpretation to build theology on these different descriptions of human nature. The key to this verse is the thrice-repeated “all,” not the supposed distinctions between “heart,” “soul,” and “mind.”

By quoting this central affirmation of the oneness of God, Jesus is inseparably linking the OT and NT understanding of God. The NT is the fulfillment of the OT. YHWH is now revealed as a Triune Unity. Oneness has been redefined! NT believers fully assert monotheism, but with a footnote. Apparently the NT writers did not see the implication of Ps. 110:1 as a contradiction (cf. I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5; Phil. 2:11). There is surely mystery here! See the Special Topic: The Trinity at 3:17.

22:39 The second commandment was not requested by the scribe, but it does show that a balance between believers’ love for God and their love for their fellow human must be maintained. It is impossible to love God and hate people (cf. I John. 2:9, 11; 3:15; 4:20). This is a quote from Lev. 19:18.

22:40 Jesus was asserting that the OT has an integrating center (i.e., covenant love, cf. 7:12; Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). These two OT commands are obviously applicable to NT believers. Love for God expresses itself in being like God, because God is love (cf. I John 4:7-21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:41-46

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: ⁴²“What do you think about Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “*The son of David.*” ⁴³He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying,

⁴⁴THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET?”

⁴⁵If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?”

⁴⁶No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

22:41-42 The Jewish leaders had asked Jesus several questions trying to test Him, now He asked them a question that showed their lack of spiritual understanding (cf. 21:24-27).

22:42 “What do you think about Christ, whose son is He” This question basically dealt with the lineage of the Messiah. Jesus had accepted the OT Messianic title “son of David.” This was a common Messianic title in Matthew (cf. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9,15). Jesus was clearly asserting His own messiahship. The Jews of Jesus’ day were not expecting a divine incarnation but a divine empowering like the Judges. Jesus used Ps. 110 (cf. v. 44) to show the human lineage and divine lineage of the Messiah.

22:44 This same Messianic use of Ps. 110 is found in 26:64. The Hebrew text of Ps. 110:1 was a play on the term YHWH (LORD) and Adonai (Lord). The first would represent the God of Israel; the second would refer to the Messiah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central theme of the parable in vv. 1-14?
2. How do you explain the harsh words of v. 13?
3. Do verses 15-22 speak to the modern issue of the separation of church and state?
4. List and characterize the political and religious groups in Palestine in Jesus' day.
5. Why were these groups trying to "trap" Jesus? (v. 15)

MATTHEW 23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Denouncing of the Scribes and Pharisees	Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees	Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees	Jesus Warns Against the Teachings of the Law and the Pharisees	The Scribes and Pharisees: Their Hypocrisy and Vanity
23:1-12	23:1-36	23:1-12	23:1-12	23:1-7 23:8-12
23:13		23:13-15	23:13	23:13
23:14			23:14	23:14 (not included)
23:15			23:15	23:15
23:16-22		23:16-22	23:16-22	23:16-22
23:23-24		23:23-24	23:23-24	23:23-24
23:25-26		23:25-26	23:25-26	23:25-26
23:27-28		23:27-28	23:27-28	23:27-28
23:29-36		23:29-36	23:29-36	23:29-32 Their Crimes and Approaching Punishment 23:33-36
The Lament for Jerusalem	Jesus Laments Over Jerusalem	Lament Over Jerusalem	Jesus' Love for Jerusalem	Jerusalem Admonished
23:37-39	23:37-39	23:37-39	23:37-39	23:37-39 (39b)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The rift between Jesus and the Jewish power structures in Jerusalem was becoming more intense.
- B. Jesus had often tried to reach them but they would not give up their traditional, nationalist concepts. They continuously tried to trap Him with questions. Their questions usually focused on the controversies (1) between the rabbinical schools of Hillel (liberal) and Shammai (conservative) or (2) between the Romans and the Jewish people. They hoped that Jesus would alienate one group or the other.
- C. Jesus' cleansings of the Temple (cf. John. 2:15 and Matt. 21:12-17) intensified the conflict.
- D. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree, a symbol of Israel (cf. Matt. 21:18-22), and the two parables of rejection (cf. Matt. 21:28-46 and 22:1-14) were the final breaking points.
- E. This chapter culminates in Jesus' rejection by the religious leaders. It is uncertain if Jesus' words reflect a rejection of Israel as a whole or merely her religious leaders.
- F. Some other biblical parallels to His criticism of the religious leaders are Mark 12:38-40, Luke 11:39-54, 20:45-47. Jesus used His most severe language to address these religious leaders.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-12

¹Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ²saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger. ⁵But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*. ⁶They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. ⁸But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹Do not call *anyone* on earth your father; for One is your Father, he who is in heaven. ¹⁰Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, *that is*, Christ. ¹¹But the greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹²Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

23:1 “Jesus spoke to the crowds” This was a public denunciation of the religious leaders. Although the following words do not describe every member of the Pharisees, they do characterize the prevalent attitude of the group.

23:2 “scribes” These were experts in the Written Law (OT) and the Oral Law (Talmud) of Israel and were available to make local practical applications. In effect they replaced the traditional OT functions of the local Levites. See Special Topic at 12:38.

▣ **“Pharisees”** This was a group of committed Jews which developed during the Maccabean Period. They accepted all of the written Old Testament and Oral Tradition as binding. Not all scribes were Pharisees, but most were. For a full discussion of the origin and theology of the Pharisees see Special Topic at 22:15.

▣ **“the chair of Moses”** This referred to a teaching position in the local synagogue or in the local Jewish community.

23:3 “all that they tell you, do and observe” Jesus uses two commands.

1. “do,” AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE
2. “keep,” PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE

Jesus was saying that if they could show you truth in the Law, then you should act on it. The Word of God is true no matter who proclaims it!

▣ **“but do not do according to their deeds”** Their lifestyles and attitudes revealed their character. In a sense they are the false teachers described in 7:15-23. They have not acted on God’s truth (cf. 7:24-27), but human tradition (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:13)!

23:4 “they tie up heavy burdens” This was a cultural metaphor which referred to the overloading or improper loading of domestic animals (cf. 11:28-30). The religious leaders did not show any compassion for the common person (cf. Luke 11:46; Acts 15:10). They themselves could not keep their own rules (cf. Rom. 2:17-24).

There is a Greek manuscript variation in this verse. It is uncertain whether the phrase “difficult to carry” is original or assimilated from Luke 11:46.

23:5 “they do all their deeds to be noticed by men” They were religious exhibitionists (cf. Matt. 6:2,5,16).

▣

NASB	“they broaden their phylacteries”
NKJV, NRSV	“they make their phylacteries broad”
TEV	“Look at the straps with scripture verses on them which they wear on their foreheads and arms, and notice how large they are”
JB	“wearing broader phylacteries”
NJB	“wearing broader headbands”

These black leather boxes contained the OT texts of Exod. 13:3-16, Deut. 6:4-9, or Deut. 11:13-21. They were worn on the forehead just above the eyes. This was an over literalization of Exod. 13:9 and Deut. 6:8 and 11:18. These texts were to be the guiding light of believers lives, not black boxes on their foreheads!

▣

NASB	“lengthen the tassels of their garments”
NKJV	“enlarge the borders of their garments”
NRSV	“their fringes long”
TEV	“how long are the tassels on their cloaks!”
JB	“longer tassels”

These were blue ornaments on their robes or prayer shawls which reminded them of the Torah (cf. Num. 15:38 and Deut. 22:12).

23:6 This was the same temptation related to James and John in 20:20-28.

23:7 “Rabbi” This Aramaic term was an honorific title (“my teacher”). These titles (rabbi, father, leader) are criticized because of the pride and arrogance connected with them in first century Judaism. The leaders loved to be called by these honorific titles.

The NKJV following the Textus Receptus doubles the word “Rabbi.” This was a cultural way of (1) adding solemnity or (2) showing affection (cf. v. 37). However the early Greek texts (A and B as well as the Vulgate) have it only once.

23:8-10 Note the repeated use of “One.” Jesus (and Matthew) did not see a contradiction of monotheism. See the second paragraph at 22:37-38.

1. One is your Teacher (could be the Father or the Son, 22:36)
2. One is your Father (twice)
3. One is your Leader, that is Christ

23:8 “you are all brothers” Believers are equal in God’s sight (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27), therefore, we must be careful of ranks or titles! There is no “clergy” vs. “laity” distinction in the NT. There are also no other distinctions, note Rom. 3:22; I Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11.

23:11 “the greatest among you shall be your servant” This is discussed in 20:25-28 and Mark 10:42-44. What a shocking statement! This is markedly different from the world’s attitudes. However, this is the sign of true greatness in the new age.

23:12 “whoever exalts himself shall be humbled” This is a recurrent biblical theme (cf. Job 22:29; Pro. 29:23; Luke 14:11; 18:14; James 4:6; I Pet. 5:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:13-14

¹³"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves; nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." ¹⁴["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation."]

23:13 "woe to you" This passage (vv. 13-36) is known as the "seven woes." Matthew often structured his Gospel using seven things. Woes are the opposite of blessings. In Luke's parallel to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he added four "woes" to the beatitudes (cf. 5:3-11 vs. Lk 6:20-26). In the OT the term "woe" introduced a prophetic "dirge" or lament. It was structured (i.e., Hebrew beat or meter, accented lines of poetry) like funeral music to express God's judgment.

▣ **"hypocrites"** This was a compound Greek term meaning "to judge under." It was a theatrical term used to describe one who played a part or acting role behind a mask. It was used earlier in 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; and also 24:51.

▣ **"you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people"** This was the use of "the keys of the kingdom" (cf. 16:19; Rev. 1:18; 3:7). What an awesome responsibility it is to know truth! Modern, secular humanity has not so much rejected Jesus as he has rejected the modern church's presentation of Him in our words, lives and priorities! This is what the religious leaders of Jesus day did also. How many Pharisees are in the church today?

This is a shocking and tragic statement (irony).

1. the religious leaders themselves were not right with God (cf. 5:20)
2. the religious leaders led others astray and kept them from being right with God (cf. 15:14; 23:16,24; 24:24; Rom. 2:19)

▣ **"enter in"** This verb is used of becoming part of the new eschatological Kingdom of God (i.e., the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34). One enters by their reception of Jesus now! Those who reject Him cannot enter (note 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23-24; 23:13). Jesus is the only door to the Kingdom (i.e., John 1:12; 10:7-18; 14:6; Rom. 10:9-13).

23:14 Verse 14 is not in the Greek uncial manuscripts A, B, D, or L, nor most versions and, therefore, is probably not original to Matthew. It was probably put here by a copyist from Mark 12:40 or Luke 20:47. It appears in some later Greek manuscripts before v. 13 and in some after v. 13. The UBS⁴ rates its exclusion as "B" (almost certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:15

¹⁵"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."

23:15 "hypocrites" See Special Topic at 6:2.

▣ **"to make one proselyte"** There were two kinds of Jewish converts: (1) those who were circumcised, self baptized and offered a sacrifice—they were called "proselytes of the gate" and (2) those who just regularly attended the synagogue—they were called "God-fearers."

▣ **"you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves"** This is truly a shocking statement. Jesus is offended by self-righteous legalism! This reinforced His statement of 5:20. This is a significant reversal of cultural expectations.

▣ **"hell"** This term *Gehenna* came from two Hebrew words, "valley" and "Hinnom." This was where the Phoenician fertility fire god was worshiped just south of Jerusalem in the valley of Topheth, by the practice of child sacrifice [*molech*] (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6). It became the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Jesus used it as the earthly metaphor of hell and eternal judgment.

This term was only used by Jesus, except for James 3:6. Jesus' love for fallen mankind did not prevent Him from addressing the awesome consequences of rejecting His words and works (cf. 25:46). If Jesus asserted the reality of eternal separation from fellowship with God, it is a truth that His followers must take seriously. Hell is a tragedy for mankind, but also an open bleeding wound in the heart of God that will never heal! See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:16-22

¹⁶“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, *that is nothing*; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ ¹⁷You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? ¹⁸And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, *that is nothing*, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’ ¹⁹You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? ²⁰Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. ²¹And whoever swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. ²²And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.”

23:16 “blind guides” This was a sarcastic metaphor for the religious leaders (cf. 15:14; 23:16, 24).

23:16-22 “swears by” The Jews had developed an extensive system of valid and invalid oaths, using God’s name (cf. 5:33-37; James 5:12). It was a way to allow lying while appearing religious (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 23:21).

▣ **“You fools”** See Special Topic at 5:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:23-24

²³“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ²⁴You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”

23:23 “you. . .hypocrites” See Special Topic at 6:2.

▣ **“you tithe mint and dill and cummin”** In their legalism (cf. Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:22-29), they counted even the smallest spices so as to give precisely ten percent to God, but they neglected justice, love, and fidelity. The New Testament does not speak of tithing except here. The heart of New Testament giving is not found in a percentage (cf. II Cor. 8-9)!

NT believers must be careful of turning Christianity into a new legal performance oriented code (Christian Talmud). Their desire to be pleasing to God causes them to try to find guidelines for every area of life. However, theologically it is dangerous to pull old covenant rules which are not reaffirmed in the NT and make them dogmatic criteria, especially when they are claimed to be causes of calamity or promises of prosperity!

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING

This is the only NT reference to tithing. I do not believe the NT teaches tithing because this entire setting is against “nit-picking” Jewish legalism and self-righteousness. I believe the NT guidelines for regular giving (if there are any) are found in II Cor. 8 and 9, which go far beyond tithing! If a Jew with only the information of the OT was commanded to give ten to thirty percent (there are two, possibly three, required tithes in the OT), then Christians should give far beyond and not even take the time to discuss the tithes!

NT believers must be careful of turning Christianity into a new legal performance-oriented code (Christian Talmud). Their desire to be pleasing to God causes them to try to find guidelines for every area of life. However, theologically it is dangerous to pull old covenant rules which are not reaffirmed in the NT (cf. Acts 15) and make them dogmatic criteria, especially when they are claimed (by modern preachers) to be causes of calamity or promises of prosperity (cf. Mal. 3).

Here is a good quote from Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 292-293:

“The New Testament does not once introduce tithing into the grace of giving. Tithes are mentioned only three times in the New Testament: (1) in censuring the Pharisees for neglect of justice, mercy, and faith while giving meticulous care to the tithing of even garden produce (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42); (2) in the exposure of the proud Pharisee who ‘prayed to himself,’ boasting that he fasted twice each week and tithed all his possessions (Luke 18:12); and (3) in arguing for the superiority of Melchizedek, and hence of Christ, to Levi (Heb. 7:6-9).

It is clear that Jesus approved tithing as a part of the Temple system, just as in principle and practice he supported the general practices of the Temple and the synagogues. But there is no indication that he imposed any part of the Temple cultus on his followers. Tithes were chiefly produce, formerly eaten at the sanctuary by the one tithing and later eaten by the priests. Tithing as set forth in the Old Testament could be carried out only in a religious system built around a system of animal sacrifice.

Many Christians find the tithe to be a fair and workable plan for giving. So long as it is not made to be a coercive or legalistic system, it may prove to be a happy plan. However, one may not validly claim that tithing is taught in the New Testament. It is recognized as proper for Jewish observance (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42), but it is not imposed upon Christians. In fact, it is now impossible for Jews or Christians to tithe in the Old Testament sense. Tithing today only faintly resembles the ancient ritual practice belonging to the sacrificial system of the Jews.

Paul Stagg has summed it up:

‘While much may be said for adopting the tithe voluntarily as a standard for one’s giving without rigidly imposing it upon others as a Christian requirement, it is clear in adopting such a practice that one is not carrying on the Old Testament practice. At most one is doing something only remotely analogous to the tithing practice of the Old Testament, which was a tax to support the Temple and the priestly system, a social and religious system which no longer exists. Tithes were obligatory in Judaism as a tax until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, but they are not thus binding upon Christians.’

This is not to discredit tithing, but it is to clarify its relationship to the New Testament. It is to deny that the New Testament supports the coerciveness, legalism, profit motive, and the bargaining which so often characterize the tithing appeals today. As a voluntary system, tithing offers much; but it must be redeemed by grace if it is to be Christian. To plead that ‘it works’ is only to adopt the pragmatic tests of the world. Much ‘works’ that is not Christian. Tithing, if it is to be congenial to New Testament theology, must be rooted in the grace and love of God.”

23:24 “who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel” The Pharisees of Jesus’ day would filter their water through cloth to keep from inadvertently swallowing an unclean insect, but in reality their legalistic unlove caused them figuratively to swallow an unclean camel! This was a word play between the Aramaic terms gnat, “*galma*” and camel, “*gamla*.” This was an Oriental hyperbole. Jesus often used camels in His overstatements (cf. 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:25-28

²⁵“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. ²⁶You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. ²⁷Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like the whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

23:25 “hypocrites” See Special Topic at 6:2.

▣ **“you clean the outside of the cup”** They were very concerned with ceremonial cleanliness, but their attitudes and motives were far from God (cf. Isa. 29:13). They were defiled from within (i.e., the heart, cf. Mark 7:15,20). The new standard of righteousness (i.e., the new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) was not human performance, but faith in Christ’s righteousness to be purchased on Calvary and confirmed on Easter Sunday!

23:27 “whitewashed tombs” The citizens of Jerusalem would paint the graves white before feast days lest a pilgrim accidentally touch them and become ceremonially unclean for seven days, and hence unable to participate in the feast even after traveling a long distance (cf. Num. 19:16; 31:19). These freshly painted tombs were analogous to the outward religiosity of the Jewish leaders.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:29-33

²⁹“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰and say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of *the guilt* of your fathers. ³³You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?”

23:29 “hypocrites” See Special Topic at 6:2.

☐ **“you build the tombs of the prophets”** In the OT God’s people would kill God’s prophets and then build large tombs for them. The building of monuments to God’s spokesmen is not what God wanted. He desires obedience to His message (cf. vv. 34-35). As the leaders of the OT killed the prophets, these leaders would kill Jesus and His followers.

23:30 “if” This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is called “contrary to fact.” A premise is made that is false and, therefore, the conclusion drawn from it is also false.

23:33 “You serpents, you brood of vipers” Jesus was not always the meek and mild, “turn the other cheek” man often pictured (cf. 3:7; 12:34). Religious self-righteous hypocrisy elicited His harshest condemnation—and still does!

☐ **“hell”** See Special Topic at 5:22.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:34-36

³⁴“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵so that upon you may fall *the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”*

23:34 “I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes” God (note Jesus uses “I”) continues His activity of revelation through His chosen spokespersons (cf. 21:34-36; 23:37). The Jews were not ignorant of God’s truth; they chose to reject it for their traditions (cf. Isa. 6:9-13; 29:13; Jer. 5:20-29)! See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at 11:9.

☐ **“some of them you will kill and crucify”** The prediction of persecution was dramatically fulfilled in the early days of Christianity. God’s spokespersons often reap the hostility of fallen mankind, even religious mankind, against God’s word and will.

23:35 “blood shed” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: POURED OUT

The general term *cheō* means “to pour.” The intensified form, *ekcheō*, has two developed connotations:

1. innocent blood shed, Matt. 23:35; Acts 22:20
2. a sacrifice given, Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20

In Jesus these two senses meet at Calvary (cf. Colin Brown, ed., *The New International dictionary of New Testament Theology* vol. 2, pp. 853-855).

☐ **“Abel”** See Gen. 4:8ff.

☐ **“Zechariah”** There has been much discussion here as to which prophet this referred. The only martyr known by this name is found in II Chr. 24:2-22, but his father’s name is different from this reference. However the parallel in Luke 11:51 omits the father’s name, as does the Greek MSS \aleph in Matthew.

Zechariah, the post-exilic prophet, had this name but was not killed in this manner. There could be another prophet by this name that we know nothing about. However, since Abel is the first martyr in the OT then the Zechariah mentioned in II Chr. 24 would be the last martyr because Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew canon.

23:36 “all these things will come upon this generation” In one sense this showed the preeminence of Jesus (cf. 10:23; 23:36; 24:34). He was God’s ultimate spokesman. When the leaders and the general population rejected Him, there was no hope—only judgment. The new age of the Spirit has come!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:37-39

³⁷“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸Behold, your house

is being left to you desolate! ³⁹For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"

23:37-39 Jesus is obviously filled with emotion (cf. Luke 13:34,35). He and the Father both love the covenant people. He longed to restore them to fellowship, but they clung to their legalism (Isa. 29:13). Only judgment could restart the need for covenant intimacy!

The question remains, when did Jesus speak these words? Was it just before His Triumphal Entry or does it refer to an eschatological entry? One thing is sure, the prophecy of Zech. 12:10 will come to pass one day! The unification of God's people spoken of in Romans 9-11 will restore the fellowship of the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:15).

23:37 "gather" This VERB is also used of an end-time gathering of the elect in 3:12; 13:20,47; 24:31.

▣ **"the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings"** YHWH and Jesus often used feminine metaphors to describe their work and attitudes (cf. Gen. 1:2; Exod. 19:5; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13). Deity is neither male nor female, but spirit. He created the sexes and has the best qualities of both in Himself.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

The idiom of "shadow" was common in the ANE. Note the examples in the Bible.

1. idiom of protection, Isa. 16:3; 30:2-3; Lam. 4:20
2. idiom of "shadow of the hand," Ps. 121:5; Isa. 49:2; 51:16
3. idiom of "shadow of the roof," Gen. 19:8
4. idiom of "shadow of God's special cloud," cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,20,24; Isa. 4:6; 25:4-5; 32:1-2
5. idiom of "shadow of the wing," Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4 (similar metaphors in Deut. 32:10-11; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 31:5; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)
6. idiom of "shadow of a tree," Jdgs. 9:15; Ezek. 17:23; 31:6,17; Dan. 4:12; Hosea 14:7

23:38 "your house is being left to you desolate" This appears to be an allusion to Jer. 22:5. It could refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 or to other future events. God's unique covenant with Israel has been altered by their unbelief! There is a New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34), which is not based on racial descent, but on faith and faithfulness in God and His Messiah.

23:39 "until you say" This is a reference to Ps. 118:26-27, which was used in the Triumphal Entry (cf. Matt. 21:9). This is similar to the wonderful Messianic prediction of Zech. 12:10 that the Jews will one day turn to the one whom they pierced (cf. Romans 9-11)! All believers pray for this Jewish revival!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Jesus so critical of the religious leaders of His day?
2. How do we know what to believe and practice?
3. Is attitude more crucial than action?
4. Is tithing a clearly taught New Testament principle?
5. Has Jesus totally rejected Israel?

MATTHEW 24

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Destruction of the Temple Foretold 24:1-2	Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple 24:1-2	Destruction of the Temple Foretold 24:1-2	Jesus Speaks of the Destruction of the Temple 24:1-2	Introduction 24:1-3
The Beginning of Woes 24:3-14	The Signs of the Times 24:3-14	On the End of the Age 24:3-8 24:9-14	Troubles and Persecutions 24:3 24:4-8 24:9-14	The Beginning of Sorrows 24:4-8 24:9-13 24:14
The Great Tribulation 24:15-28	The Great Tribulation 24:15-28	24:15-28	The Awful Horror 24:15-22 24:23-25 24:26-27 24:28	The Great Tribulation of Jerusalem 24:15-22 24:23-25 The Coming of the Son of Man 24:26-28
The Coming of the Son of Man 24:29-31	The Coming of the Son of Man 24:29-31	24:29-31	The Coming of the Son of Man 24:29-31	The Universal Significance of This Coming 24:29-31
The Lesson of the Fig Tree 24:32-35	The Parable of the Fig Tree 24:32-35	24:32-35	The Lesson of the Fig Tree 24:32-35	The Time of This Coming 24:32-36
The Unknown Day and Hour 24:36-44	No One Knows the Day or the Hour 24:36-44	24:36-44	No One Knows the Day or Hour 24:36-44	Be On the Alert 24:37-41 24:42-44
The Faithful or the Unfaithful Servant 24:45-51	The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant 24:45-51	24:45-51	The Faithful or the Unfaithful Servant 24:45-51	Parable of the Conscientious Servant 24:45-51

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR 24:1-36 (parallel to Mark 13:1-37)

- A. My exegetical notes on Mark 13 are more complete in my commentary on Mark and I & II Peter. You can see all of my commentaries at www.freebiblecommentary.org.
- B. Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are so difficult to interpret because they deal with several questions simultaneously (cf. Matt. 24:3).
 1. When will the Temple be destroyed?
 2. What will be the sign of the Messiah's return?
 3. When will this age end?
- C. The genre of New Testament eschatological passages is usually a combination of apocalyptic (see Special Topic below) and prophetic language which is purposely ambiguous and highly symbolic.
- D. Several passages in the NT (cf. Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21, I and II Thess. and Rev.) deal with the Second Coming. These passages emphasize
 1. the exact time of the event is unknown but the event is certain
 2. we can know the general time but not specific time of the events
 3. it will occur suddenly and unexpectedly
 4. we must be prayerful, ready, and faithful to assigned tasks
- E. There is a theological paradoxical tension between (1) the any moment return (cf. 24:27,44) versus (2) the fact that some events in history must occur.
- F. The NT states that some events will occur before the Second Coming:
 1. The Gospel preached to the whole world (cf. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
 2. The great apostasy (cf. 24:10-13, 21; I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 3:1ff.; II Thess. 2:3)
 3. The revelation of the "man of sin" (cf. Dan. 7:23-26; 9:24-27; II Thess. 2:3)
 4. Removal of that/who restrains (cf. II Thess. 2:6-7)
 5. Jewish revival (cf. Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11)
- G. Verses 37-44 are not paralleled in Mark. They do have a partial Synoptic parallel in Luke 17:26-37.

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

This special topic is taken from my commentary on Revelation (free at www.freebiblecommentary.org).

Revelation is a uniquely Jewish literary genre, apocalyptic. It was often used in tension-filled times to express the conviction that God was in control of history and would bring deliverance to His people. This type of literature is characterized by:

1. a strong sense of the universal sovereignty of God (monotheism and determinism)
2. a struggle between good and evil, this age and the age to come (dualism)
3. use of secret code words (usually from the OT or intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic literature)
4. use of colors, numbers, animals, sometimes animals/humans

5. use of angelic mediation by means of visions and dreams
6. primarily focuses on the end-time (new age)
7. use of a fixed set of symbols, not reality, to communicate the end-time message
8. Some examples of this type of genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Isaiah 24-27, 56-66
 - (2) Ezekiel 37-48
 - (3) Daniel 7-12
 - (4) Joel 2:28-3:21
 - (5) Zechariah 1-6, 12-14
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and I Corinthians 15 (in some ways)
 - (2) II Thessalonians 2 (in most ways)
 - (3) Revelation (chapters 4-22)
 - c. non-canonical (taken from D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, pp. 37-38)
 - (1) I Enoch, II Enoch (the Secrets of Enoch)
 - (2) The Book of Jubilees
 - (3) The Sibylline Oracles III, IV, V
 - (4) The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
 - (5) The Psalms of Solomon
 - (6) The Assumption of Moses
 - (7) The Martyrdom of Isaiah
 - (8) The Apocalypse of Moses (Life of Adam and Eve)
 - (9) The Apocalypse of Abraham
 - (10) The Testament of Abraham
 - (11) II Esdras (IV Esdras)
 - (12) Baruch II, III

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-2

¹Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ²And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

24:1 “the temple” This was the Greek word for the whole temple area (*hieron*, cf. Mark 13:1). Jesus had been teaching there since Matt. 21:23. This building itself (*naos*, cf. Mark 15:38) had become the great Jewish hope (cf. Jeremiah 7), a symbol of God’s exclusive love for the Jews.

▣ **“buildings”** They were white polished limestone with gold trim. This building project took Herod the Great more than 46 years to complete (cf. John. 2:20). This project was meant to placate the Jews, who were upset because an Idumean (Edom) was ruling over them.

24:2 “stone” Josephus tells us that Herod the Great used polished limestones or *mezzeh*, which were native to this area. These foundation stones and wall stones were huge, 25x8x12 cubits (a cubit was 18-21 inches; thus, the total volume of one of these stones would have been approximately 3600 cubic feet).

▣ **“not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down”** This is the strong grammatical structure of two DOUBLE NEGATIVES. This speaks of total destruction. This must have dumbfounded the disciples! Josephus tells us that in

A.D. 70 the Roman army destroyed this site so completely that one could plow the ground on Mount Moriah (cf. Mic. 3:12; Jer. 26:18) where the temple stood.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:3

³As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

24:3 “sitting on the Mount of Olives” This ridge to the east overlooked Jerusalem and the temple area. Mark’s Gospel identified the disciples who asked Jesus these questions—Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Matthew reads “the disciples came up. . .to Him” (cf. vv. 1 and 3).

▣ **“when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming”** Mark 13:4 and Luke 21:7 have only one question, but Matt. 24:3 shows the expanded questions. There were several events the disciples wanted to know about: (1) destruction of the temple, (2) Second Coming and (3) end of this age. The disciples probably thought all three would happen at one time. See Special Topic following.

The term used here translated “coming” (cf. Matt. 24:3,27,37,39; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thess. 2:1,8; James 5:7,8; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4,12; I John 2:28) is *parousia*. See the second Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Answers to the disciple’s two questions of 24:3 (F. F. Bruce in *Answers to Questions*)

- A. A warning against being misled, by false prophets or great calamities, into thinking that this is the end.
 - 1. Matt. 24:4-8
 - 2. Mark 13:5-8
 - 3. Luke 21:8-11
- B. A prediction of persecution and promise of help
 - 1. Matt. 24:9-14
 - 2. Mark 13:9-13
 - 3. Luke 21:12-19
- C. An answer to the first question, relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of its inhabitants
 - 1. Matt. 24:15-28
 - 2. Mark 13:14-23
 - 3. Luke 21:20-24
- D. An answer to the second question, describing the coming of Christ
 - 1. Matt. 24:29-31
 - 2. Mark 13:24-27
 - 3. Luke 21:20-24
- E. An exhortation to watchfulness in the situation leading up to the fall of Jerusalem
 - 1. Matt. 24:32-35
 - 2. Mark 13:28-31
 - 3. Luke 21:29-33
- F. An exhortation to watchfulness for the coming of Christ
 - 1. Matt. 24:36-44
 - 2. Mark 13:32-37
 - 3. Luke 21:34-36

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SECOND COMING

This is literally “until the *Parousia*,” which means “presence,” and was used of a royal visit. The other NT terms used for the Second Coming are (1) *epiphaneia*, “face to face appearing”; (2) *apokalupis*, “unveiling”; and (3) “the Day of the Lord” and the variations of this phrase.

The NT as a whole is written within the world-view of the OT, which asserted:

1. a current evil, rebellious age
2. a coming new age of righteousness
3. this would be brought about by the Spirit's agency through the work of the Messiah (Anointed One)

The theological assumption of progressive revelation is required because the NT authors slightly modify Israel's expectation. Instead of a military, nationalistic-focused (Israel) coming of the Messiah, there are two comings. The first coming was the incarnation of deity in the conception and birth of Jesus of Nazareth. He came as the non-military, non-judicial "suffering servant" of Isa. 53; also the mild rider on the colt of a donkey (not a war horse or kingly mule), of Zech. 9:9. The first coming inaugurated the New Messianic Age, the Kingdom of God on earth. In one sense the Kingdom is here, but of course, in another it is still far off. It is this tension between the two comings of the Messiah which, in a sense, is the over-lapping of the two Jewish ages that was unseen, or at least unclear, from the OT. In reality, this dual coming emphasizes YHWH's commitment to redeem all humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5 and the preaching of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jonah).

The church is not waiting for the fulfillment of OT prophecy because most prophecies refer to the first coming (cf. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 165-166). What believers do anticipate is the glorious coming of the resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the expected historical fulfillment of the new age of righteousness on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). The OT presentations were not inaccurate, but incomplete. He will come again just as the prophets predicted, in the power and authority of YHWH.

The Second Coming is not a biblical term, but the concept forms the world-view and framework of the entire NT. God will set it all straight. Fellowship between God and mankind made in His image will be restored. Evil will be judged and removed. God's purposes will not, cannot, fail!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:4-8

⁴And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. ⁶You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. ⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

24:4 "See to it that no one misleads you" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which meant stop an act in process. There were and continue to be many false signs or "precursor signs." This statement was repeated often (cf. Mark 13:5, 9, 23, 33). There is great theological confusion in this area. The church has never had a consensus in eschatology.

Every generation of Christians has tried to force their contemporary history into biblical prophecy. To date they have all been wrong. Part of the problem is that believers are to live in a moment by moment expectation of the Second Coming yet the prophecies are all written for one end time generation of persecuted followers. Rejoice that you do not know!

24:5 "many will come in My name" This referred to false messiahs (cf. vv. 11, 23-24; Mark 13:6). It could also be an allusion to the end-time (1) antichrist of I John 2:18; (2) "Man of Sin" of II Thessalonians 2; or (3) the Sea Beast of Rev. 13:1-10.

▣ **"I am the Christ"** "Christ" is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew term *messiah*, which meant "an anointed one." This shows that many messianic pretenders would come (cf. vv. 11, 24; I John. 2:18).

▣ **"and will mislead many"** This shows the persuasive power of the false messiahs and the spiritual vacuum of fallen mankind (cf. Matt. 24:11,23-26). It also shows the naivete of new believers and/or carnal Christians (cf. I Cor. 3:1-3; Col. 2:16-23; Heb. 5:11-14).

24:6 "that you are not frightened" This is PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in process.

▣ **"for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end"** Wars (vv. 6, 7), famines (v. 7), earthquakes (v. 7), and false messiahs (v. 5) are not signs of the end, but precursor signs of every age (cf. v. 8). The presence of these kinds of events are not a sign of the end, but of a fallen world.

24:8	
NASB, NRSV	“of birth pangs”
NKJV	“of sorrows”
TEV	“the first pains of childbirth”
NJB	“the birthpangs”

This referred to the “birth pangs” of the new age (cf. Isa. 13:8; 26:17; 66:7; Mic. 4:9-10; Mark 13:8). This reflected the Jewish belief in the intensification of evil before the new age of righteousness. The Jews believed in two ages (see Special Topic at 12:31); the current evil age, characterized by sin and rebellion against God, and the “age to come.” The New Age would be inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah. It would be a time of righteousness and fidelity to God. Although the Jewish view was true to a point, it did not take into account the two comings of the Messiah. We live in the over-lapping of these two ages. The “already” and “not yet” of the kingdom of God!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:9-14

⁹“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹²Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. ¹³But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

24:9 “Then” This term is used several times in Jesus’ end-time discussion (cf. 24:9,10,14,16,21,23,30,40; 25:1,7,31,34,37, 41,44,45). The question is

1. Is it simply a transition marker?
2. Does it designate a temporal sequence?
3. Does it designate a context sequence (like the *waw* consecutive in Hebrew)?

☐ Mark 13:9 is much more specific at this point. “Courts and synagogues,” a phrase not found in Matt. 24:9, shows both governmental and religious persecution of Christians (cf. I Pet. 4:12-16). “Beaten” or literally “skinned,” Jews whipped offenders thirty-nine times—thirteen times on the front and twenty-six times on the back (cf. Deut. 25:1-3; II Cor. 11:24).

☐ **“you will be hated by all nations”** Jesus prepared His disciples for the world’s hatred (cf. 10:22; 21:35-36; 23:37; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17; John 15:18,19; I John 3:13). The level of opposition to the gospel is surprising (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). The implication of this phrase is that Christianity has spread into all the world (cf. v. 14) which means Jesus is referring to a future time.

☐ **“because My name”** Not for their own wickedness or civil crimes will believers be persecuted, but because they are Christians (cf. Matt. 5:10-16; Mark 13:9; I Pet. 4:12-16).

24:10 “many will fall away” Under persecution and spiritual delusion many followers of Jesus will “fall away” (lit. “be caused to stumble,” cf. 11:6). These are the ones spoken of in the parable of the soils in 13:21 (cf. Mark 4:17; 8:13). They are the ones who “do not abide” in John 15:6. They are the ones who leave the fellowship in I John 2:18-19. They are the ones described in Hebrews and II Pet. 2:20-22. See Special Topic: Apostasy at 7:21.

24:10-11 This implies organized opposition (cf. Mark 13:12). Families will be split over Christ (cf. Matt. 10:35-37). Those who should have been changed by the gospel act like the unsaved (cf. Titus 3:2-3).

24:11 “many false prophets” This is a frightful thought. These people are wolves in sheep’s clothing (cf. Matt. 7:15-23). Believers must have a grasp of the gospel, a yieldedness to the Spirit, and a godly lifestyle to protect themselves from these pretenders (cf. II Peter 2; I John. 2:18-19; Revelation 13).

24:12 Persecution will reveal the true spiritual nature of the pretenders (cf. Matt. 13:20-22) or the weak (cf. I Tim. 6:9-10).

24:13 “but whoever endures to the end, he will be saved” This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (endure) followed by a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE (saved cf. Matt. 10:22. See Special Topic: the Need to Persevere at 10:22). This is the doctrine of perseverance (Rev. 2:2, 11, 12, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) and it must be held in a dialectical tension with the doctrine of the security of the believer. Both are true! Both are gifts of God. The term “saved” can be understood in its OT sense of physical deliverance and its NT sense of spiritual eternal deliverance.

Endurance is an evidence of a life changing encounter with Jesus (be sure to read the Special Topic on perseverance at 10:22). It does not imply sinlessness, but it does contrast the actions of vv. 10-12!

24:14 “this gospel of the kingdom” This was mentioned earlier in 4:23; 9:35. It is synonymous with “the gospel.” It referred to the content of Jesus’ preaching.

▣ **“shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations”** This is the goal of Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8! It marks a major shift away from the “Israel only” policy. This is one of the things that must occur before the Second Coming. It is impossible to know how specific to interpret this phrase. Does it mean every single tribe or people in racial groupings or possibly everyone in the Roman world of Paul’s day? This second option is possible because the phrase “the whole world” is literally “the inhabited earth.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB’S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelism. I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-32), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture (i.e., Jonah). I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

▣ **“and then the end will come”** Jesus was trying to show the disciples their mission to the Gentiles (cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 52:10; 60:1-3). He was also trying to show them that there will be a long period of time between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming (cf. II Thessalonians 3). We must hold in tension (1) the “any-moment” return of our Lord and (2) the fact that some things must happen first. There is a real tension in the New Testament concerning the time of the Second Coming: imminent, or delayed.

It is surely possible to see these predictions relating to the fall of Jerusalem. The best book I have seen on this view (Preterist) is John Bray, *Matthew 24 Revisited*. My real problem with this is the date of the writing of John’s Revelation. All evidence points toward a midwinter date. For the Preterist view to be valid, it must have been written before A.D. 70.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:15-28

¹⁵“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains; ¹⁷Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things that are in his house. ¹⁸Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁹But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²²Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There *He is*,’ do not believe *him*. ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not get out, *or*, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe *them*. ²⁷For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

24:15

NASB, NKJV

“the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION”

NRSV

“the desolating sacrilege”

TEV

“the Awful Horror”

NJB

“the appalling abomination”

The word “desolation” meant sacrilege. This was used in Dan. 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. It seems originally to refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 168 B.C. (cf. Dan. 8:9-14; I Mac. 1:54). Also in Dan. 7:7-8 it related to the Antichrist of the end time (cf. II Thess. 2:4). Luke 21:20 helps us interpret this as possibly the coming of Titus’ army in A.D. 70. It cannot refer to the siege of Jerusalem itself because it would be too late for believers to escape.

This is an example of a phrase being used in several different but related senses. This is called multiple fulfillment prophecy. Often it is difficult to interpret until after the events occur. Then looking back, the typology is obvious. For more detailed notes on Daniel see my commentary at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

M. R. Vincent describes well the term abomination: “The cognate verb, βδελύσσειν, means to feel a nausea or loathing for food, hence used of disgust generally. In a moral sense it denotes an object of moral or religious repugnance. See 2 Chron. 15:8; Jer. 13:27; Ezek. 11:21; Dan. 9:27; 11:31. It is used as equivalent to idol in I Kings 11:17; Deut. 7:26; 2 Kings 23:13. It denotes anything in which estrangement from God manifests itself; as the eating of unclean beasts, Lev. 11:11; Deut. 14:3; and, generally, all forms of heathenism. This moral sense must be emphasized in the New Testament use of the word. Compare Luke 16:15; Rev. 17:4,5; 21:27. It does not denote mere physical or esthetic disgust. The reference here is probably to the occupation of the temple precincts by the idolatrous Romans under Titus, with their standards and ensigns. Josephus says that after the burning of the temple the Romans brought their ensigns and set them over against the eastern gate, and there they offered sacrifices to them, and declared Titus, with acclamations, to be emperor” (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, pp. 74-75).

The word “desolation” meant sacrilege. This phrase is used in Dan. 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11. It seems originally to refer to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who put an altar to Zeus Olympios in the temple in Jerusalem in 167 B.C. (cf. Dan. 8:9-14; I Macc. 1:54). Also in Dan. 7:7-8 it related to the Antichrist of the end-time (cf. II Thess. 2:4). In Luke 21:20 it possibly refers to the coming of the Roman General (later Emperor) Titus’ army in A.D. 70, who sacrificed to their army standards which were dedicated to pagan gods, placed by the eastern gate close to the temple. It cannot refer to the siege of Jerusalem itself because it would be too late for believers to escape.

This is an example of a phrase being used in several different, but related, senses. This is called multiple fulfillment prophecy. It is difficult to interpret until after the events occur; looking back, the typology is obvious.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“standing in the holy place”

TEV

“it will be standing in the holy place”

NJB

“set up in the holy place”

The Greek PARTICIPLE “standing” is NEUTER, not MASCULINE. It should be translated “it,” which backs up the interpretation of “it” being the Roman army under Titus in A.D. 70. “Holy Place” referred to the first part of the central shrine of the Temple. Titus set up Roman standards representing their pagan gods in this area of the temple.



NASB, NRSV,

NJB

“(let the reader understand)”

NKJV

“(whoever reads, let him understand)”

TEV

“(Note to the reader: understand what this means)”

This was a comment by Matthew to his Christian readers. Everyone read aloud in the ancient Mediterranean world. A regular attendee at synagogue should know God’s word. It may relate to the specific phrase “the abomination of desolation” in Dan. 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11.

24:16 “then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains” Eusebius, an early church historian (4th century A.D.), informs us that the Christian community fled to the city of Pella in Perea when the Roman army appeared and began to surround Jerusalem.

24:17 “Whoever is on the housetop” The houses had flat roofs. They were used as the place of social gathering in the hot months. It has been said that one could walk across Jerusalem on the roofs of houses. Apparently some houses were built next to the city’s wall. When the army was seen, immediate flight was necessary.

24:18 “must not turn back to get his cloak” This referred to one’s outer cloak which was used as sleeping gear. They were to flee immediately and not go back even for what was perceived as necessities of life.

24:19 “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies” See Mark 13:17. This referred to the destruction of Jerusalem only! These disciples’ questions to Jesus related to three separate issues: the destruction of Jerusalem,

His Second Coming, and the end of the age. The problem is that these questions were dealt with at the same time. There is no easy verse division by topic.

24:20 “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter” This phrase was related to the difficulties of pregnant women fleeing quickly. This is not a warning to today’s women not to be pregnant at the Second Coming. Matthew, written to Jews, adds the phrase “or on the Sabbath” which is left out of Mark 13:18. Jewish believers would be reluctant to flee on a Sabbath.

I am struck by two things related to this verse.

1. Jesus did not know the exact date of the destruction of Jerusalem.
2. Believers’ prayers could affect the exact date of the destruction of Jerusalem.

24:21 “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will” This is a Hebrew idiomatic phrase similar to many in the OT (cf. Exod. 10:14; 11:6; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:2).

24:22 If all the Christians fled as Eusebius tells us they did, then this might be a reference to the Jewish people, the OT elect (God still has a purpose for national Israel cf. Rom. 9-11). However because of the use of the term “elect” in vv. 24 and 31, it seems to refer to believing Jews. For “elect” see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others’ redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God’s sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind’s necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God’s elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God’s call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner; etc.).

The theological concept of “covenant” unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

▣ **“cut short”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FORTY-TWO MONTHS

The number forty-two months is prophetically characteristic of a period of persecution. The trampling of the outer court is a proverb for the people of God under the domination of unbelievers in different periods in history—Antiochus Epiphanes, the Romans in A.D. 70, and the end-time Antichrist.

Forty-two months, or its equivalent, is mentioned several times in the Bible. The origin seems to be the book of Daniel.

1. Daniel 7:25; 12:7 mention “a time, times, and half a time” or 1277 days (assuming a “time” equals one year)
2. Daniel 8:14 mentions 2300 evenings and mornings
3. Daniel 12:11 mentions 1290 days
4. Daniel 12:12 mentions 1335 days. Similar phrasing is found in Rev. 12:6 (1260 days) and 13:5 (42 months).

When all of these occurrences are taken into account, their variety seems to speak of the symbolic nature of the numbers, while their proximity to forty-two months seems to show that it is a symbolic number for a period of persecution. Since three and a half is half of seven, it seems to be a reference to a complete period of persecution that has been cut short (cf. Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:20; Luke 21:24). Persecution is limited in God’s love as is judgment.

24:23,26 The true Messiah's coming will not be secret or hidden. It will not be to a select group but visible to all (v. 27). Biblically there is no "secret rapture." See note at 24:40-41.

24:23,26 "if" These are two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which denote potential action.

24:24 "they will show great signs and wonders" These false christs will perform miracles (cf. 7:21-23). Be careful of always identifying the miraculous with God (cf. Exod. 7:11-12,22; Deut. 13:1-3; II Thess. 2:9-12; Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 20:20).

24:27 "just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be" See Luke 17:24. Mark 13 does not have this phrase. This implies a visible coming. The NT does not teach a secret rapture of believers (cf. 24:40-41). But it does reveal that believers dead and alive will meet the Lord in the air at His Second Coming (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18). The air was considered the realm of the demonic or Satan (cf. Eph. 2:2). Believers will meet Jesus in the midst of Satan's kingdom to show its total overthrow!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANY-MOMENT RETURN OF JESUS VERSUS THE NOT YET (NT PARADOX)

- A. New Testament eschatological passages reflect Old Testament prophetic insight that viewed the end-time through contemporary occurrences.
- B. Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are so difficult to interpret because they deal with several questions simultaneously.
 - 1. when will the Temple be destroyed
 - 2. what will be the sign of the Messiah's return
 - 3. when will this age end (cf. Matt. 24:3)?
- C. The genre of New Testament eschatological passages is usually a combination of apocalyptic and prophetic language which is purposely ambiguous and highly symbolic.
- D. Several passages in the NT (cf. Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21, I and II Thess. and Rev.) deal with the Second Coming. These passages emphasize:
 - 1. the exact time of the event is unknown, but the event is certain
 - 2. we can know the general time, but not specific time of the events
 - 3. it will occur suddenly and unexpectedly
 - 4. we must be prayerful, ready, and faithful to assigned tasks.
- E. There is a theological paradoxical tension between (1) the any-moment return (cf. Luke 12:40,46; 21:36; Matt.24:27,44) versus (2) the fact that some events in history must occur.
- F. The NT states that some events will occur before the Second Coming.
 - 1. The Gospel preached to the whole world (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
 - 2. The great apostasy (cf. Matt. 24:10-13, 21; I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 3:1ff.; II Thess. 2:3)
 - 3. The revelation of the "man of sin" (cf. Dan. 7:23-26; 9:24-27; II Thess. 2:3)
 - 4. Removal of that/who restrains (cf. II Thess. 2:6-7)
 - 5. Jewish revival (cf. Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11)
- G. Luke 17:26-37 is not paralleled in Mark. It does have a partial Synoptic parallel in Matt. 24:37-44.

24:28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather" This does not appear in Mark 13 but it does appear in Luke 17:37. It was a proverbial statement possibly from Job 39:30. If it was a cryptic reference to the end time battle of Psalm 2, then maybe the source is Ezek. 39:17-20. It may be a metaphor for endtime persecution and death.

NASB TEXT: 24:29-31

²⁹But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. ³¹And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

24:29 “but” This is a strong ADVERSATIVE showing a break in context. Notice all the English translations mark a paragraph division at this point.

☐ **“the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light”** This was OT apocalyptic language of the end time (cf. Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10,31; 3:15; Amos 8:9). There will be upheavals in nature at the coming of the Day of the Lord (cf. II Pet. 3:7,10,11,12; Rev. 6:12-14).

☐ **“the powers of the heavens will be shaken”** This could simply be the continuation of the OT apocalyptic language, and thereby a reference to the convulsions of nature at the Lord’s coming or a reference to angelic powers that influence history (cf. Dan. 10; Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15; Rev. 12:4).

24:30 “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky” It is possible that this is a connection to Isa. 60:1-3. The “sign” would be the light of the *Shekinah* cloud of glory. Earthly lights fail, but God’s light (cf. Gen. 1:3), the true morning star, shines forth!

Jesus’ humanity (Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1) and deity (Dan. 7:13) are emphasized by the term “Son of Man.” Clouds were seen as the means for transportation of deity in the OT. Jesus used them in Acts 1:9 and I Thess. 4:17 which implied His deity. This sign will be Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven as the eastern sky “opens.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF MAN (from notes in commentary on Daniel 7:13)

The Aramaic phrase (“ben *enosh*,” construct BDB 1085 and 1081) “son of man” is different from the similar Hebrew phrase (“ben *adam*”) found in Psalms and Ezekiel. Both phrases are used in parallel in Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; 90:3; 144:3; Isa. 13:12. This obviously refers to the Messiah and it links his humanity (cf. 8:17; Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1), which is the meaning of the Aramaic and Hebrew phrases, “son of man” with his deity because the clouds are the transportation of deity (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

Jesus uses the phrase to refer to Himself in the NT. It was not used of the Messiah in rabbinical Judaism. It had no exclusivistic, nationalistic, militaristic connotations. It uniquely describes the Messiah as fully human and fully God (cf. I John 4:1-3). Daniel’s usage is the first which focuses on its divine aspect!

Jesus used the phrase for Himself in three senses.

1. His suffering and death (e.g. Mark 8:31; 10:45; 14:21; Luke 9:22,44)
2. His coming as Judge (e.g. Matt. 16:27; 25:31; John 5:27)
3. His coming in glory to set up His kingdom (e.g. Matt. 16:28; 19:28; Mark 13:26-27; 14:62)

From *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1657 (also see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 136-139), the later Jewish tradition about this text are listed.

1. This context is Messianic (cf. I Enoch 46:1; 48:10; 4 Ezra [2 Esdras] chapter 13; b. Sanh. 98a)
2. All predictions in this context are already fulfilled (cf. b. Sanh. 97b)
3. This context does not refer to the end-time (cf. Gen. Rab. 98:2)
4. This context represents Israel (cf. Ibn Ezra and Rashi)

☐ **“and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn”** This referred to the visible return of Jesus. It will be seen by the entire world. Unbelievers will suddenly recognize the consequences of their unbelief.

☐ **“on the clouds”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COMING ON THE CLOUDS

This phrase is an obvious reference to the Second Coming of Christ. This coming on the clouds was a very significant eschatological sign. It was used in three distinct ways in the OT.

1. to show God’s physical presence, the *Shekinah* cloud of Glory (cf. Exod. 13:21; 16:10; Num. 11:25)
2. to cover His Holiness so that man would not see Him and die (cf. Exod. 33:20; Isa. 6:5)
3. to transport deity (cf. Isa. 19:1)

In Daniel 7:13 clouds were used of the transportation of a divine human Messiah. This prophecy in Daniel is alluded to over 30 times in the NT. This same connection of the Messiah with the clouds of heaven can be seen in Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 14:62; Acts 1:9,11 and I Thess. 4:17.

▣ **“with power and great glory”** This shows the drastic contrast between His first coming and the Second Coming. This is the way the Jews expect the Messiah’s coming. See note on “Glory” at 16:27.

24:31 “His angels” See Mark 13:27, 8:38, and II Thess. 1:7. God’s angels are called Jesus’ angels here. This implied His deity.

▣ **“with a great trumpet”** This probably referred to the Shophar, the left ram’s horn, which was used to signal Jewish Sabbaths and feast days. In Isa. 27:13 there is a trumpet blast related to the last days (cf. I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew association with horns/trumpets:

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) – turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham will substitute for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) – from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and time to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) – from Phoenician word for Ram (cf. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

(All of these first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed any animal horn—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow.)

4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) – possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used:
 - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10)
 - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
 - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

▣ **“gather together His elect”** This is OT imagery of restoration from exile (i.e., Deut. 30:4), here turned into an eschatological gathering (cf. 13:40-43,47-49). The exact order of these specific end-time events is uncertain. Paul taught that at death the believer is already with Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). I Thess. 4:13ff. teaches that apparently something of our physical bodies, which were left here, will be united with our spirits at the Lord’s coming. This implies a disembodied state between death and resurrection day. There is so much about the end-time events and afterlife that are not recorded in the Bible.

▣ **“from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other”** This implied a world-wide following of Jesus! It also implied a long period of time for the gospel to spread.

The numerical four is symbolic of the world. It referred to the four corners of the world (Isa. 11:12; Rev. 7:1), the four winds of heaven (Dan. 7:2; Zech. 2:6), and the four ends of heaven (Jer. 49:36). See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers In Scripture at 4:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:32-35

³²Now learn the parable of the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³So, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right at the door*. ³⁴Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

24:32 “the fig tree” This parable is paralleled in Mark 13:28-32 and Luke 21:29-33. The fig tree in this proverbial passage was apparently not a symbol of Israel as in Matt. 21:18-20 and Mark 11:12-14, but a way of assuring believers that although they cannot know the specific eschatological times, they can know the general time. The fig tree put out its leaves early and everyone knew spring was close.

24:32-33 “you know” When the last generation comes, the Bible’s prophetic passages will fit exactly the history of that day. This knowledge will strengthen the believers’ trust in God amidst end time persecution. The problem with every generation of believers is that they force the Bible into the history of their own day! All attempts have so far have been wrong!

24:33 “He” This MASCULINE PRONOUN is not in the Greek text. It should be “it” (cf. v. 14).

☐ **“when you see all these things”** This could refer to (1) the destruction of Jerusalem; (2) the transfiguration (cf. Mark 9:1; Matt. 16:27); or (3) one of these specific signs of the Second Coming.

24:34 This verse referred to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman legion under Titus. Jesus was merging the questions of 24:3: (1) the destruction of the temple, (2) the sign of His return at the end of the age, and (3) the end of the age.

It is also possible to link 10:23; 16:28 and 24:34 and conclude that Jesus expected to return quickly, but Matthew, writing decades later, realized the “delayed return” theme in Jesus’ teachings.

24:25 What a strong statement of Jesus’ self understanding. It surely relates to 5:17-19 or Isa. 40:8; 55:11. Jesus is the full revelation of the invisible God (i.e., Col. 1:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:36-41

³⁶But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women *will be grinding at the mill*; one will be taken and one will be left.

24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” For “hour” see Special Topic below. This is a strong verse to deter Christians from setting specific dates for the Second Coming.

The phrase “nor the Son” is not included in Matt. 24:36 in some ancient Greek uncial manuscripts \aleph^a , K, L, W. It is included in most translations because it does occur in manuscripts \aleph , B and D, the Diatesseron, and the Greek texts known to Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, and the old Latin manuscript used by Jerome. This may have been one of the texts modified by orthodox scribes to accentuate the deity of Christ against false teachers (See *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, Bart D. Ehrman, pp. 91-92, published by Oxford University Press, 1993).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HOUR

The term “hour” is used in several different ways in the Gospels, as

1. a time reference (cf. Matt. 8:13; Luke 7:21; John 11:9)
2. a metaphor for a time of testing and trial (cf. Matt. 10:19; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12)
3. a metaphor for Jesus beginning His ministry (cf. John 2:4; 4:23)
4. a metaphor for the day of judgment (i.e., Second Coming, cf. Matt. 24:36,44; 25:13; Mark 13:32; John 5:25,28)
5. a metaphor for Jesus’ passion (cf. Matt. 26:45; Mark 14:35,41; John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1)

24:37 “Coming” See Special Topic at 24:3.

☐ **“will be just like the days of Noah”** This is an idiom which meant that normal life was continuing just as in the past (cf. v. 38).

24:39 This is the judgment of God on the unbelieving both temporally and eschatologically.

24:40-41 “there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women *will be grinding at the mill*; one will be taken and one will be left” Many try to relate this to a secret rapture. However, the context implies blessing on some and judgment on others in the unexpected day the Lord returns. It is uncertain which group is blessed. Does “taken” or “left” refer to Noah and his family who were left alive after the Flood, or are those who meet the Lord in the air (v. 31)? An OT example of some people being blessed and some people being judged is Noah’s flood (cf. v. 39). In Luke the OT example of Sodom was used (cf. Luke 17:29). As a matter of fact, v. 27 implied one physical, visible coming of the Lord! The only reason

some want a secret rapture of believers first is to try to explain the dialectical tension in the NT documents between (1) the any moment return of the Lord and (2) the fact that some things must happen first.

Jesus gives several examples to denote the suddenness and unexpectedness of His return.

1. Noah's flood, vv. 37-38
2. thief in the night, v. 43
3. the master's return, vv. 45-46
4. delayed bridegroom, 25:5-6
5. possibly "lightning" in v. 27

Believers' only option is to be ready at all times (cf. v. 44; 25:10,13)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:42-44

⁴²Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.

24:42 "be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming" This parable is paralleled in Luke 12:39-40. The emphasis on being ready (cf. v. 43, 44) and the uncertainty of the time (cf. vv. 39,47,49,50; 25:5,13) are recurrent themes in the chapter. The uncertainty of the time provides motivation for the continued readiness of each generation of believers.

24:43 "if" This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is called "contrary to fact." A statement is made that is false so the conclusion drawn from it is also false.

24:44 "you also must be ready" This phrase is PRESENT (deponent) IMPERATIVE (cf. Mark 13:5,9,23). This is the key for believers, not speculation and dogmatism about the when and how!

The fact that so many expect His coming soon may be an evidence that this is not the last generation!

▣ **"an hour"** See Special Topic: The Hour at 24:36.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:45-51

⁴⁵Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' ⁴⁹and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with the drunkards; ⁵⁰the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, ⁵¹and will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

24:45 "put in charge of his household" Some see this as relating this parable to Christian leaders (cf. Luke 12-40-48). In this context it related to Jesus' continuing confrontation with the Jewish leaders of His day.

24:46 Believers must remain active, ready, and faithful (cf. Luke 12:37-38; James 1:12; Rev. 16:15). The when and how of the Second Coming is not the issue!

24:47 "he will put him in charge of all his possessions" See Matt. 13:12, 25:29, and Luke 19:17.

24:48 "if" This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which meant potential future action.

▣ **"heart"** See Special Topic at 5:8.

▣ **"My master is not coming for a long time"** This represents the concept of a delay in the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 25:5; II Thess. 2; II Pet. 3:4).

24:50 "the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know" See Matt. 24:27,44; 25:6, 13. This reflects the "any moment" return of the Lord.

24:51 “will cut him to pieces” There is uncertainty as to whether this is metaphorical or literal (cf. II Sam. 12:31; Heb. 11:37). It is surely a description of OT judgment.

▣ **“with the hypocrites”** The parallel in Luke 12:46 has “unbelievers.” Matthew calls the Pharisees “hypocrites” several times. See Special Topic at 6:2.

▣ **“weeping”** These last two items are judgment metaphors. Weeping was a sign of great sadness (cf. 25:30).

▣ **“gnashing of teeth”** This represents anger or pain (cf. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 25:30).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the basic purpose of this chapter?
2. Do verses 4-7 describe the end time?
3. How does Daniel’s prophecy (7:23-28; 9:24-27; 11:26-29) relate to this chapter?
4. Why does Jesus use language like verse 24?
5. Can we know when the Lord will come again?
6. Is the time of Second Coming imminent, delayed, or time uncertain?
7. How could Jesus not know the time (v. 36)?
8. What is the major emphasis of this section (vv. 45-51)?
9. Do you expect Jesus’ return in your lifetime? Why?

MATTHEW 25

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Parable of the Ten Maidens 25:1-13	The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins 25:1-13	The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids 25:1-13	The Parable of the Ten Girls 25:1-5 25:6-12 25:13	Parable of the Ten Wedding Attendants 25:1-13
The Parable of the Talents 25:14-30	The Parable of the Talents 25:14-30	Parable of the Talents 25:14-30	The Parable of the Three Servants 25:14-18 25:19-30	Parable of the Talents 25:14-30
The Judgment of the Nations 25:31-40 25:41-46	The Son of Man Will Judge the Nations 25:31-46	The Great Judgment 25:31-46	The Final Judgment 25:31-40 25:41-46	The Last Judgment 25:31-46

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Take note of the literary context. In this case the context is Matthew 24-25, which dealt with the suddenness of Christ's unexpected coming and the warning to "be ready" by being faithful in doing God's will—even amidst persecution.
- B. For a full discussion on interpreting parables see introduction to Chapter 13.
- C. Write in your own words the central truth of each parable (cf. Matt. 24: 45-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-30). Parables are meant to illustrate truth from common occurrences of daily life (cf. Matt. 13:10-17). Always look for the unexpected twist or surprise!
- D. Verses 37-44 do not appear in Mark. They do have a partial Synoptic parallel in Luke 17:26-37.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-13

¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish and five were prudent. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. ⁶But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ ¹²But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

25:1 “the kingdom of heaven” God’s current reign over the lives of redeemed people will one day be consummated in His reign over all the earth (cf. Matt. 6:10). See Special Topic at 4:17.

▣ **“ten”** See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 24:31.

▣ **“went out to meet the bridegroom”** The cultural background of this parable (which is unique to Matthew) concerns Jewish wedding customs of first century Palestine (see James Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*). After about a year of binding betrothal, the groom went to the bride’s home on an assigned day to bring her to his home for a seven day feast.

There is a Greek manuscript variant here that relates to this Hebrew custom. The best and most ancient Greek texts have “went out to meet the bridegroom.” The Bezae Greek manuscript (D) and the Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations, as well as the Greek texts used by Origen, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine add “and the bride.” This then would refer to when she joined the wedding party. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text a “B” rating (almost certain).

25:5 “the bridegroom was delaying” This may refer to the delay of Jesus’ return. Matthew 24:14 and 43-44 also imply a delay between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming. This delay surprised the early church, yet the concept was implicit in Jesus’ teachings and Paul’s (cf. II Thessalonians 2). The parables are literary imagery that has a main purpose. Be careful to turning the details into doctrine!

▣ **“they all got drowsy and began to sleep”** There is no condemnation implied for this. It merely sets the stage for the parables’ emphasis on preparedness.

25:9 Each person must prepare for themselves in the kingdom!

25:10 “the door was shut” Luke 13:25 related this parable to Israel and the Gentiles, but this context demands a relationship to the Second Coming. This illustrates how the inspired evangelists used Jesus’ teachings in different settings and for different purposes (cf. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, p. 113-134). See Special Topic: Use of “door” in the NT at 6:6.

25:11 “Lord, lord” The repetition was an attempt to show intimacy (cf. Luke 6:46), but the relationship was lacking (cf. Matt. 7:21,22). The shocking part of these examples is that these were seemingly part of the followers of Jesus, but somehow were not (cf. chapter 13, the parable of the soils and the parable of the tares). As Paul says in Rom. 9:6, “they are not all Israel who are from Israel,” so too, not all the outward followers of Jesus are redeemed (cf. II Pet.2:20-22; I John 2:18-19 and even possibly some of the warnings of Hebrews [i.e., 2:1-4; 3:7-13; 4:1-13; 5:11-6:12; 10:26-39; 12:14-17]). See Special Topic: Apostasy at 7:21.

25:12 “I do not know you” Lack of preparation has eternal consequences. This is parallel to 24:50-51; 25:29-30; and 25:41-44. One must balance the different aspects of salvation presented in the NT.

1. it is a decision, a public profession (i.e., welcome a person)
2. it is a discipleship, a public godly lifestyle (live like that person)
3. it is an informed biblical understanding (i.e., accept truths about that person)

All three are necessary for maturity.

The term “know” was used in its OT sense of intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Christianity combines the Hebrew sense (personal relationship) and the Greek sense (information). The gospel is a person, a lifestyle, and a message!

25:13

NASB “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour”
NKJV “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming”
NRSV “Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour”
TEV “Watch out, then, because you do not know the day or the hour”
NJB “So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour”

This truth is the purpose of the parable. See full note at 24:40-41. The date of the Second Coming is sure, but unknown (cf. 24:36,42,44,50; Mark 13:32). Believers are to stay active and ready for Jesus’ certain but sudden return (cf. 24:36). There is a manuscript variant at this point. Apparently copyists added “in which the Son of Man is coming” from 24:44. This additional phrase is absent in the ancient Greek manuscripts P³⁵, \aleph , A, B, C*, D, L, W, X, and Y, as well as the Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations. It is obviously not original to Matthew. UBS⁴ gives the shorter text an “A” rating (certain).

▣ “the hour” See Special Topic at 24:36.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:14-18

¹⁴“For it is just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷In the same manner the one who *had received* the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.”

25:16 “Immediately the one who had received the five talents” This parable is paralleled in Luke 19:11-27. There is a Greek manuscript variant over how “immediately” relates to v. 15: (1) does it describe the slave owner or (2) the slave? Although the Greek texts vary, the context and Matthew’s usage of “immediately” mandate option two.

▣ “five talents” A talent was equivalent to 6,000 denarii. A denarius was the daily wage of soldiers and laborers. The RSV footnote says “more than fifteen years’ wages of a laborer.” See Special Topic at 17:24.

▣ “each according to his own ability” This states a biblical principle (cf. Matt. 13:8; II Cor. 8:3,11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:19-23

¹⁹“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See I have gained five more talents.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ ²²Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’”

25:21-23 “Well done, good and faithful slave” Good stewardship, not the amount, was the issue. See Special Topic: Degrees of Rewards and Punishments at 5:12.

▣ “enter into the joy of your master” This repeated phrase is an idiom for entering the Kingdom. Service for Christ is service for the family. The joy is the fellowship.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:24-25

²⁴“And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’”

25:24-25 The servant’s characterization does not accurately describe God. One must not push the detail of these parables allegorically. The NT has parables of both comparison and contrast.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:26-28

²⁶"But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'"

25:27 "interest" This term was an idiom taken from child bearing. OT guidelines for interest are found in Deut. 23:19-20. A Jew could only collect usury from Gentiles.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:29-30

²⁹"For to everyone who has *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. ³⁰Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

25:29 "For to everyone who has *more* shall be given" See Matt. 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18; 19:26. "More" is not in the text but is certainly implied.

25:30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" Western readers are uncomfortable with Eastern overstatements and metaphorical language (cf. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51). This parable shows the need not only for initial salvation but for ongoing responsibility. Profession is confirmed by lifestyle. No fruit—no root!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central truth of all these parables?
2. How do these parables relate to other larger context of Chapters 24 and 25?
3. Explain the statement that gospel writers had the right under inspiration to select, adapt, and arrange the teachings of Jesus.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FOR 25:31-46

- A. It is Jesus Himself who speaks so often of the eternal and horrible consequences of human sin. It is Jesus and Jesus alone who emphasizes not only a final judgment but an eternal hell.
- B. This passage seems to be an amplification of 16:27. A good parallel passage on a day of judgment is Rev. 20:11-15.
- C. Jesus is coming again as the Glorified King of Heaven. This is similar to the way the Jews are still expecting Him to come for the first time.
- D. The Bible speaks of the certainty of the judgment, but often signifies different agents.
 1. God as Judge (cf. Rom. 14:2; I Peter 1:17)
 2. Christ as Judge (cf. John. 5:22, 27; Matt. 16:27; Acts 10:42; II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:1)
 3. God through Christ (cf. Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:31-33

³¹"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left."

25:31 "the Son of Man" This was a term used in the OT to simply signify a human being, as in Psalm 8:4 and Ezek. 2:1. However, in Dan. 7:13 a human being, called "a son of man," comes riding on the clouds of heaven—the mode of transportation for deity—and is given the eternal kingdom. The title "Son of Man" was not used in rabbinical Judaism. Jesus used this term as a self-designation which included the concepts of humanity and deity and did not have the narrow Jewish nationalistic, militaristic connotation. As the Son of Man rode on the clouds of heaven in Dan. 7:13, He now comes with all the holy angels to judge mankind (cf. Matt. 25:31; I Thess. 4:13-18).

▣ **"in His Glory"** See note on "glory" at 16:27.

▣ **"and all the angels with Him"** The angels will do the work of gathering and dividing. They were often associated with Christ's coming (cf. 16:27; Mark 8:38; II Thess. 1:7; Jude 14; and Dan. 7:10).

▣ **"He will sit on His glorious throne"** He will take His seat on the throne of God (cf. Ps. 110:1) not only as Lord and King, but as Judge (cf. 19:28). Rejecting Jesus has a temporal aspect (cf. John 3:18) and an eschatological aspect. The judgment in time is consummated in eternity.

25:32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him" This passage may not be a parable, but a dramatic presentation unique to Matthew. All questions about the end time are not dealt with. One wonders if all nations include those humans who are alive and dead, or just those who are alive. The phrase "all the nations" implied the universal spread of the gospel to all people (cf. Revelation 5) which included Israel. This is the goal of Gen. 3:15, 12:3, and Exod. 19:4-6. Israel's call was to be missionary to the nations!

It is difficult to identify with certainty who "the goats" are: (1) those who have rejected the gospel or (2) those who have an outward profession only? Both groups call Jesus "Lord" (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). This judgment seems to be limited to those who have, at least outwardly, responded to the gospel. Therefore it is similar in meaning to the parable of the soils (cf. Matthew 13).

The pressures of end-time events and the lack of love for other believers (cf. I John. 2:9,11; 3:15; 4:7-21) will clearly reveal false professions (cf. Matt. 13:21,22; I John. 2:19).

▣ **"and He will separate them from one another"** Much like the wheat and tares (cf. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) could not be separated until judgment day, so the sheep and the goats wait until the last day for all to see the fruit of their lives. Also notice there are only two categories.

▣ **"as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats"** God as shepherd was a common OT metaphor (cf. Psalm 23). "Shepherd" was used in Ezekiel 34 to describe the false shepherds of Israel and God as Chief Shepherd and Judge. The same terminology is applied to Jesus in Zech. 11:4-14; John 10.

25:33 "on His right" This is a biblical anthropomorphic phrase to describe the place of preeminence, honor, power, and authority.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:34-40

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹When did we see You sick in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'"

25:34 “the King” Jesus was often spoken of as the Coming King (cf. Rev. 17:14; 19:16). YHWH was also spoken of as the King, which brings additional significance to this term when it was used for Jesus (cf. Deut. 10:17; I Tim. 6:15). This transference of title was a common technique of NT authors to assert the full deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

▣ **“you who are blessed of My Father”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. They have been blessed in the past and continue to be blessed. God is the active agent.

▣ **“inherit”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. The judgment of believers (cf. II Cor. 5:10) will not be based upon our sins (cf. Titus 2:14; I John. 1:7), but upon our use of spiritual gifts and our availability to God (cf. I Cor. 3:10-15). See Special Topic: Believers’ Inheritance at 19:29.

▣ **“the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The NT used this phrase several times to describe things that God did for believers even before creation (cf. John. 17:24; Eph. 1:4, 11; I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). The Trinity was active in redemption before Gen. 1:1! God’s work never fails!

25:35-39 Our good deeds and lifestyle love reveal and confirm our initial faith commitment to Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10; II Tim. 2:21; 3:17; Titus 3:1; Heb. 13:21). Faith without works is dead (cf. James 2:14-26). These good works to others are related to the good works of Jesus Himself (cf. Isa. 58:6-7). Believers continue His ministry (cf. Titus 2:14).

25:40 “to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them” The term “brother” here must refer to a neighbor. It is believers caring for humans made in God’s image that is emphasized. The close relationship between Jesus and His followers can be seen in Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14, and I Cor. 8:12. To hurt one is to hurt both; to bless one is to bless both. Jesus wants believers to live in such a way that His task on earth continues (i.e., help fallen humans find fellowship with their Creator, cf. 20:28; Mark 10:45; I John 3:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:41-46

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

25:41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me’” Hell’s worst aspect is the separation from fellowship with God (cf. Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27). God does not send humans to hell; they send themselves by their lifestyle choices.

▣ **“accursed ones”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This grammatical construction was used several times in this context. It speaks of that which happened in the past and the results of which have continued into the present. The action is done by an outside agent. These people’s rejection of God and His Christ in the past has been consummated into permanent blindness and rejection! This rejection revealed itself in lack of love for other human beings (vv. 42-43).

▣ **“into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels”** Hell was not made for humans, but for angelic beings in rebellion. Satan has angels that serve him, possibly alluded to in Dan. 8:10 and Rev. 12:4. Matthew 25 mixes the metaphors of its darkness in v. 30, and fire in v. 41. The horrors and torments of hell are so far beyond human vocabulary and finite conceptions that the Bible used the most vivid imagery possible. Most of the metaphors come from the garbage dump outside Jerusalem in the valley of the sons of Hinnom called “*Gehenna*.” Jesus often spoke about it (cf. Isa. 33:14; 66:24; Matt. 3:10, 12; 5:22; 7:19; 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8, 9; Jude 7; Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). See Special Topic: Eternal at 18:8.

25:45 “Truly I say to you” Literally “*amen*,” this was a Hebrew term meaning “to be firm.” It was used by biblical authors to affirm the reality and truthfulness of words, concepts and teachings. Jesus uniquely used it to begin sentences. Often He would double it for even more emphasis. See Special Topic: at 5:1.

25:46 “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” The same term [*aiōnos*] that describes heaven as everlasting is applied to hell as everlasting (cf. 18:8; 19:16; Mark 3:29; 9:48; 10:17; Luke 18:18; Jude v. 7; Rev. 20:10; also with “eternal judgment in II Thess. 1:9 and Heb. 6:2). Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; and Acts 24:15 describe a resurrection of both

the righteous and wicked. Josephus states that the Pharisees believed in the immortality of all “souls” (cf. *Antiq.* 18.1,3), but only the resurrection of the righteous into a new body, while the wicked have eternal punishment (cf. *Jewish Wars* 2.8,14). The eternality and finality is the impetus of the urgency of gospel preaching, teaching, and witnessing!

An eternal hell is not only a tragedy for rebellious mankind, but also for God! God created humans as the apex of His creative event. We were made in His image and likeness for fellowship with Him (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). God’s choice to allow mankind a choice resulted in a significant percentage of God’s creation being separated from Himself! Hell is an open, bleeding sore in the heart of God that will never be healed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How can hell be both darkness and fire?
2. Does this passage teach that some will be saved by their good works to mankind?
3. In your own words what is the central truth of this passage?
4. Will Christians be judged?
5. What does hell cost God?

MATTHEW 26

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Plot to Kill Jesus	The Plot to Kill Jesus	Jesus' Death	The Plot Against Jesus	The Conspiracy Against Jesus
26:1-5	26:1-5	26:1-2 26:3-5	26:1-2 26:3-5	26:1-2 26:3-5
The Anointing at Bethany	The Anointing at Bethany		Jesus Anointed at Bethany	The Anointing at Bethany
26:6-13	26:6-13	26:6-13	26:6-9 26:10-13	26:6-13
Judas' Agreement to Jesus	Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus		Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus	Judas Betrays Jesus
26:14-16	26:14-16	26:14-16	26:14-16	26:14-16
The Passover with the Disciples	Jesus Celebrates Passover with His Disciples	The Last Supper	Jesus Eats the Passover Meal with His Disciples	Preparations for the Passover Supper
26:17-25	26:17-30	26:17-19	26:17 26:18 26:19	26:17-19
		26:20-25	26:20-21 26:22 26:23-24 26:25a,b 26:25c	The Treachery of Judas Foretold 26:20-25
The Institution of the Supper			The Lord's Supper	The Institution of the Eucharist
26:26-30		26:26-29	26:26 26:27-29	26:26-29
		Gethsemane		Peter's Denial Foretold
		26:30	26:30	26:30-35
Peter's Denial Foretold	Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial		Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial	
26:31-35	26:31-35	26:31-35	26:31-32 26:33 26:34 26:35a	

			26:35b	
The Prayer in Gethsemane	The Prayer in the Garden		Jesus Prays in Gethsemane	Gethsemane
26:36-46	26:36-46	26:36-46	26:36-38	26:36-37
				26:38-46
			26:39	
			26:40-41	
			26:42-43	
			26:44-46	
The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus	Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane		The Arrest of Jesus	The Arrest
26:47-56	26:47-56	26:47-56	26:47-48	26:47-56
			26:49	
			26:50a	
			26:50b-54	
			26:55-56a	
			26:56b	
Jesus Before the Council	Jesus Faces the Sanhedrin	Jesus Before Caiaphas	Jesus Before the Council	Jesus Before the Sanhedrin
26:57-68	26:57-68	26:57-68	26:57-61	26:57-58
				26:59-66
			26:62-63	
			26:64	
			26:65-66a	
			26:66b	
			26:67-68	26:67-68
Peter's Denial of Jesus	Peter Denies Jesus, and Weeps Bitterly		Peter Denies	Peter's Denials
26:69-75	26:69-75	26:69-75	26:69	26:69-75
			26:70-71	
			26:72	
			26:73	
			26:74a	
			26:74b-75	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY FOR 26:1-35

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-2

¹When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, ²"You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion."

26:1 "When Jesus had finished all these words" This referred to Jesus' eschatological discourse in chapters 24-25. This phrase is a literary marker which Matthew used to mark off Jesus' discourses (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

26:2 "after two days the Passover is coming" There is much confusion over the exact date of the Lord's Supper and, for that matter, the whole itinerary of the last week of Jesus' ministry. The Lord's Supper was obviously linked to the Passover symbolism (cf. John. 1:29). The Synoptic Gospels say it was the Passover meal, but John says it was the day before. There is some evidence that because the high priesthood had been corrupted by being purchased from the Roman occupiers that several sects of the Jews had Passover on a different day (i.e., the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls used a solar calendar and had Passover one day earlier) than the official feast.

John's dating of the Supper one day earlier emphasizes Jesus as the Passover lamb killed to save the family. If so, John may have altered the date for theological purposes, as he may have altered the cleansing of the temple early for theological presentation of Jesus' life. The Gospel writers under inspiration had the right to select, adapt, and arrange the words and deeds of Jesus so as to present Him to different groups (Gordon Fee, Doug Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*).

▣ **"Son of Man"** See note at Matt. 8:24:30.

▣ **"is to be handed over for crucifixion"** Jesus had warned the disciples of this several times (cf. Matt. 16:21; 17:9,12,22-23; 20:18-19; 27:63). These predictions would embolden His followers in the days after the Passion week. Jesus knew future events. Jesus laid down His own life (cf. Mark 10:45; John. 10:11,15,18). He was always in control of the timing and events themselves.

▣ **"crucifixion"** This was a form of public torture developed by either the Phoenicians or in Mesopotamia to deter rebellion and crime but perfected (i.e., where it lasted several days) by the Romans. No Roman citizen could be crucified. It involved a public beating and nailing to a cross. The shape of the cross could be a capital "T" or a small "t" or an "X." It is even possible that a scaffolding was used when several persons were crucified together. Death finally occurred by asphyxiation. The condemned person had to push up on his nailed feet to breathe. This is why breaking the legs of those criminals crucified with Jesus caused their rapid death (cf. John. 19:32).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:3-5

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; ⁴and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. ⁵But they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people."

26:3 "the chief priests and the elders" This was the short designation for the Sanhedrin. See Special Topic at 20:18.

▣ **"in the court of the high priest"** This referred to the central courtyard of Caiaphas' and possibly Annas' mansion.

▣ **“Caiaphas”** Caiaphas was the High Priest, appointed by Rome, in exchange for a price, from A.D. 18-36. He was the son-in-law of Annas, High Priest from A.D. 6-15. This powerful family was motivated more by politics and wealth than by spirituality. It is unfair to judge all Sadducees or, for that matter, the Sanhedrin, by them.

26:4 “they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him” They decided early in His ministry to kill Him, but they were seeking an opportunity when the common people were not present (cf. Matt. 12:14; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:2; John. 5:18; 7:1,19,25; 8:37,40; 11:53). They were jealous of His popularity and fearful of His teachings and actions.

26:5 “during the festival” The Passover was combined with the Feast of the Unleavened Bread to form an eight day feast (cf. Exodus 12 and Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 3.10.5).

▣ **“a riot might occur among the people”** Many pilgrims from Galilee and the Diaspora were present in Jerusalem for observance of the Passover. The Passover was required for all male Jews of twenty years and above (cf. Lev. 23:2, 4, 17, 44; Num. 29:39). Jerusalem swelled to three times its normal population during the three mandatory annual feasts. The Romans always brought in extra soldiers during the feast days (cf. 27:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:6-13

⁶Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, ⁷a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined *at the table*. ⁸But the disciples were indignant when they saw *this*, and said, “Why this waste? ⁹For this *perfume* might have been sold for a high price and *the money* given to the poor.” ¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. ¹¹For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me. ¹²For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. ¹³Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.”

26:6 “the home of Simon the leper” Mary and Martha served the meal (cf. John. 12:1ff.), but it was not at their home (cf. Mark 14:3). It is possible they were somehow related, all being from the same small village, Bethany. Simon was apparently (although not recorded) healed by Jesus earlier.

26:7 “a woman” John. 12:3 says it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus. This account is not to be confused with the prostitute of Luke 7:37-39.

▣ **“alabaster vial of very costly perfume”** This was a white/yellow stone vase from Egypt. The contents were made from an aromatic Indian herb called “nard” or “spikenard” (cf. Song of Songs 1:12; 4:13-14; Mark 14:3; John. 12:3). It was very expensive and may have been Mary’s wedding dowry.

▣ **“poured it on His head”** John. 12:3 says that she put the nard on His “feet.” Since this vial contained 12 ounces, or one Roman pound, there was enough to cover His whole body. Once the vial was opened it could not be resealed.

26:8 “the disciples were indignant” John 12:4 says it was Judas Iscariot who was upset.

26:9 “for a high price” This high price was three hundred denarii (cf. John. 12:5). A denarius was the daily wage of a soldier or laborer. The implication is that Judas was thinking of the needs of the poor. However, he probably wanted some of the money for himself (cf. John 12:6).

26:10 “she has done a good deed to Me” The NOUN “deed” and the VERB are from the same root. It intensifies the statement or was an idiom (cf. John 3:21; 6:28; 9:4; Acts 13:41; I Cor. 16:10).

26:11 “For you always have the poor with you” This was not a callous statement toward poverty, but a recognition of the uniqueness of Jesus’ presence.

26:12 “to prepare Me for burial” Mary was a disciple; maybe she understood more than the Apostles! This perfume was used to anoint the body of the dead before burial (cf. John. 19:40).

26:13 “in the whole world” Jesus assumed His gospel (Matthew uses the term for Jesus’ actions in 4:23; 9:35; and Jesus uses the term in 24:14; 26:13) would be preached everywhere (cf. Matt. 24:9,14,32; 28:19-20). This fulfills the OT universal predictions (especially Isaiah, i.e., 2:1-4; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4-5; 56:7)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:14-16

¹⁴Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, “What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?” And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. ¹⁶From then on he *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

26:14 “Iscariot” There are several theories concerning this word (the word is spelled differently in various Greek manuscripts). It could refer to

1. a man of Kerioth, a city of Judah
2. man of Kartan, a city of Galilee
3. the leather bag used to carry money
4. the Hebrew word for “strangling”
5. the Greek word for assassin’s knife

If #1 is true he was the only Judean in the Twelve. If #5 is true he was a zealot like Simon.

There has recently been written a book that interprets Judas in a positive light. The book is entitled *Judas, Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 1996. My problem with it is that it does not take the comments in John’s Gospel seriously.

26:15 “What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you” The motive seems obvious (cf. John. 12:6). The tragedy of Judas is unexplainable. Many modern theories suppose him to be trying to force Jesus to be the expected militant Jewish messiah. The Gospel of John asserts he was a thief.

☐ **“thirty pieces of silver”** This fulfilled the prophecy of Zech. 11:12-13 (cf. Matt. 27:9-10). Jesus was the rejected Shepherd. It was the price paid in the OT for a gored slave (cf. Exod. 21:32). Chapters 9-14 of Zechariah are quoted several times as a prophetic source in relation to Jesus’ ministry.

1. Matt. 21:4-5 quote Zech. 9:9
2. Matt. 24:3 quotes Zech. 12:10
3. Matt. 26:15 quotes Zech. 11:12-13
4. Matt. 26:31 quotes Zech. 13:7
5. Matt. 27:9-10 quotes Zech. 11:12-13

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:17-19

¹⁷Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.”’” ¹⁹The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

26:17 “the first day of Unleavened Bread” The exact chronology of the last week is confusing. Often the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and John (13:1; 19:14,31,42) do not agree. This eight day feast involved two Sabbaths, Passover being the first (cf. Lev. 23:4-8; Deut. 16:8).

☐ **“the disciples”** Luke 22:8 identified Peter and John as these disciples.

☐ **“Passover”** It was eaten on Nisan 15 at 6:00 p.m. The exact day of the week varied year to year because of the Jewish lunar calendar (cf. v. 20).

26:18 “to a certain man” Luke 22:10 says he was to be identified by “carrying a pitcher of water,” an activity traditionally considered women’s work.



NASB, NRSV,

NJB “My time is near”

NKJV “My time is at hand”

TEV “My hour has come”

This was a cryptic phrase used by Jesus for His time of rejection, betrayal, and crucifixion (cf. John. 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).

▣ “at your house with My disciples” Many believe this was the home of John Mark who was

1. Barnabas’ cousin (Col. 4:10)
2. missionary helper (12:25; 13:5,13; 15:37,39)
3. the scribe of Peter’s memoirs, the Gospel of Mark (I Pet. 5:13)

It is also surmised that this was the location of the upper room (cf. Acts 1:13; 12:12), where the disciples waited for the Spirit to come (Acts 1:5; 2:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:20-25

²⁰Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. ²¹As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” ²²Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” ²³And He answered, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. ²⁴The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” ²⁵And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself.”

26:20 “reclining at the table” Tables and chairs were only used in Egypt in this period of time. In Palestine they laid on their left elbows at a low table with their feet behind them (cf. Mark 14:18). This is how Mary could easily anoint His feet (cf. John. 12:3).

26:21 “betray” This is the Greek term “to give over” (*paradidōmi*). It is always translated “betray” by English Bibles, but this is not an established meaning. It can mean

1. a positive meaning of entrust (cf. Matt. 11:27)
2. restore or commend (cf. Acts 14:26; 15:40)
3. a negative sense of to hand someone over to the authorities
4. to put someone in Satan’s hands (cf. I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20)
5. for God to abandon someone to his own idolatry (cf. Acts 7:42)

It is obvious that context must determine the meaning of the common VERB.

26:22 “Surely not I, Lord” Each disciple asked the question. The Greek grammatical construction expected a negative answer. Their asking the question shows their confusion.

26:23 “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me” For one to betray a host was the height of shame in the East (cf. Ps. 41:9). Judas had the seat of honor next to Jesus on His left side. Jesus was still trying to reach Judas!

▣ “the bowl” This was a traditional Passover sauce of nuts, raisins, dates, figs, and vinegar.

26:24 Jesus knew who He was and what He must do (cf. John 13:1). Jesus came to reveal God, to give mankind an example to follow, and to die for their sin (cf. Mark 10:45; Acts 2:23-24; II Cor. 5:21). His life was revealed in OT prophecy (cf. vv. 31,54,56; 11:10; 21:42).

▣ “if” This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. Judas’ betrayal was a necessary, predicted act for which he will suffer the punishment. This is the mystery of election and free will!

26:25 “Surely it is not I, Rabbi” Note Judas used the title “rabbi” (i.e., my teacher) not “Lord” as the other disciples had.

▣ “You have said it yourself” Jesus was still trying to reach Judas. The idiomatic phrase was also used in 26:64 and 27:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:26-29

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” ²⁷And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. ²⁹But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

26:26 “While they were eating” The focus of the *seder* meal, to which this alludes, was the third cup of blessing after the meal itself. Jesus wanted to identify with the deliverance of the Exodus. He was the lamb of God, but He chose the bread and wine, not the Passover lamb, as the symbol for the new covenant.

Matthew often depicts Jesus as the second Moses, the new law-giver. Jesus brings the new exodus from sin.

▣ **“bread”** This referred to flat, unleavened bread cakes used in the Passover meal (cf. Exod. 12).

26:26-28 “this is My body. . .this is My blood” The first recorded Lord’s supper is Paul’s account in I Cor. 11:17-34.

The Synoptic Gospels were written after some of the NT letters. The exact date is uncertain but they were not the first church writings (cf. William L. Blevins’ book *Birth of a New Testament*, personal publication, Carson-Newman College).

26:28 “this is My blood of the covenant” This may be an allusion to Exod. 24:8. Some ancient uncial Greek manuscripts add “new” before covenant: MSS A, C, D, and W. This would reflect Jer. 31:31-34. However, many other good ancient manuscripts (MSS P³⁷, R, B, and L) do not make this addition. It may have been assimilated from Luke 22:20. It is absent in Mark 14:24. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter reading a “B” rating (almost certain).

▣ **“poured out for many”** This is an allusion to Isa. 53:11-12. See Special Topic: Poured Out at 23:35. There has been much discussion about the relationship between “the many” of Isa. 53:11,12 and “us all” of Isa. 53:6. The parallelism of Rom. 5:17-19 may answer this question. The “all men” of 5:18 is the same as “the many” of 5:19. Jesus died for all humans (cf. John. 3:16); all are potentially saved in Him!

▣ **“for forgiveness of sins”** This is the thrust of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34) and the significance of Jesus’ name (“YHWH saves,” cf. Matt. 1:21).

26:29 “I will not drink. . .until. . .My Father’s Kingdom” This was a reference to the Messianic end-time banquet (cf. 8:11; Luke 13:28-30; note Mal. 1:11). This was often connected to the Wedding Feast of Jesus and the Church (cf. Eph. 5:23-29; Rev. 19:7). See Special Topic: The Kingdom of God at 4:17.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* – This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine,” BDB 779, e.g. Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Eos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah – Gen. 9:21; Lot – Gen. 19:33,35; Samson – Jdgs. 16:19; Nabal – I Sam. 25:36; Uriah – II Sam. 11:13; Amnon – II Sam. 13:28; Elah – I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad – I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers – Amos 6:6; and Ladies – Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Mathew. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God’s gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called “new wine” or “sweet wine.”
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered “aged wine” and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called “old wine” and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
- D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:30

³⁰After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

26:30 "singing a hymn" The hymn was probably one or more of the Hallel Psalms 113-118, or 146-150, traditionally used at the close of the Passover ceremony or it may have been the Great Hallel (cf. Psalm 136).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:31-35

³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'" ³²But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." ³³But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." ³⁴Jesus said to Him, "Truly I say to you that this *very* night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." ³⁵Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You." All the disciples said the same thing too.

26:31 "You will all fall away" This states clearly that Jesus' disciples will abandon Him in His hour of need (cf. 26:56.) Only John stayed with Him and Peter followed at a distance. The rest fled!

▣ **"for it is written"** This is a quote from Zech. 13:7. It is interesting that the first eight chapters of Zechariah are quoted often in the book of the Revelation, while the last six are often quoted in the Gospels. It is YHWH who strikes the Shepherd (cf. Isa. 53:6,10; Rom. 8:32). This was always God's plan of redemption (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 24:14.

▣ **"sheep"** Sheep became the animal metaphor used for the followers of Christ..

1. Matt. 7:15 (false sheep)
2. Matt. 9:36; 26:3; Mark 14:27 (scattered flock)
3. Matt. 10:6; 15:24 (lost sheep of Israel)
4. Matt. 10:16; Luke 10:3 (lambs among wolves)
5. Matt. 18:12; Luke 15:6 (parable)
6. Matt. 25:32-33 (sheep and goat judgment)
7. Mark 6:34 (sheep with no shepherd)
8. John 10:1-18 (Jesus as the Good Shepherd)
9. John 21:16-17 (Peter, feed my lambs and sheep)
10. I Pet. 2:25 (Isa. 53:6, sheep going astray)

26:32 "after I have been raised" See Special Topic at 27:63.

▣ **"I will go ahead of you to Galilee"** This post-resurrection meeting is mentioned several times (cf. Matt. 26:32; 28:7,10,16-20; I Cor. 15:6; and John. 21). This should have been a great encouragement to the disciples, but they apparently did not understand.

26:33 "Even though all may fall away" Peter's presumption is clearly seen. This is much like Matt. 16:22-23, where Peter denies the Lord's prediction.

26:34 “Truly I say to you” This is literally “*amen*,” which originally meant “to be firm,” but came to mean “I agree” or “I affirm.” Jesus used this term uniquely to begin significant statements. See Special Topic at 5:1.

▣ **“a rooster crows”** This occurred between 12:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. It must have been a Roman rooster because the Jews did not allow them in the holy city. There has been some speculation that there was a Roman trumpet signal called “The Crow of the Rooster,” which was sounded at the end of the watch at 3 a.m. However, this is still uncertain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus?
2. What about the chronological problems among the four Gospels? Is the Bible in error?
3. Is Judas responsible for his action? What did he do? Why did he do it?
4. What is the significance of the Lord’s Supper?
5. Did Judas take the Lord’s Supper?
6. Why was the prediction of the disciples’ apostasy recorded?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY FOR 26:36-75

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:36-38

³⁶Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. ³⁸Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

26:36 “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane” “Gethsemane” meant “oil press” in Hebrew. It apparently was a private garden just outside the city limits of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. It was illegal to have gardens within the city because the manure needed for the plants made the city ceremonially unclean. Apparently Jesus came to this garden quite often. It is even possible that during Passion Week He bivouacked here with His disciples. Judas knew the place well.

26:37 “And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee” From Mark 14:33 and John 4:21 we know the other two were James and John. This was the inner circle of leadership among the disciples (cf. 17:1; Mark 5:37). They were present with Jesus on several special occasions when the other disciples were not. Apparently this led to both special training and jealousy on the part of the other disciples. Exactly why Jesus had an inner circle is uncertain. The list of the Twelve is always in four groupings of three. The groups never change. It is possible that the groups formed a rotating schedule for the disciples to go home periodically and check on their families.

▣ **“began to be grieved and distressed”** These were strong terms in Greek (cf. Mark 14:33). We are on very holy ground here in the garden as we see the Son of God in what may have been His most vulnerable human moment. Jesus must have related this account to His disciples after His resurrection. Apparently it was meant to be helpful for those who face temptation and for those who seek to understand the agony and cost of the Calvary experience.

26:38 “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death” This was an Old Testament idiom (cf. Ps. 42:5; Jonah 6:9), which expressed the tremendous intensity which was involved in the redemption of sinful mankind. Something of the struggle can be seen in the parallel of Luke 22:43-44, which records that an angel came to minister to Him and He sweat great drops of blood. The victory over the evil one was won here in the garden. The insidiousness of Satan’s temptation in Matt. 4 and of Peter’s supposedly helpful, but extremely destructive, comments in Matt. 16:22, are fully revealed in this passage.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:39-41

³⁹And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” ⁴⁰And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

26:39 “And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed” The beautiful contemporary pictures of Jesus kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane by a rock are moving, but inaccurate. The Greek text here asserts that He was completely prostrate in agony and distress, even to the point of physical death, during these moments. It has often been asked what terrified Jesus so much. Some have speculated that it was the fear of physical death, or His fear that the disciples could not lead the Church. Jesus, who had known intimacy with the Father moment by moment, was on the verge of having to experience the last great aspect of human lostness—a breach of fellowship with God. It was this breach of fellowship and having to carry the burden of sin for all people of all time that terrified the Son. If we can see this kind of intense anguish on the part of Jesus of Nazareth, the unique Son of God, how awesome and destructive must separation from fellowship with God really be!

▣ **“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”** There are several extremely important aspects to this phrase. From Mark’s parallel we understand that He used the Aramaic term “*Abba*,” which referred to an intimate, family relationship. It is often translated “Daddy.” In a few brief hours this will change to “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (cf. 27:46).

The phrase “if it is possible” (FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE) is found in the Markan parallel (cf. Mark 14:36) in the phrase “all things are possible.” The slight variation between vv. 35 and 42 and the variation between the Gospels do not minimize the fact that, from v. 44, we realize that Jesus prayed the same prayer three times.

The concept of “the cup” in biblical usage reflected an Old Testament symbol for the destiny of a person, usually in the sense of the judgment of God (cf. Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22; Jer. 25:15,16,27,28). The cup of judgment that God had prepared for rebellious mankind was consumed to the dregges by the innocent Son of God (cf. II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13).

▣ **“yet not as I will, but as You will”** The PRONOUNS “I” and “You” are in the EMPHATIC POSITION in the Greek. This, combined with the use of FIRST CLASS and THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in v. 42, shows us the intent of the Son in His prayer. Though His human nature cries out for deliverance, His heart is set on fulfilling the will of the Father in substitutionary atonement (cf. Mark 10:45).

26:40 “And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping” Before we are too quick to condemn the disciples, let’s note that in Luke 22:45 the phrase, “they were asleep from sorrow,” describes that they were unable to bear the pain of Jesus’ prophecy about His own death and their subsequent scattering. Though Jesus longed to have human fellowship and intercession at this time of ultimate crisis in His life, He had to face this moment alone, and He faced it for all believers!

26:41 “keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation” These are both PRESENT IMPERATIVES. There must be constant vigil! Temptation is an ongoing reality (cf. Matt. 4:11; Luke 4:13; Romans 7).

There have been several theories as to what “temptation” referred in this context

1. to the disciples sleeping instead of praying
2. to the disciples desertion of Jesus in v. 56
3. to Peter’s denial in vv. 69-75
4. to governmental or religious trials (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 9:22; 16:2)

The term “temptation” (*peirasmos*) had the connotation of “to tempt or try with the goal of destruction” (see Special Topic at 4:1, cf. Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4; James 1:13). It is often contrasted with another Greek term for test (*dokimazo*) which had the connotation of “to try or tempt with a view toward strengthening.” However, these connotations are not always present in every context. Theologically it can be said that God does not test or tempt His children to destroy them but He does provide opportunities for spiritual growth through trials (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Duet. 8:2,16; Matt. 4; Luke 4; Heb. 5:8). However, He always provides a way through (cf. I Cor. 10:13).

▣ **“the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”** This was the self-confession of Jesus who knows fully our humanity and its weaknesses (cf. Heb. 4:15). And, knowing us, He loved us and died for us (cf. Rom. 5:8) and now intercedes for us (cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; I John 2:1). Hallelujah!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:42-46

⁴²He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” ⁴³Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. ⁴⁵Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

26:42 “if this cannot pass away unless I drink it” This is a combination of a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL and a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE. It implies that Jesus knew it was God’s will that He go to the cross, but He knew He could express His concern to the Father. It is good to know that God will not reject us because of our fears and confusion, but will work with us in love and faith as He worked with Jesus. We cannot even pray ourselves out of the will of God.

26:44 “prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more” Jesus prayed three times. This is similar to Paul’s three prayers concerning this thorn in the flesh (II Cor. 12:8). There is something of the Hebrew idiom of emphasis in the three-fold repetition (cf. Isa. 6:3; Jer. 7:4). We can bring to God our concerns any time, as often as we feel the need.

26:45

NASB, NKJV,

TEV

“Are you still sleeping and resting?”

NRSV

“Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?”

NJB

“You can sleep on now and have your rest.”

It is hard to interpret this Greek idiom. Is it a question? Is it irony? Is it a statement? Is it a command? Although the meaning is uncertain, it is obvious that Jesus has won the victory and He now stands erect, ready to face the night trials, the morning beatings and crucifixion.

▣ **“the hour is at hand”** “Hour” was a significant idiom used throughout the Gospels, particularly John (cf. 12:23; 13:1,32; 17:1), to describe this moment (cf. Mark 14:35,41). See Special Topic: The Hour at 24:36.

▣ **“is being betrayed into the hands of sinners”** This is the fulfilled prophecy of 16:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:47-50

⁴⁷While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, *who came* from the chief priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.” ⁴⁹Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁵⁰And Jesus said to him, “Friend, *do* what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

26:47 “Judas, one of the Twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs” There has been much discussion about the motivation of Judas. It must be said that this remains uncertain. His kiss of Jesus in v. 49 either (1) was a sign to the soldiers that this was the man to arrest (cf. v. 48) or (2) lends support to the modern theory that He was trying to force Jesus’ hand to act, (cf. 27:4). Other Gospel passages state that he was a robber and an unbeliever from the beginning (cf. John 12:6).

From Luke 22:52 we know the makeup of this crowd. There were Roman soldiers involved because they were the only ones who could legally carry swords. Also, the Temple police were involved because they usually carried clubs. Representatives from the Sanhedrin were also present at the arrest (cf. vv. 47, 51).

26:48 “kiss” This was a sign of respect and greetings among rabbis. In v. 49 Judas calls Jesus “Rabbi” (“my teacher”).

26:50

NASB

“Friend, *do* what you have come for”

NKJV

“Friend, why have you come”

NRSV

“Friend, do what you are here to do”

TEV

“Be quick about it, friend”

NJB

“My friend, do what you are here for”

There has been some disagreement over the meaning of this Greek idiom. It could be

1. a question (NKJV)
2. a reproach (TEV)
3. an idiom for “do what you came to do” (NASB, NRSV, JB)

The American Standard Version and the Williams translation agree that it is a statement of irony or purposeful understatement. However, King James and the Revised Standard Version see it as a question, also of veiled irony. The use of the term “friend” may have been an attempt to remind Judas of their discussions in the Upper Room (cf. 26:23) or an idiom of sarcasm (cf. 20:13; 22:12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:51-54

⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. ⁵³Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say that it must happen this way?*”

26:51 From the parallel in John 18:10 and Luke 22:50-51, we know that this was Peter and the servant was Malchus. The disciples had previously been admonished to buy swords (cf. Luke 22:36-38), but obviously, they had misunderstood Jesus’ true meaning concerning this issue. It must be said on Peter’s behalf that he was fully willing to die for his Lord at this point. In the face of great odds, he drew one of two swords. But, again, the inappropriateness and impulsiveness of his actions characterized his personality.

26:52 “all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” This was a cultural proverb (cf. Rev. 13:10). It was not meant to be taken as a literal truth in every individual example, but a characteristic truth that is obvious in itself. This is also like the biblical book of Proverbs. It may relate to the fact that Jesus was being arrested as a common criminal. His disciples then are also seen as bandits and robbers, those who carry swords! See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 2:13.

26:53 Jesus knew who He was (cf. John 13:1). He knew the resources of His Father, but now He was resolved to die (cf. John 10:17-18)!

▣ **“more than twelve legions of angels”** A Roman legion had 6,000 men, but the term was also an idiom for several thousand. see Special Topic: the Number Twelve at 14:20.

26:54, 56 “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled” If this phrase in v. 54 relates to the same phrase in v. 56, then this is a general statement that everything has happened according to a predetermined divine plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28). We know that John accompanied Jesus through the trials and the crucifixion and that Peter followed at a distance (cf. v. 58). Therefore, this is a general reference going back to Isa. 53:6. Jesus knew that events were proceeding just as they should to fulfill the Father’s purpose.

It is possible that this refers to the sufferings Jesus had foretold the disciples several times (first in 16:21-28), involving a suffering, rejected Messiah (i.e., Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zech. 9; 12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:55-56

⁵⁵At that time Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as *you would* against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. ⁵⁶But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

26:55 Jesus brings into clear light the plotting of the religious leaders (cf. Matt. 12:14; John 11:53). They were seeking an opportunity to arrest Him away from the crowds of pilgrims and followers (cf. 26:4; Luke 22:2).

▣
NASB, NKJV “robber
JB “brigand”

The term denotes a violent, lawless person (cf. Luke 10:30). It was later used in Josephus for an insurrectionist, like Barabbas (cf. 27:16-17).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:57-58

⁵⁷Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. ⁵⁸But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

26:57 “Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest” From the parallel in John 18:12, we realize that He was taken first to the residence of Annas, who was really the power behind the office. Apparently Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same home. Selected members of the Sanhedrin were already being assembled there. The phrase, “the scribes and the elders,” along with the High Priest, describes the full designation of the Sanhedrin.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Illegality of the Sanhedrin’s night trial, vv. 57-68

- A. No capital trials were to be held at night.
- B. A capital trial and punishment must not occur on the same day.
- C. No trials were to be held on a feast day or the eve of a feast.
- D. This particular morning was reserved for the saying of phylacteries (cf. Deut. 6:8; 11:18).
- E. This morning was also the time of the offering of gifts in the Temple (cf. Exod. 23:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:59-64

⁵⁹Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. ⁶⁰They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, ⁶¹and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’” ⁶²The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” ⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.”

26:59 “kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus” This seems to imply that they were looking for two witnesses who could agree on some charge because OT legal precedent required two witnesses to condemn a person (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

The Sanhedrin could not find two consistent testimonies against Jesus (vv. 60-61). Finally they found two similar testimonies (cf. Mark 14:59) connected with Jesus’ statement about destroying the temple (cf. John 2:19).

There were many illegal elements in this night trial (see Special Topic at 26:57). These Jewish leaders would have rationalized this by illegally sacrificing this one man to save the whole nation from Roman retaliation.

26:61 This is an allusion to Jesus’ statement recorded in John 2:19, although He may have made the statement often. He is referring to the coming destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 by Titus and His new resurrection body (cf. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19), which will be the new focus of worship for YHWH’s people. The sacrificial system is replaced by the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ (cf. Hebrews). The central focus of acceptance and worship has changed! Jesus is the new temple (cf. John 2:19-21), as are His followers (cf. I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:19).

26:63 “But Jesus kept silent” This was also true during his later trial which was recorded in Matt 27:12, 14. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isa. 53:7.

☐ **“And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God’”** Self-incrimination by means of an oath was illegal but effective, for Jesus would not be silent in the face of an oath in the name of YHWH. The name “YHWH,” from Exod. 3:14, was from the Hebrew VERB “to be,” which means the “ever-living, only-living God” (cf. 16:16). It was the covenant name for the God of Israel.

These leaders recognized that Jesus, at least by His words and deeds, was claiming to be the promised Messiah (note how the titles “Messiah” and “Son of God” are equated). They saw Him as one of many false Messiah’s because He was not committed to the oral traditions and their authority.

26:64
 NASB “You have said it *yourself*”
 NKJV “It is as you said”
 NRSV “You have said so”
 TEV “So you say”
 JB “The words are your own”
 NJB “It is you who say it”

This same affirmative idiom is found in Matt. 26:25. It was somewhat ambiguous. Possibly Jesus was saying, “Yes, I am the Messiah, but not in the sense you think” (cf. Mark 14:62).

▣ **“I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN”** These Hebrew scriptural idioms affirmed His self-understanding. Being at the right hand of the power (i.e., YHWH) was an allusion to Ps. 110:1. Coming on the clouds in heaven was an allusion to Dan. 7:13 (cf. Mark 13:26; Matt. 24:30; and Rev. 1:7). With these OT phrases, Jesus was asserting unambiguously His full and divine Messiahship. He knew this would lead to His death for blasphemy (i.e., claiming to be equal with God).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:65-66

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶“what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”

26:65 “Then the high priest tore his robes” This was a sign of a deeply disturbed spirit caused by the blasphemy (cf. Acts 14:14). The penalty for blasphemy from Lev. 24:15 was death. Jesus deserved to die on the basis of Deut. 13:1-3 and 18:22 if He was not the Coming One, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. There is no middle ground here. Either He is who He claimed to be or He is a blasphemer who deserved death (cf. Josh McDowell’s, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:67-68

⁶⁷Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, ⁶⁸and said, “Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?”

26:67-68 It is uncertain whether these acts were perpetrated by the members of the Sanhedrin themselves and by their attendants. Mark 14:65 states they blindfolded Him, hit Him, and demanded He tell them who did it! This may be a fulfillment of Isa. 53:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:69-75

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” ⁷⁰But he denied *it* before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” ⁷¹When he had gone out to the gateway, another *servant-girl* saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷²And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” ⁷³A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are *one* of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.” ⁷⁴Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the words which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

26:69-73 The exact order of these three accusations differs from Gospel to Gospel. The fact that Peter denied Jesus three times with successive emphasis is common to all of the accounts. The fact that they differ is evidence of eyewitness accounts, not historical inaccuracies.

26:71 “Jesus of Nazareth” See Special Topic at 2:23.

26:72 “I do not know the man” This Greek idiom was a veiled statement of contempt.

26:73 “for even the way you talk gives you away” Those who lived in Galilee could be recognized by the differences in accent and pronunciation of the guttural sounds of the Aramaic language.

26:74 “Then he began to curse and swear, ‘I do not know the man’” This again was an idiom which reflected contempt and is tragic in that he used God’s name in affirming this lie. If anyone deserved to be damned, it is Peter for, in the face of such love,

forgiveness, prophecy and miracles, he denied, three times with vehemence and an oath, the One whom he claimed to love. If Peter can be saved, anyone can be saved! The only difference between Peter and Judas was that Judas did not turn back to Jesus in faith.

▣ **“And immediately a rooster crowed”** This must have been a Roman rooster for the Jews were not allowed to keep chickens in Jerusalem because they caused the ground to be unholy (see note on 26:34).

From Luke 22:61, we know that Jesus looked at Peter. This implies that Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same house and that Jesus could either see the courtyard or He was being transferred between the two residences.

26:75 “And he went out and wept bitterly” Peter was fulfilling prophecy in his denials and giving hope for all believers who have denied Jesus with their tongue, with their lives and with their priorities. There is hope for anyone who turns back to Him in faith (cf. John 21).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Jesus go to a place that Judas knew?
2. What so distressed Jesus in the garden that He felt he was almost going to die?
3. What is Jesus really asking God to do in this thrice repeated prayer?
4. Why did Judas bring such a large crowd to arrest Jesus?
5. Why did Jesus condemn Himself by His obvious statement in verse 64?
6. Why do the Gospel accounts differ as to the order of Peter’s denials?

MATTHEW 27

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jesus Brought Before Pilate	Jesus Handed Over to Pilate	Jesus Before Pilate	Jesus Taken to Pilate	Jesus is Taken Before Pilate
27:1-2	27:1-2	27:1-2	27:1-2	27:1-2
The Death of Judas	Judas Hangs Himself		The Death of Judas	The Death of Judas
27:3-10	27:3-10	27:3-10	27:3-4a 27:4b 27:5 27:6-8 27:9-10	27:3-10
Jesus is Questioned by Pilate	Jesus Faces Pilate		Pilate Questions Jesus	Jesus Before Pilate
27:11-14	27:11-14	27:11-14	27:11a 27:11b-12 27:13 27:14	27:11-14
Jesus Sentenced to Die	Taking the Place of Barabbas		Jesus Sentenced to Death	
27:15-26	27:15-26	27:15-23 27:24-26	27:15-18 27:19 27:20-21a 27:21b 27:22a 27:22b 27:23a 27:23b 27:24 27:25 27:26	27:15-18 27:19 27:20-26
The Soldiers Mock Jesus	The Soldiers Mock Jesus	The Crucifixion	The Soldiers Make Fun of Jesus	Jesus is Crowned with Thorns
27:27-31	27:27-31	27:27-31	27:27-31	27:27-31
The Crucifixion of Jesus	The King on a Cross		Jesus Nailed to the Cross	The Crucifixion
27:32-44	27:32-44	27:32-37	27:32-34 27:35-38	27:32-36

		27:38-44		27:37-38
				The Crucified Christ is Mocked
			27:39-40	27:39-44
			27:41-43	
			27:44	
The Death of Jesus	Jesus Dies on the Cross	The Death of Jesus	The Death of Jesus	The Death of Jesus
27:45-56	27:45-56	27:45-54	27:45-46	27:45-50
			27:47-48	
			27:49	
			27:50	
			27:51-53	27:51-54
			27:54	
		27:55-56	27:55-56	27:55-56
The Burial of Jesus	Jesus Buried in Joseph's Tomb		The Burial of Jesus	The Burial
27:57-61	27:57-61	27:57-61	27:57-61	27:57-61
The Guard at the Tomb	Pilate Sets the Guard		The Guard at the Grave	The Guard at the Tomb
27:62-66	27:62-66	27:62-66	27:62-64	27:62-66
			27:65	
			27:66	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY FOR 27:1-56

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:1-2

¹Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; ²and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.

27:1 “Now when morning came” Romans held court early each day, probably because of the heat. Most of the pilgrims and citizens of Jerusalem were not awake yet. It would have been around 6 a.m.

☐ **“all the chief priests”** The PLURAL referred to the priestly family of Annas, who had purchased this office from the Romans. He was succeeded by several of his sons and sons-in-law.

☐ **“conferred together”** Jesus’ statements in 26:64 condemned Him in their minds of blasphemy, which was punishable by stoning, but they wanted Him to bear the curse of crucifixion (cf. Deut. 21:23). Therefore, they had to come up with a charge that the Romans would act on. This is where the charge that He claimed to be King of the Jews was used as a political threat against Roman rule.

27:2 “bound Him” Jesus was bound during these trials possibly because (1) they were afraid of His performing magic to release Himself; (2) it was a way to humiliate Him; or (3) it was the common procedure with criminals.

☐ **“Pilate the governor”** Probably this took place at the Roman Fortress of Antonia which was built next to the Temple, although it could have been at Herod’s palace, which was made available to the Roman officials when they were in Jerusalem. The Romans stationed extra troops from Caesarea by the Sea in Jerusalem during the Jewish feast days in case of riot (cf. 27:24). Pilate was appointed Governor from A.D. 26-36. History depicts him as a cruel, ruthless man.

It has been surmised that the Jewish leadership brought Jesus to Pilate

1. to fulfill Jesus’ prophecy about being killed by Gentiles
2. to have the Romans crucify Him because in this day the Sanhedrin did not have the authority of capital punishment

However, Jesus was accused of blasphemy and, therefore, should have been stoned. The Jews did this very thing to Stephen in Acts 7 and did not ask permission from the Romans. I think these Jewish leaders wanted Jesus crucified to have the divine curse of Deut. 21:23 enacted on Him. They wanted this Messianic pretender cursed by God! Jesus did bear the “curse” (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14) for us!

There is a Greek manuscript variation here. In several good ancient manuscripts Pilate’s first name, Pontius, is present, (cf. MSS A, C, W, and the Vulgate). It also appears in Luke 3:1; Acts 4:27 and I Tim. 6:13. The two names are the norm in the early church literature. However, it is absent in MSS N, B, and L, as well as Mark 15:1 and Luke 23:1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PONTIUS PILATE

I. The Man

- A. Place and time of birth unknown
- B. Of the Equestrian order (upper middle class of Roman society)
- C. Married, but no known children
- D. Earlier administrative appointments (of which there must have been several) unknown

II. His Personality.

- A. Two different views
 1. Philo (*Legatio and Gaium*, 299-305) and Josephus (*Antiq.* 18.3.1 and *Jewish Wars* 2.9.2-4) depict him as a cruel and uncompassionate dictator.
 2. The NT (Gospels, Acts) portrays him as a weak, easily manipulated Roman procurator
- B. Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*, pp. 143-148 gives a plausible explanation of these two views.
 1. Pilate was appointed procurator in A.D. 26 under Tiberius, who was pro-Jewish (cf. Philo, *Legatio and Gaium*, 160-161) by the advice of Sejanus, Tiberius anti-Jewish advisor.
 2. Tiberius suffered a loss of political power to L. Aelius Sejanus, praetorian prefect who became the real power behind the throne and who hated Jews (Philo, *Legatio land Gaium*, 159-160).

3. Pilate was a protégé of Sejanus and tried to impress him by:
 - a. bringing Roman standards into Jerusalem (A.D. 26), which other procurators had not done. These symbols of Roman gods inflamed the Jews (cf. Josephus' *Antiq.* 18.3.1; *Jewish Wars* 2.9.2-3).
 - b. minting coins (A.D. 29-31) which had images of Roman worship engraved on them. Josephus says he was purposefully trying to overturn Jewish laws and customs (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.4.1-2).
 - c. taking money from the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct in Jerusalem (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.3.2; *Jewish Wars* 2.9.3).
 - d. having several Galileans killed while offering a sacrifice at Passover in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 13:12).
 - e. bringing Roman shields into Jerusalem in A.D. 31. Herod the Great's son appealed to him to remove them, but he would not, so they wrote Tiberius, who demanded they be removed back to Caesarea by the sea (cf. Philo, *Legatio and Gaium*, 299-305).
 - f. having many Samaritans slaughtered on Mt. Gerizim (A.D. 36/37) as they searched for sacred objects of their religion, which had been lost. This caused Pilate's local superior (Vitellius, Prefect of Syria) to remove him from office and send him to Rome (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 18.4.1-2).
 - g. Sejanus was executed in A.D. 31 and Tiberius was restored to full political power; therefore, #1,2,3, and 4 were possibly done by Pilate to earn Sejanus' trust. Numbers 5 and 6 could have been attempts to earn Tiberius' trust, but may have backfired.
 - h. It is obvious with a pro-Jewish emperor restored, plus an official letter to procurators from Tiberius to be kind to Jews (cf. Philo, *Legatio and Gaium*, 160-161), that the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem took advantage of Pilate's political vulnerability with Tiberius and manipulated him to have Jesus crucified. This theory of Barnett brings the two views of Pilate together in a plausible way.

III. His Fate

- A. He arrived in Rome just after Tiberius' death (A.D. 37).
- B. He was not reappointed.
- C. His life is unknown after this. There are many later theories, but no secure facts.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:3-10

³Then when Judas who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" ⁵And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. ⁶The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." ⁷And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. ⁸For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET BY THE SONS OF ISRAEL; ¹⁰AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME."

27:3 "Then when Judas who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned" This phrase involves an ambiguous PRONOUN ANTECEDENT, He. The Williams and Phillips translations of the NT assume that it refers to Judas, but all the other modern translations refer this PRONOUN to Jesus. Notice the capital "He" in NASB. NIV, TEV, JB, and NRSV even insert the name "Jesus" for the PRONOUN.

▣ **"he felt remorse"** There were two words in Greek which translate "repentance." The one used here was not the normal word used in Matt. 3:2, which meant "a change of mind and actions." Here the word meant "sorrow afterwards" but with the implication of no real change (cf. Matt. 21:29; II Cor. 7:8). The best context in the NT to compare the connotations of these terms is II Cor. 7:8-10. See Special Topic: Repentance at 3:2.

▣ **"thirty pieces"** This is an allusion to Zech. 11:12. This was the price of a gored slave (cf. 26:15; Exod. 21:32).

27:4 "innocent blood" There is a Greek manuscript variant at this point. All of the English translations which are compared in this commentary have "innocent." However, the ancient uncial manuscript B originally had "innocent," but a later copyist put "righteous" from Matt. 23:35. This was followed by the Vulgate and the Diatessaron. The Septuagint uses both ADJECTIVES to

describe the NOUN “blood”; “innocent” appears fourteen times and “righteous” appears four times in the LXX. UBS⁴ gives “innocent” a “B” rating (almost certain).

27:5 “into the Temple sanctuary” This Greek word usually referred to the Central Shrine made up of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies as separate from the complete Temple area (cf. John 2:9).

▣ **“hanged himself”** This was not a theological proof-text about suicide bringing damnation. There are several suicides mentioned in the OT: Judges 9:54; 16:30; I Sam. 31:4,5; II Sam. 17:23; I Kgs. 16:18. Nothing negative is ever said about these acts. It was Judas’ lack of true repentance that sealed his lostness, not his taking his own life.

The account of Judas’ death in Acts 1:18 does not contradict Matthew’s account but supplements it. Apparently Judas hanged himself over a cliff and later the rope broke and his body fell and broke open.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISCARIOT

The etymology of this word is somewhat obscure; however, there are several possibilities.

1. *Kerioth*, a city of Judah (cf. Josh. 15:25)
2. *Kartan*, a city in Galilee (cf. Josh. 21:32)
3. *Karōides*, a date palm grove in Jerusalem or Jericho
4. *scortea*, an apron or leather bag (cf. John 13:29)
5. *ascara*, strangling (Hebrew) from Matt. 27:5
6. an assassin’s knife (Greek), meaning he was a Zealot like Simon (cf. Luke 6:15).

27:6 “it is the price of blood” They had no qualms about giving the money for Jesus’ betrayal, but they felt uncomfortable taking it back! What irony!

27:7 “they . . . bought the Potter’s Field” This was possibly a clay quarry which had been depleted and, therefore was of little value. It may have been an allusion to Jer. 18-19. From Jerome’s time (4th century A.D.) it was said to have been in the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem.

27:8 “Field of Blood” This translates the Aramaic term *Hakeldama*, found in Acts 1:19. Jerome’s Vulgate puts the Aramaic term in this verse.

27:9 “spoken through Jeremiah the prophet” This is a direct quote from Zech. 11:12-13. Jeremiah 18:19 also speaks of a potter and Jer. 32:7-9 mentions the buying of a field. This has caused commentators great problems.

1. Augustine, Beza, Luther, and Keil said Matthew quoted the name Jeremiah in error
2. The Peshitta, a 5th century A.D. Syriac translation and the Diatessaron just removed the prophet’s name from the text
3. Origen and Eusebius said a copyist caused the problem
4. Jerome and Ewald said it is a quote from an apocryphal writing ascribed to Jeremiah
5. Mede said Jeremiah wrote Zechariah, chapters 9-11
6. Lightfoot and Scofield said Jeremiah was listed first in the Hebrew division of the canon known as “the prophets” and, therefore, his name stands for that section of the canon
7. Hengstenberg said that Zechariah quoted Jeremiah
8. Calvin said an error has crept into the text
9. F. F. Bruce and a JB footnote said it was a composite quote from Zechariah and Jeremiah

I think #6 is the best explanation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:11-14

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.” ¹²And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” ¹⁴And He did not answer him with regard to even a *single* charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

27:11 “Are You the King of the Jews” This was the question which implied treason against Rome. It was the political issue that concerned Pilate.

27:11

NASB, NKJV *“It is as you say”*
NRSV *“You say so”*
TEV *“So you say”*
NJB *“It is you who say it”*

Jesus’ answer was an enigmatic phrase which implied, “Yes!” but with qualification (cf. John 18:33-37), which shows His kingdom was not earthly.

27:12 **“accused”** See Luke 23:2.

▣ **“He did not answer”** This relates to the Messianic prophecy of Isa. 53:7. He answered Pilate in private, but would not address the charges in the presence of the Jewish leaders or Herod.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:15-18

¹⁵Now at *the feast* the governor was accustomed to release for the people *any one prisoner whom they wanted*. ¹⁶At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, **“Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”** ¹⁸For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

27:15 **“the feast”** This refers to the Passover, one of the three annual feasts which all Jewish males above the age of twenty were required to attend (cf. Lev. 23).

▣ **“the governor was accustomed”** There is no historical corroboration for this except Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.9.3.

27:16, 17 **“Barabbas”** Some later translations have “Jesus Barabbas,” but this is not as much a textual option as a tradition. A good discussion is in Bruce Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 67-68, from United Bible Societies. “Barabbas” meant son of a father or rabbi. He was truly guilty of the treasonous charge of which Jesus was accused.

27:18 **“For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over”** Pilate tried several ways to release Jesus because of his contempt for the Jewish leaders and their manipulative practices.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:19-23

¹⁹While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him *a message*, saying, **“Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.”** ²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. ²¹But the governor said to them, **“Which of the two do you want me to release for you?”** And they said, **“Barabbas.”** ²²Pilate said to them, **“Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”** They all said, **“Crucify Him!”** ²³And he said, **“Why, what evil has he done?”** But they kept shouting all the more, saying, **“Crucify Him!”**

27:19 **“his wife sent him a message, saying, ‘Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him’”** This information is unique to Matthew. They must have talked about Jesus. She used a Messianic title for Him, but how much she knew is uncertain! The irony is that a pagan woman saw what the Jewish leaders did not (cf. Matt. 27:54; John 1:11).

27:20 **“put to death”** See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 2:13.

27:23 **“Why, what evil has he done”** Pilate was not convinced of Jesus’ guilt. This text was a way for the early church (also the trials in Acts) to show that Christianity was not a threat to Roman rule.

▣ **“they kept shouting all the more”** An IMPERFECT TENSE phrase, this could be rendered “they began shouting” or “they shouted again and again.” This crowd was not the same as the pilgrims involved in the Triumphal Entry. This was possibly the friends of Barabbas who had gathered for the purpose of trying to gain his release! Some have seen this crowd as a set up by the Sanhedrin.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:24-26

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see *to that* yourselves.” ²⁵And all the people said, “His blood shall be on us and on our children!” ²⁶Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

27:24 “a riot was starting” This was always a possibility during feasts with Jerusalem being so crowded with exuberant pilgrims. Rome always stationed extra troops from Caesarea in the Fortress Antonio during feast days.

▣ **“washed his hands in front of the crowd”** This was a Jewish custom, not a Roman practice (cf. Deut. 21:6-7; Ps. 26:6; 73:13).

27:25 “His blood shall be on us and on our children” This was a grave oath, especially in light of the OT view of corporate guilt (cf. Exod. 20:5-6; II Sam. 3:29). This was a self-curse! It was fulfilled in A.D. 70.

27:26 “scourged” This was a severe punishment! It is often fatal. It always preceded crucifixion, but it seems initially from John 19:1, 12 that this possibly was another attempt by Pilate to gain sympathy for Jesus.

The Gospels use different words to describe this brutal beating.

1. *phragelloō* in Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15, translated by NASB as “scourged”
2. *derō* in Luke 22:63, translated by NASB as “beating”
3. *mastigoō* in John 19:1, translated by NASB as “scourged” (cf. Matt. 20:19; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:33)

This terrible beating always preceded crucifixion. It was so severe that many died from it. A person was unclothed and their hands tied to a stake in the ground. Then a whip of leather thongs with pieces of rock, metal, or bone braided into the end of the nine thongs was lashed across the exposed back. It is recorded that these thongs

1. blinded the victim
2. opened the ribs to the bone
3. knocked out teeth

There was no limit to the number of lashes given by the two soldiers, one on each side.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:27-31

²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole *Roman* cohort around Him. ²⁸They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ³⁰They spat on Him, and took the reed and *began* to beat Him on the head. ³¹After they had mocked Him, they took the *scarlet* robe off Him and put His *own* garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

27:27

NASB, NKJV,

NJB “Praetorium”

NRSV, TEV “the governor’s headquarters”

This was located in the Fortress Antonio or at Herod’s palace which became the Roman governor’s residence when in Jerusalem. Some have surmised that it was the site of the soldiers’ barracks.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PRAETORIAN GUARD

Originally the term, praetorian, referred to a Roman general’s tent (*praetor*), but after the age of Roman conquest it came to be used in an administrative sense to denote the headquarters or residence of the political/military administration (cf. Matt. 27:27; John 18:28,33; 19:9; Acts 23:35).

However, in the first century Roman world it was used for the officers who made up the special Imperial Guard. This elite group of soldiers was begun by Augustus but was finally concentrated in Rome by Tiberius. They:

1. were all of the same rank, centurions
2. received double pay

3. had special privileges
4. became so powerful that their choice for Emperor was always honored.

It was not until the time of Constantine that this elite, politically powerful group was finally disbanded.

☐ **“cohort”** This was about 600 men, but in reality, only some of them were on duty at one time.

27:28 “scarlet robe” This word comes from an insect which was used to dye clothes dark red. Mark 15:17 and John 19:2 have “purple.” This was probably a faded Roman officer’s red cloak. Purple was the color of royalty. The early church saw this as symbolic of Jesus’ kingly position (as they did the stephanos crown of thorns). The ancients were not as precise in naming colors as moderns.

27:29-30 The soldiers take out their hostility toward the Jewish population on Jesus in their kingly mockery of Him. The “crown of thorns” may allude to (1) mocking Jesus’ claim to kingship or (2) the curse of Gen. 3:18 (cf. Gal. 3:13). Thorns are a symbol of rejecting the gospel (cf. Heb. 6:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:32

³²As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

27:32 “man of Cyrene named Simon” Cyrene is modern Libya, but the man’s name is Jewish. The fact that he was in Jerusalem at this time says he was a Jew or a proselyte. There was a synagogue in Jerusalem for Cyrenian Jews (cf. Acts 6:9). His racial or ethnic background is uncertain, but he was probably a Jew of the Diaspora.

☐ **“pressed into service”** This is a Persian word used in Matt. 5:41. Occupying military forces had the right to command local citizens to perform certain tasks.

☐ **“to bear His cross”** Whether the cross-bar or the entire cross was carried to Golgotha is uncertain. The shape of the cross may have been a capital “T,” a small “t,” an “X,” or a scaffolding holding several persons.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:33-34

³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, ³⁴they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.

27:33 “Golgotha” This Hebrew word meant “skull.” “Calvary” is from the Latin. The term referred to a low, bald hill, not a full skull.

27:34 “they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall” The Babylonian Talmud says the women of Jerusalem gave this strong drink to condemned prisoners to ease their pain (cf. Mark 15:23, where “gall” means “myrrh”). This was possibly a prophetic reference to Psalm 69:21.

☐ **“He was unwilling to drink”** This has nothing to do with the modern denominational issue of total abstinence (see Special Topic at 26:29). Jesus does later accept the cheap wine of the soldiers (cf. v. 48). He is refusing to take anything to dull either the pain or His senses.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:35-37

³⁵And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. ³⁶And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. ³⁷And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, **“THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”**

27:35 “they crucified Him” The Gospels do not dwell on the physical aspect of Jesus’ death (cf. Ps. 22:16). This form of death was developed in Mesopotamia and was taken over by the Greeks and Romans. It was meant to be an extended, excruciating death

taking several days. Its purpose was to humiliate and cause fear as a deterrent to rebellion against Rome. A thorough article is in the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, pp. 1040-42.

▣ **“they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots”** This is an allusion to Ps. 22:18. Jesus was possibly naked or, more probably, clothed in just His loin cloth.

The Textus Receptus manuscripts add to the text several phrases that come from John 19:24, which quoted Ps. 22:18; these however are not original in Matthew. These additions are not in the Greek uncial manuscripts \aleph , A, B, D, L, or W, nor in the Latin or Syriac translations.

“Casting lots” is used in the NT both as a game of chance, as here, and a way of knowing God’s will as in Acts 1:26. This followed the OT precedent of the Urim and Thummim. This mechanical means of knowing God’s will has passed away. This shows that the Bible records things that it does not necessarily advocate. Another good example of this same idea would be Gideon’s fleece (cf. Jdgs. 6:36-40).

27:37 “the charge against Him” From John 19:20 we learn the charge was written in three languages (Aramaic, Latin and Greek). Pilate worded it on purpose in such a way so as to anger the Jewish leaders. The charge is given differently in the four Gospels:

- Matthew: “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”
- Mark: “The King of the Jews” (cf. Mark 15:26)
- Luke: “This is the King of the Jews” (cf. Luke 23:38)
- John: “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” (cf. John 19:19)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:38-44

³⁸At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, “You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking *Him* and saying, ⁴²“He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. ⁴³HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ⁴⁴The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

27:38 “two robbers were crucified with Him” This is an allusion to Isa. 53:12. Josephus’ use of this term “robbers” suggests these may have been “zealots,” like Barabbas.

27:39 “those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads” This is an allusion to Ps. 22:7. Golgotha must have been near a main roadway into Jerusalem. The purpose of crucifixion was to deter crime and revolt.

27:40 “If You are the Son of God” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which the speaker assumes to be true for the purpose of making a point (cf. Matt. 4:3). These leaders had no doubt who Jesus claimed to be!

27:41 “chief priest. . . scribes. . . elders” This was the full designation of the Sanhedrin.

27:43 “HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM” This is a quote from Ps. 22:8. This psalm of David describes Jesus’ crucifixion in amazing detail.

27:44 Matthew states that both of the zealots crucified with Jesus insulted Him at first, but Luke 23:39 says only one of the criminals hurled abuses at Him. Again this is not contradictory but complementary. They were both angry and insolent at first, but one mellowed and repented.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:45-54

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” ⁴⁷And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.” ⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. ⁴⁹But the rest of them said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.” ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth

shook and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

27:45 “from the sixth hour. . .until the ninth hour” This refers to Roman time (i.e., noon to 3 p.m.). It is often difficult to know, especially in John’s gospel, if the time designations are referring to Roman time, which begins at dawn, or Jewish time which begins at evening. Here it is obvious.

▣ **“darkness”** Darkness was one of the plagues on Egypt which turned into a covenant curse if God’s commands were not kept (cf. Exod. 10:21ff; Deut. 28:29; Joel 2:10; and Amos 8:9). Theologically, it was a symbol of God’s turning away from His Son as He bore the sins of the world. This personal spiritual separation, as well as the burden of all the sins of all mankind, was what Jesus feared most.

27:46 “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI” Jesus combines Hebrew and Aramaic words from Ps. 22:1. Matthew and Mark (Mark 15:34) use slightly different words. Matthew translates them for his readers, who spoke only Aramaic. From v. 47 it is obvious Jesus’ words were misunderstood by the crowd gathered to watch the crucifixion.

▣ **“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME”** These are the first words of Psalm 22. By quoting them Jesus wants to bring to His hearers’ minds the complete Psalm. Jesus was experiencing separation from God, the last great experience of sinful mankind (cf. Gal. 3:13; II Cor. 5:21). However, the Psalm also expresses faith in YHWH’s faithfulness!

27:47 “This man is calling for Elijah” Elijah was to be the precursor of the Messiah (cf. Mal. 4:5). It is probable that Jesus’ Aramaic “*Eloi*” (cf. Mark 15:34) or possibly “*Eliya*” sounded like the name of the prophet.

27:48

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “sour wine”

TEV “cheap wine”

NJB “vinegar”

This was the cheap wine that the soldiers drank. Offering this wine was not an act of compassion on the part of the soldiers, but a way to prolong the agony of the crucifixion. Jesus took some because His mouth was so dry that He could not speak (cf. Ps. 22:15). This may have fulfilled Ps. 69:21

27:49 At this point there is another added phrase from John 19:34. It is absent in the ancient Greek uncial manuscripts A, D, K, and the Greek texts of Origen, Jerome, and Augustine, but present in \aleph , B, C, and L. It is hard to decide on the originality of this passage because (1) it seems to be an assimilation from John; (2) it seems to be out of chronological order; yet (3) it is present in several good manuscripts. Was Jesus pierced before He died? The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text a “B” rating (almost certain). In the context of Matthew, Jesus had not died yet!

27:50 “Jesus cried out again with a loud voice” Compare John 19:30; Ps. 22:15; Luke 23:46; Ps. 31:5.

27:51 “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” This was the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, called the inner veil (cf. Exod. 26:31-35). This act by God indicated that the way was now open for all to come to God! It was torn from the top, which symbolized God’s act of removing barriers to His presence and making Himself accessible to all people.

27:52 “the tombs were opened” This was caused by the earthquake (cf. v. 54). Exactly when the people came back to life is uncertain. This resuscitation seems linked to Jesus’ resurrection (cf. v. 53). But the text seems to place the event at Jesus’ death. There is ambiguity here as to who, when, where and why. This information is unique to Matthew.

▣ **“saints”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *kadash*, which has the basic meaning of setting some one, some thing, or some place apart for YHWH's exclusive use (BDB 871). It denotes the English concept of "the sacred." YHWH is set apart from humanity by His nature (eternal non-created Spirit) and His character (moral perfection). He is the standard by which all else is measured and judged. He is the transcendent, Holy One, Holy Other.

God created humans for fellowship, but the fall (Gen. 3) caused a relational and moral barrier between a Holy God and sinful humanity. God chose to restore His conscious creation; therefore, He calls on His people to be "holy" (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8). By a faith relationship with YHWH His people become holy by their covenantal position in Him, but are also called on to live holy lives (cf. Matt. 5:48).

This holy living is possible because believers are fully accepted and forgiven through Jesus' life and work and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their minds and hearts. This establishes the paradoxical situation of

1. being holy because of Christ's imputed righteousness
2. called to live holy because of the presence of the Spirit

Believers are "saints" (*hagioi*) because of (1) the will of the Holy One (the Father); (2) the work of the Holy Son (Jesus); and (3) the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The NT always refers to saints as PLURAL (except one time in Phil. 4:12, but even then the context makes it PLURAL). To be saved is to be part of a family, a body, a building! Biblical faith starts with a personal reception, but issues into a corporate fellowship. We are each gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:11) for the health, growth, and well-being of the body of Christ—the church (cf. I Cor. 12:7). We are saved to serve! Holiness is a family characteristic!

▣ "who had fallen asleep" Sleep is an OT euphemism for death (i.e., used mostly in Kings and Chronicles). This is not a proof-text for the theory of "soul sleep." The Scripture must be interpreted in light of the meaning of the words to the first hearers/readers!

27:54

NASB, NKJV "Truly this was the Son of God!"

NRSV "Truly the man was God's Son!"

TEV "He really was the Son of God!"

JB "In truth this was a son of God!"

There is no ARTICLE with "son." This soldier was surely impressed by all that happened. He asserts Jesus was "a son of God." However, in the parallel in Luke 23:47 he is proclaiming Jesus as "righteous" or "innocent." The irony is that this Roman soldier saw what the Jewish leaders did not (cf. v. 19; John 1:11).

This is literally "this man was a son of God." The image of God in mankind has been restored! Intimate fellowship is again possible. However the absence of the ARTICLE does not automatically mean it is not definite (cf. Matt. 4:3,6; 14:33; 27:43; and Luke 4:3,9). This was a hardened Roman soldier. He had seen many men die (cf. Matt. 27:54). This may be "the focal passage" of Mark because this Gospel was specifically written to Romans. Mark's Gospel has many Latin words and very few OT quotes. Also Jewish customs and Aramaic phrases are translated and explained. Here is a Roman centurion professing faith in a crucified Jewish insurrectionist!

It is possibly purposeful that passers by, chief priests, and even fellow prisoners mock Jesus, but a Roman centurion responds in affirmation and awe!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF GOD

This is one of the major NT titles for Jesus. It surely has divine connotations. It included Jesus as "the Son" or "My Son" and God addressed as "Father." It occurs in the NT over 124 times. Even Jesus' self-designation as "Son of Man" has a divine connotation from Dan. 7:13-14.

In the OT the designation "son" could refer to three specific groups.

1. angels (usually in the PLURAL, cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1)
2. the King of Israel (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27)
3. the nation of Israel as a whole (cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 2:10)
4. Israeli judges (cf. Ps. 82:6)

It is the second usage that is linked to Jesus. In this way “son of David” and “son of God” both relate to II Samuel 7; Psalm 2 and 89. In the OT “son of God” is never used specifically of the Messiah, except as the eschatological king as one of the “anointed offices” of Israel. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the title with Messianic implications is common (see specific references in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 770). Also “Son of God” is a Messianic title in two interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic works (cf. II Esdras 7:28; 13:32,37,52; 14:9 and I Enoch 105:2).

Its NT background as it refers to Jesus is best summarized by several categories.

1. His pre-existence (cf. John 1:1-18)
2. His unique (virgin) birth (cf. Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-35)
3. His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22. God’s voice from heaven unites the royal king of Psalm 2 with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53).
4. His satanic temptation (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13. He is tempted to doubt His sonship or at least to accomplish its purpose by different means than the cross).
5. His affirmation by unacceptable confessors
 - a. demons (cf. Mark 1:23-25; Luke 4:31-37,41; Mark 3:11-12; 5:7)
 - b. unbelievers (cf. Matt. 27:43; Mark 14:61; John 19:7)
6. His affirmation by His disciples
 - a. Matt. 14:33; 16:16
 - b. John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
7. His self affirmation
 - a. Matthew 11:25-27
 - b. John 10:36
8. His use of the familial metaphor of God as Father
 - a. His use of “abba” for God
 - 1) Mark 14:36
 - 2) Romans 8:15
 - 3) Galatians 4:6
 - b. His recurrent use of Father (*patēr*) to describe His relationship to deity

In summary, the title “Son of God” had great theological meaning for those who knew the OT and its promises and categories, but the NT writers were nervous about its use with Gentiles because of their pagan background of “the gods” taking women with the resulting offspring being “the titans” or “giants.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:55-56

⁵⁵Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. ⁵⁶Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

27:55 “many women” Mark 15:40 has a parallel list. These women were traveling companions of Jesus and the Twelve. They may have even supported Jesus and the Disciples financially as well as cooking for them and meeting the needs of other women who Jesus and the Apostles ministered to. See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN WHO TRAVELED WITH JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

Matt. 27:55-56	Mark 15:40-41	Luke 8:2; 23:49	John 19:25
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary, Jesus' mother
Mary, mother of James and Joseph	Mary, mother of James the Less, Joses	Joanna, wife of Chuza (Herod's steward)	His mother's sister Mary, wife of Clopas
Mother of the sons of Zebedee (James & John)	Salome	Susanna and others	Mary Magdalene

Following are the notes on these women from my commentary on Mark 15:40-41:

“There were also *some* women looking on from a distance” The apostolic group was ministered to both financially and physically by several women (i.e., cooking, washing, etc., cf. v. 41; Matt. 27:55; Luke 8:3).

“Mary Magdalene” Magdala was a small city on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, three miles north of Tiberias. Mary followed Jesus from Galilee after He had delivered her from several demons (cf. Luke 8:2). She has unfairly been labeled as a prostitute but there is no NT evidence of this.

“Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses” In Matt. 27:56 she is called “the mother of James and Joseph.” In Matt. 28:1 she is called “the other Mary.” The real question is, to whom was she married? In John 19:25 possibly she was married to Clopas, yet her son James, was said to be the “son of Alphaeus” (cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).

“Salome” This was the mother of James and John, who were part of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, and the wife of Zebedee (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1-2).

Following are the notes on these women from my commentary on John 19:25:

“standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene” There is much discussion about whether there are four names here or three names. It is probable that there are four names because there would not be two sisters named Mary. Mary's sister, Salome, is named in Mark 15:40 and Matt. 27:56. If this is true, then it would mean James, John, and Jesus were cousins. A second-century tradition (*Hegesippus*) says that Clopas was Joseph's brother. Mary Magdala was the one out of whom Jesus cast seven devils, and the first one to whom He chose to appear after His resurrection (cf. 20:1-2; 11-18; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1-10).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the Sanhedrin go to Pilate? Why not kill Jesus by stoning?
2. How is Judas' repentance different from Peter's?
3. Why does Pilate try to release Jesus?
4. What is the purpose of finding so many OT allusions to Christ's death?
5. Why did it turn dark when Jesus was on the cross? Why did Jesus feel forsaken?
6. List the signs that followed Jesus' death. What was their purpose?

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY (The context includes 27:57-28:20)
(The parallels to this Gospel are in Mark 15:42-16:8, Luke 23:50-24:12, John 19:30-20:10)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:57-61

⁵⁷When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

27:57 “When it was evening” This phrase means it was close to the beginning of the Passover which began at 6:00 p.m. or twilight. The Jews had two evenings. The first at 3 p.m. and the second at 6 p.m., which started a new day.

☐ **“a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph”** Several passages describe this man.

1. he was rich and a disciple of Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:57)
2. he was a highly honored member of the Sanhedrin (cf. Mark 15:43)
3. he was a good and upright man (cf. Luke 23:50)
4. he was a secret disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews (cf. John 19:38)

27:57-58 This was a brave act on the part of Joseph for the following reasons.

1. he was publicly identifying himself with a man convicted of treason
2. he was willing to be ceremonially unclean for the Passover
3. this would surely ostracize him from the Sanhedrin

27:59 Joseph hurried to prepare Jesus’ body before 6 p.m., which started Passover. The exact time when the stone was rolled into place is uncertain. It was before 6 p.m. However brief the time, it was counted as one day in the three days Jesus was in the grave.

27:60 “his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock” This is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isa. 53:9.

27:61 “Mary Magdalene” See Matt. 27:55-56 for a listing of the three women.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:62-66

⁶²Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, ⁶³and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ ⁶⁴Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

27:62-66 This account is unique to Matthew (cf. 28:2-4,11-15).

27:62 “Now on the next day, the day after the preparation” This is an obvious reference to the Sabbath. Being in Pilate’s presence and court would have made the Jewish leaders ceremonially unclean and thus unable to participate in the Passover. This very act shows how fearful they were of Jesus and His power and predictions.

☐ **“the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together”** It is so ironic (1) that they met at all; (2) that it was the Sabbath of Passover week; (3) that the Sadducees did not even believe in the resurrection; and (4) that they became powerful, though unwilling, witnesses to the resurrection!

27:63 It is ironic that Pilate is called *Kurie* (translated “sir”) by these Jewish leaders and Jesus the Lord is called “that deceiver.”

☐

NASB, NKJV	“that deceiver”
NRSV, JB	“that impostor”
TEV	“that liar”

This word (*planos*) may be literally rendered “wanderer,” explaining the derivation of our English word “planet” from the same term for “wandering” celestial lights. It originally referred to the orbit of planets that did not follow the standard pattern of the constellations. The term had a negative connotation in Greek. It was applied to errors or liars.



NASB “After three days I *am to arise again*”
NKJV “After three days I will rise”
NRSV, NJB “After three days I will rise again”
TEV “I will be raised to life three days later”

Literally, “after three days I am raised.” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE. The context implies that Pilate assigned Roman soldiers to guard the tomb. The Jewish leaders knew of Jesus’ predictions (cf. 12:40; 16:4) and feared them. The disciples were surprised by the resurrection—what irony!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION

- A. Evidence for the resurrection
1. Fifty (50) days later at Pentecost, the resurrection had become the key note of Peter’s sermon (cf. Acts 2). Thousands who lived in the area where it happened believed!
 2. The lives of the disciples were changed radically from discouragement (they were not expecting resurrection) to boldness, even martyrdom.
- B. Significance of the resurrection
1. Shows Jesus was who He claimed to be (cf. Matt. 12:38-40 prediction of death and resurrection)
 2. God put His approval on Jesus’ life, teaching, and substitutionary death! (cf. Rom. 4:25)
 3. Shows us the promise to all Christians (i.e., resurrection bodies, cf. I Cor. 15)
- C. Claims from Jesus that He would rise from the dead:
1. Matt. 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9,22, 23; 20:18-19; 26:32; 27:63
 2. Mark 8:31; 9:1-10, 31; 14:28,58
 3. Luke 9:22-27
 4. John 2:19-22; 12:34; chapters 14-16
- D. Further Study
1. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell
 2. *Who Moved the Stone?* by Frank Morrison
 3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, “Resurrection,” “Resurrection of Jesus Christ”
 4. *Systematic Theology* by L. Berkhof, pp. 346, 720.

27:65 “You have a guard” This is an idiom (i.e., an IMPERATIVE, not an INDICATIVE) for permission to the Jewish delegation for Roman soldiers to guard the tomb.

▣ **“go, make it as secure as you know how”** “Go” is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE followed by an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. There is a bit of sarcasm here (i.e., “as you know how”). These priestly leaders were no friends of Pilate, but they shared a desire of political expediency.

27:66 “they went” This refers to the representatives of the Jewish leadership and the Roman soldiers. These leaders wanted to make sure the tomb was sealed and guarded! Their representatives may even have helped seal the tomb themselves!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL

A seal may have been an ancient way of showing

1. truth (cf. John 3:33)
2. ownership (cf. John 6:27; II Tim. 2:19; Rev. 7:2-3)
3. security or protection (cf. Gen. 4:15; Matt. 27:66; Rom. 15:28; II Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30)
4. it may also be a sign of the reality of God’s promise of a gift (cf. Rom. 4:11 and I Cor. 9:2).

The purpose of this seal is to identify God's people so that the wrath of God will not affect them. Satan's seal identifies his people, who are the object of God's wrath. In Revelation "tribulation" (i.e., *thlipsis*) is always unbelievers persecuting believers, while wrath/anger (i.e., *orgē* or *thumos*) is always God's judgment on unbelievers so that they might repent and turn to faith in Christ. This positive purpose of judgment can be seen in covenant curses/blessings of Deuteronomy 27-28.

The phrase "the living God" is a word play on the title YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14; Ps. 42:4; 84:2; Matt. 16:16). This same word play is often found in biblical oaths, "as the Lord lives."

▣ **"made the grave secure"** This referred to an official sealing which used two blobs of wax placed at the juncture of the round stone and the wall of the tomb imprinted with an official Roman seal, with a string between them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Was Joseph of Arimathea present at the night trial?
2. Why was Pilate so willing to have the bodies disposed of?
3. List the prophet's predictions in this section.
4. What role did the women who followed the apostolic group serve?
5. Explain the irony of v. 64 and the sarcasm of v. 65.

MATTHEW 28

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Resurrection of Jesus 28:1-10	He Is Risen 28:1-8 The Women Worship the Risen Lord 28:9-10	The First Easter 28:1-10	The Resurrection 28:1-4 28:5-7 28:8	The Empty Tomb; The Angel's Message 28:1-8 Appearance to the Women 28:9-10
The Report of the Guard 28:11-15	The Soldiers are Bribe 28:11-15	Bribing the Guard 28:11-15	The Report of the Guard 28:11-14 28:15	Precautions Taken by the Leaders of the People 28:11-15
The Commissioning of the Disciples 28:16-20	The Great Commission 28:16-20	Jesus' Commission to His Disciples 28:16-20	Jesus Appears to His Disciples 28:16-20	Appearance in Galilee; The Mission to the World 28:16-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-7

¹Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. ²And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as

white as snow. ⁴The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. ⁵The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where he was lying. ⁷Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

28:1 “after the Sabbath” This Greek phrase refers to sundown on Saturday (cf. Vulgate “on the Sabbath evening”). In Mark the Greek phrase refers to sunrise on Sunday. There is much confusion in the chronology of the last week of Jesus’ life, especially events surrounding the resurrection. It is the mentioning of the term “dawning” that causes one to think that the reference may be to Roman time, not Jewish time. There are instances of both being used in the Gospels.

▣ **“Mary of Magdalene and the other Mary”** Both Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:10 mention other women, while John 20:1 mentions Mary of Magdalene alone.

28:2 “a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone” This is unique to Matthew. Two explanations for how the stone was removed are given side by side. There must have been two earthquakes (1) one at Jesus’ death in 27:54, and (2) another to remove the stone and allow Jesus’ followers inside the empty tomb. See note on “an angel of the Lord” at 1:20.

28:3 “and His appearance was like lightning” This is a reference to the angel who was wearing white linen cloth, a symbol of purity. Luke 24:4 and John 20:12 record two angels. This variation between one or two persons or angels is common among the Gospels, but the number is reversed, usually it is Matthew’s Gospel that has “two.” Other examples are: (1) the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26) and the two demoniacs (Matt. 8:28); and (2) the blind man (Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35) and two blind men (Matt. 20:30).

28:5 “Do not be afraid” This is exactly what Jesus told them in verse 10. It was the common statement when the supernatural realm broke into the natural.

1. Jesus’ words in Matt. 14:27; 17:7; 28:10; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; 12:32; John 6:20; Rev. 1:17
2. angels in Matt. 28:5; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10

28:6 “He has risen” In this context the Father’s acceptance and approval of the Son’s words and works are expressed in two great events.

1. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead
2. Jesus’ ascension to the Father’s right hand

See Special Topic: Glory at Mark 10:37b.

28:7 “He is going ahead of you into Galilee” Jesus had told them He would meet them on a mountain in Galilee (cf. 26:32, 28:7, 10; I Cor. 15:6). This was a way to assert His resurrection and give them hope. He had a final message for them (cf. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:8-10

⁸And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

28:8 Fear and great joy characterize the first resurrection encounters. The spiritual realm breaking into physical reality also caused fear (which was to cease, cf. v. 10, but the great joy would continue), but this time it was the message of the risen Christ which brought “great joy” and still does!

They ran to report it. This is the same thrust as vv. 19-20. The followers must go and tell!

28:9

NASB	“and greeted them”
NKJV	“rejoice”
NRSV, NJB	“Greetings”
TEV	“Peace be to you”

This was Jesus’ common greeting. It came from a word that meant “rejoice.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' POST RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

Jesus showed himself to several people to confirm His resurrection:

1. the women at the tomb, Matt. 28:9
2. the eleven disciples, Matt. 28:16
3. Simon, Luke 24:34
4. two men, Luke 24:15
5. disciples, Luke 24:36
6. Mary Magdalene, John 20:15
7. ten disciples, John 20:17
8. eleven disciples, John 20:26
9. seven disciples, John 21:1
10. Cephas (Peter), I Cor. 15:5
11. the Twelve (Apostles), I Cor. 15:5
12. 500 brethren, I Cor. 15:6 (Matt. 28:16-17)
13. James (His earthly family), I Cor. 15:7
14. all the apostles, I Cor. 15:7
15. Paul, I Cor. 15:8 (Acts 9)

Obviously some of these refer to the same appearance. Jesus wanted them to know for sure He was alive!

▣ **“they”** Characteristically, Mark and Luke named one women, while Matthew named two.

▣ **“took hold of His feet”** John 20:17 records only Mary taking hold of Jesus' feet. This was the oriental way of showing submission, respect, and even worship.

28:10 “My brethren” What a designation for these fearful disciples (cf. 12:15)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:11-15

¹¹Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. ¹²And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³and said, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴And if this should come to the governor’s ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is to this day.*

28:11 It is surprising that Roman guards reported to Jewish priests! Some of these must have told Matthew!

28:12 “they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers” What these soldiers must have thought, knowing the truth and telling a lie!

These Jewish leaders (i.e., Sanhedrin) would do anything to destroy Jesus. They

1. used betrayal to find and arrest Jesus
2. held an illegal night trial to accuse Him
3. used lying witnesses to charge Him
4. then used bribery to silence witnesses

28:13 “His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep” If they were sleeping, how did they know the disciples stole His body? However, this account does emphasize that by the report of the Roman guards, the women, and the disciples, the tomb is empty.

28:14 “keep you out of trouble” Roman guards falling asleep at their posts was a grave offense, sometimes punishable by death.

28:15 “this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day” Remember that Matthew was written for a Jewish audience. A similar account was given in Justin Martyr’s (A.D. 114-115) *Dialogue with Trytho* (i.e., 108). It was the Sadducees and Romans who were to prevent the body of Jesus from being stolen.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:16-20

¹⁶But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. ¹⁷When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. ¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

28:16 “But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated” Jesus had told the disciples earlier (cf. 26:32; 27:7,10) that He would meet them there. If they had listened closely they would have expected the resurrection, but they did not. This was not the mount of Ascension. Jesus’ ascension took place on the Mount of Olives forty days after the resurrection (cf. Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:4-11).

28:17

NASB “but some were doubtful”

NKJV, NRSV “but some doubted”

TEV “some of them doubted”

NJB “some hesitated”

This could not refer to the 120 disciples who had seen Him three times in Jerusalem in the Upper Room. Possibly it refers to the larger number of followers (upward of 500) that Paul mentioned in I Cor. 15:6. Apparently Jesus appeared at a distance and walked closer to them. There was some physical difference in Jesus’ appearance after the resurrection (cf. John 20:14; 21:4; Luke 24:13,31).

The significance of this is that the Great Commission was not given to the Apostles alone, not even the hundred and twenty disciples of the Upper Room, but to the whole church. It is for all Christians, not just the church’s leadership! It was given on at least three different occasions.

1. upper room, resurrection evening (cf. Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21)
2. on a mountain in Galilee (cf. Matthew 28)
3. on the Mount of Olives just before the ascension (cf. Acts 1:8).

28:18 “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” What a tremendous statement (cf. Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 13:3; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 1:16-19; 2:10; I Pet. 3:22)! Jesus must have been either the Messiah or a liar. His resurrection confirmed His claims!

28:19 “Go” This is an AORIST PASSIVE (deponent) PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. This should not be interpreted “as you are going” because this would translate a PRESENT IMPERATIVE, not an AORIST. “Going” may be the most accurate option. All Christians are commanded to be lifestyle witnesses (cf. I Pet. 3:15 and possibly Col. 4:2-6). It is a priority. This is the Great Commission—not the Great Option.

☐ “make disciples” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. The term “disciples” meant “learners.” The Bible does not emphasize decisions, but lifestyle faith. The key to evangelism is discipleship. However, discipleship must start with a repentant faith profession and continue in the same way unto obedience and perseverance.

☐ “of all the nations” This must have been a shocking statement to the Jews, but it follows Dan. 7:14 which speaks of a universal, eternal kingdom (cf. Revelation 5). This is a reversal of Jesus’ previous orders (cf. 10:5-6). Notice the number of times that the inclusive “all” appears in this paragraph.

See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 24:14.

☐ “baptizing” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. This is balanced with “teach” (v.20). The two purposes of the Church are evangelism and discipleship. They are two sides of one coin. They cannot and must not be separated!

SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM

Curtis Vaughan, *Acts*, has an interesting footnote on p. 28.

“The Greek word for ‘baptized’ is a third person imperative; the word for ‘repent,’ a second person imperative. This change from the more direct second person command to the less direct third person of ‘baptized’ implies that Peter’s basic primary demand is for repentance.”

This follows the preaching emphasis of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:2) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:17). Repentance seems to be a spiritual key and baptism is an outward expression of this spiritual change. The New Testament knew nothing of unbaptized believers! To the early church baptism was the public profession of faith. It is the occasion for the public confession of faith in Christ, not the mechanism for salvation! It needs to be remembered that baptism is not mentioned in Peter’s second sermon, though repentance is (cf. 3:19; Luke 24:17). Baptism was an example set by Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:13-18). Baptism was commanded by Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:19). The modern question of the necessity of baptism for salvation is not addressed in the New Testament; all believers are expected to be baptized. However, one must also guard against a sacramental mechanicalism! Salvation is a faith issue, not a right-place, right-words, right-ritual act issue!

▣ **“in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”** This three-Person formula may reflect Isa. 42:1. Notice “in the name” is SINGULAR. The name of God is Triune (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; John 14:26; Acts 2:32-33, 38-39; Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4, 8-10; I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 1:21; 13:14; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 1:3-14, 17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; I Thess. 1:2-5; II Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:4-6; I Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21). See Special Topics: The Trinity at 3:17 and The Personhood of the Spirit at 12:31.

The baptismal formula of Acts 2:38, “in Jesus’ name,” cannot be exclusive to this formula in the Great Commission. Salvation is a series of acts both initial and continual: repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. It is not a liturgical formula or sacramental procedure. It is an intimate, daily, growing, personal relationship with God. This was/is the purpose of creation.

28:20 “teaching them” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. Notice that “what we teach” is not simply facts about Jesus, but obedience to all of His teachings. Christian maturity involves

1. a repentant faith profession
2. a life of Christlike living
3. a growing doctrinal understanding

▣ **“I am with you always”** This is emphatic. The personal presence of Jesus is always with believers. Emmanuel came (cf. 1:23) and remains! There is a real fluidity between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Son (cf. Rom. 8:9-10; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19; Col. 1:27). In John 14:23 both the Father and the Son indwell believers. In reality all three persons of the divine essence participate in all redemptive events. The One who has “all authority” and who is “with us always” has commanded us to evangelize and disciple all nations (note the four uses of “all” in the Great commission). With His presence and power we can to it!

▣ **“to the end of the age”** This refers to the two Jewish ages and was a reference to the Second Coming or consummation of the Kingdom of God. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at 12:31.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do the accounts of the events of the resurrection differ so greatly between the four Gospels?
2. Why did God move the boulder when Jesus was already gone?
3. Why did the women visit the tomb? How many times? How many women?
4. Why did Jesus meet with His disciples in Galilee?
5. What is the implication that the Great Commission was given to the church as a whole, not the leadership?

APPENDIX ONE

A Table of Dates and Rulers Related to Palestine During the Inter-biblical Period

PERSIAN EMPIRE

Cyrus II	538-529 B.C.
Cambyses II	529-522
Darius I (Hystaspes)	522-486
Xerxes I	485-465
Artaxerxes I (Longimanus)	464-424
Xerxes II (few months only)	424-423
Darius II (Nothus)	423-404
Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)	404-359
Artaxerxes III (Ochus)	359-338
Darius III (Codomannus)	338-331

PTOLEMID EMPIRE (EGYPT)

Ptolemy I (Soter I)	311-283/2
Ptolemy II (Philadelphos)	285-246
Ptolemy III (Euegetes I)	246-221
Ptolemy IV (Philopator)	221-203
Ptolemy V (Epiphanes)	203-181/0
Ptolemy VI (Philometor)	181/0-145
Ptolemy VII (Euergetes II, Physcon)	145-116
Ptolemy VIII (Soter II, Lathyros)	116-108/7 & 88-89
Ptolemy IX (Alexander I)	108/7-88
Ptolemy X (Alexander II)	80
Ptolemy XI (Auletes)	80-51
Ptolemy XII & Cleopatra VII	51-48
Ptolemy XIII & Cleopatra VII	47-44
Ptolemy XIV(Caesar) & Cleopatra VII	44-30

SELEUCID EMPIRE

Seleucus I (Nicator)	311-281/0
Antiochus I (Soter)	280-262/1
Antiochus II (Theos)	261/0-247/6
Seleucus II (Callinicos)	246/5-226/5
Seleucus III (Ceraunus)	225/4-223
Antiochus III (The Great)	223-187
Seleucus IV (Philopator)	187-175
Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)	175-163
Antiochus V (Eupator)	163-162
Demetrius I (Soter)	162-150
Alexander Balas	150-145
Demetrius II (Nicator)	145-139/8
Antiochus VI (Epiphanes)	145-142/1
Tryphon	142/1-138
Antiochus VII (Euergetes, Sidetes)	139/8-129
Demetrius II (Nicator)	129-126/5
Antiochus VIII (Grypos)	125-96
Antiochus IX (Kyzikenos)	115-95
(Confusion with rival claimants for the next 30 years)	

THE HASMONAEANS

Judas Maccabaeus	166/5-160
Jonathan (High Priest)	160/59-142/1
Simon (High Priest)	142/1-135/4
John Hyrcanus I (High Priest, King)	134/3-104/3
Aristobulus I (High Priest, King)	103/2
Alexander Jannaeus (High Priest, King)	102/1-76/5
Alexandra Salome	75/4-67/6
Hyrcanus II (High Priest, King)	75/4-66/5 & 63/40
Aristobulus II (High Priest, King)	66/5-63
Antigonus (High Priest, King)	40-37
Herod the Great	37-4

RULERS OF JUDEA FROM B.C. 4 TO FALL OF JERUSALEM A.D. 70

Archelaus	B.C. 4 - A.D. 6
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ROMAN PROCURATORS

Coponius	6-9
Marcus Ambibulus	c9-12
Annus Rufus	c12-15
Valerius Gratus	15-26
Pontius Pilate	26-36
Marcellus	36
Marullus	37
Merennius Capito	?-41
Herod Agrippa I	41-44
Cuspius Fadus	44-?
Tiberius Alexander	?
Cumanus	?48-52
Felix	52-?60
Porcius	?60-62
Albinus	63-64
Gessius Florus	64-

The Interbiblical Period (400-5 B.C.)

- A. Persian Rule (539/538-332 B.C.)

- B. Greek Rule (322-167 B.C.)
 1. Alexander the Great (332-323 B.C.) Succeeded Philip of Macedon, his father in 336 B.C. Upon his death, Alexander's Empire divided among his generals—two of whom really concern us: Ptolemy and Seleucus
 2. Ptolemaic Rule (232-198 B.C.) Ptolemy and his dynasty ruled Palestine from Egypt
 - a. Ptolemy I ("Soter," 323-285 B.C.) Built Lighthouse on Island of Paphos
 - b. Ptolemy II ("Philadelphus," 285-245 B.C.) Built or rebuilt many cities in Palestine as centers of Greek culture: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza and Joppa, Gezer, Strato's Tower, Sidon, Ptolemais, Samaria, Beth-shan, now renamed Scythopolis.
 - c. Ptolemy V (a child) Lost Palestine to the Seleucids in 198 B.C.
 3. Seleucid rule (198-167 B.C.)
 - Seleucus I ("Nicator," 281 B.C.)
 - Antiochus I (Seleucus' son, 281-261 B.C.)
 - Antiochus II (married Bernice, daughter of Ptolemy II, 261-246 B.C.)
 - Antiochus III (brother of Seleucus III, 223-187 B.C.)

Seleucus II (246-226 B.C.)

Seleucus III (226-223 B.C.)

Antiochus III (called “Antiochus the Great”) He took Palestine away from the Ptolemies.

The Jewish High Priest and Simon II (His family often called the Onaids) were against Hellenizing influences.

Another Jewish family, the Tobiad, was for Hellenization.

The Hasidim “the pious people” of Jerusalem who deplored and rejected Hellenization.

Rome defeated Antiochus in 188 B.C. and laid heavy tribute on him.

Seleucus IV — 187-175 B.C.

Antiochus IV — 175-163 B.C. “Epiphanes” (Brother of Seleucus IV) Antiochus Epiphanes removed the high priest, Onias III, and appointed his brother in his place — Jason, a Hellenized Jew. The Hasidim strongly opposed him. He later replaced Jason with Menelaus as high priest (and with his help Antiochus later robbed the Temple of 1800 talents of gold!) After a rumor that he had been killed spread in Jerusalem causing a Jewish uprising, Antiochus stopped the Temple ritual, ordered their Scriptures destroyed and Sabbaths not to be observed. He demanded that Zeus be worshipped. An altar to Zeus was set up in the Temple! The Jews were not allowed to circumcise their children and they were forced to eat pork.

C. Maccabean Rule or Hebrew Independence 167-63 B.C.

1. Mattathias — priest at Modin; father of five sons — his family was called Hasmonean, from Hasmon an ancestor of Mattathias.
2. Judas — called “Maccabeus” or “The Hammer”
Gained religious freedom for Jews by means of guerilla warfare over the Seleucids. Cleansed the Temple and rededicated it, Dec. 25— either 165 or 164 B.C. (Hanukkah or Festival of Lights); Onias IV (sons of the deceased legitimate Jewish High Priest) built a Jewish Temple in Egypt at Leontopolis and duplicated the Jerusalem ritual. This priestly lineage lasted 230 years.
3. Jonathan succeeded Judas — 160 B.C. - 143 B.C.
4. Simon gained power upon Jonathan’s death and in either 143 or 142 B.C. gained Seleucid recognition of political independence. He was made hereditary high priest and was assassinated by his son-in-law in 134 B.C. or 135 B.C.
5. John Hyrcanus (Simon’s son) succeeded him — 135-105 B.C. Destroyed Samaritan Temple. The Sadducees and Pharisees now appear in history according to Josephus.
6. Aristobulus I — 105-104 B.C. For one year, son of John, called himself “king.” He was supported by the Sadducees.
7. Alexander Jannaeus, 104-103 B.C. — 78-77 B.C. or 76
Half-brother of Aristobulus. He became king and high priest after marrying the widow Salome Alexandra. He was supported by the Sadducees. He appointed Antipater as governor of Idumea. This was the zenith of power and greatness of the Maccabean kingdom.
8. Salome Alexandra — ruled nine years as queen, making her son, Hyrcanus II (who was a Pharisee), high priest and her other son, Aristobulus II (who was a Sadducee), military commander. This caused a civil war between them. Antipater of Idumea and Artas, King of Nabatea at Petra, helped Hyrcanus II. Pompey, a Roman general, arrived in Damascus in 63 B.C. and both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus II appealed for support.

D. Roman Rule — 63 B.C.

1. Pompey — supported Hyrcanus II with Antipater as advisor.
2. Julius Caesar — gave Antipater great power as procurator of Judea and Antipater made his two sons, Herod and Phasael, military prefects over Galilee and Judea respectively.
3. Mark Anthony appointed Herod and Phasael “tetrarchs” jointly over Judea in 41 B.C.
4. Parthia overran and controlled Judea from 40-39 B.C. and a high priest ruled as king. Phasael committed suicide but Herod escaped to Rome and, with help of Antony and Octavius, the Senate made him King of the Jews. It took two or three years of war to take full control of Palestine. When Octavius and Antony (and Cleopatra) had a showdown in 31 B.C. at Actium, Octavius emerged as ruler of the Roman world and Herod secured his support.
5. Rule of Herod — 37-4 B.C. : in theory, an independent king in alliance with Rome.
 - a. An Idumean (or Edomite)

- b. Had overthrown a Hasmonean ruler — so he married an Hasmonean Princess, Marianne. Murder, intrigue, etc. followed.
- c. Expanded his territory considerably
- d. Great builder
 - (1) Caesarea by the Sea
 - (2) Temple started in 20 or 19 B.C. and took until 64 A.D. to complete
 - (3) Samaria became Sebaste in honor of Augustus.
 - (4) so too, Antipatris northeast of Joppa
 - (5) so too, Phasaelis north of Jericho
 - (6) and fortresses were built such as Machaerus and Masada
- e. His family who ruled:
 - (1) Archelaus — 4 B.C. - 6 A.D. ruled Judea, but he was removed and procurators were instituted in his place (cf. Matt. 2:20-22)
 - (2) Herod Antipas — ruled Perea and Galilee; executed John the Baptist. Built city of Tiberius on Sea of Galilee in A.D. 22. Became the center of Jewish learning after Jerusalem destroyed in A.D. 70.
 - (3) Philip the Tetrarch — ruled Northeast of Palestine. Capitol city of Panion rebuilt. (He is not the husband of Herodias.) Called capitol city Caesarea, hence Caesarea Philippi. Rebuilt Bethsaida and called it Bethsaida Julius in honor of Julia, the daughter of Augustus Caesar.
 - (4) Antiochus IV — 175-163 B.C. “Epiphanes” (brother of Seleucus IV). Antiochus Epiphanes removed the high priest, Onias III, and appointed his brother in his place — Jason, a Hellenized Jew. The Hasidim strongly opposed him. He later replaced Jason with Menelaus as high priest (and with his help Antiochus later robbed the Temple of 1800 talent of gold!) After a rumor that he had been killed spread in Jerusalem, causing a Jewish uprising, Antiochus stopped the Temple ritual, ordered their Scriptures destroyed and Sabbaths not to be observed. He demanded that Zeus be worshiped. An altar to Zeus was set up in the Temple! The Jews were not allowed to circumcise their children and they were forced to eat pork.

APPENDIX TWO

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 B.C.) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 B.C.-A.D. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the ancient near east and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

I. TENSE

- A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."
1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
 2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

- B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing
1. It occurred = AORIST
 2. It occurred and the results abide = PERFECT
 3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = PLUPERFECT
 4. It is occurring = PRESENT
 5. It was occurring = IMPERFECT
 6. It will occur = FUTURE

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. AORIST - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. PERFECT - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. PRESENT - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. FUTURE - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

- C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the AORIST. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the INDICATIVE MOOD. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. PERFECT TENSE. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the AORIST and PRESENT TENSES. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act. Example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, “you have been and continue to be saved.”
2. PLUPERFECT TENSE. This was like the PERFECT except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 “Peter was standing at the door outside.”
3. PRESENT TENSE. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, “Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning.” “Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin.”
4. IMPERFECT TENSE. In this tense the relationship to the PRESENT TENSE is analogous to the relationship between the PERFECT and the PLUPERFECT. The IMPERFECT speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, “then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him” or “then all Jerusalem began to go out to him.”
5. FUTURE TENSE. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, “Blessed are. . .they will. . .”

II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. ACTIVE VOICE was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The PASSIVE VOICE means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
 1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt.1:22; Acts 22:30).
 2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22).
 3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the INSTRUMENTAL CASE.
 4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the INSTRUMENTAL CASE alone.
- D. The MIDDLE VOICE means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
 1. REFLEXIVE - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 “hanged himself.”
 2. INTENSIVE - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”
 3. RECIPROCAL - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 “they counseled with one another.”

III. MOOD (or “MODE”)

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author’s own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (INDICATIVE) and that which indicated potentiality (SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE and OPTATIVE).
- B. The INDICATIVE MOOD was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author’s mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened but the chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the FUTURE INDICATIVE. The difference was that the SUBJUNCTIVE expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms “could,” “would,” “may,” or “might.”
- D. The OPTATIVE MOOD expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the SUBJUNCTIVE. The OPTATIVE expressed possibility under certain conditions. The OPTATIVE was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul’s famous phrase, “May it never be” (KJV, “God

forbid”), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.

- E. The IMPERATIVE MOOD emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the IMPERATIVE in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the PRESENT and AORIST tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize PARTICIPLES as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as a verbal adjective. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was the normal or “unmarked” way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
 1. The NOMINATIVE CASE was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs “to be” or “become.”
 2. The GENITIVE CASE was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, “What kind?” It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition “of.”
 3. The ABLATIVE CASE used the same inflected form as the GENITIVE, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition “from.”
 4. The DATIVE CASE was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition “to.”
 5. The LOCATIVE CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions “in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside.”
 6. The INSTRUMENTAL CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE and LOCATIVE cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, “by” or “with.”
 7. The ACCUSATIVE CASE was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, “How far?” or “To what extent?”
 8. The VOCATIVE CASE was used for direct address.

VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

- A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.
- B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).
1. Time connectors
 - a. *epei, epeid ē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
 - b. *heōs* - "while"
 - c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
 - d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
 - e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
 - f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"
 2. Logical connectors
 - a. Purpose
 - (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
 - (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
 - (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
 - b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)
 - (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
 - (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
 - (3) *ara* - "so"
 - c. Causal or reason
 - (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
 - (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
 - (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
 - (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"
 - d. Inferential
 - (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
 - (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
 - (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
 - (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"
 - e. Adversative or contrast
 - (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
 - (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
 - (3) *kai* - "but"
 - (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
 - (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
 - (6) *oun* - "however"
 - f. Comparison
 - (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
 - (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)
 - (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
 - (4) *ē* - "than"
 - g. Continuative or series
 - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
 - (2) *kai* - "and"
 - (3) *tei* - "and"
 - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
 - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)
 3. Emphatic usages
 - a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
 - b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
 - c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"

- d. *de* - “indeed”
- e. *ean* - “even”
- f. *kai* - “even,” “indeed,” “really”
- g. *mentoi* - “indeed”
- h. *oun* - “really,” “by all means”

VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A **CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The **FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an “if.” In several contexts it could be translated “since” (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all **FIRST CLASSES** are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The **SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** is often called “contrary to fact.” It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
 - 1. “If He were really a prophet, which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not” (Luke 7:39).
 - 2. “If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not” (John 5:46).
 - 3. “If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am” (Gal. 1:10).
- D. The **THIRD CLASS** speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the “it” clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The **FOURTH CLASS** is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete **FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE** in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial **FOURTH CLASS** is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial **FOURTH CLASS** in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The **PRESENT IMPERATIVE** with **MĒ PARTICLE** often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: “stop storing up your riches on earth. . .” (Matt. 6:19); “stop worrying about your life. . .” (Matt. 6:25); “stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . .” (Rom. 6:13); “you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . .” (Eph. 4:30); and “stop getting drunk on wine. . .” (5:18).
- B. The **AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE** with **MĒ PARTICLE** has the emphasis of “do not even begin or start an act.” Some examples: “Do not even begin to suppose that. . .” (Matt. 5:17); “never start to worry. . .” (Matt. 6:31); “you must never be ashamed. . .” (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The **DOUBLE NEGATIVE** with the **SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD** is a very emphatic negation. “Never, no never” or “not under any circumstance.” Some examples: “he will never, no never experience death” (John 8:51); “I will never, no, never. . .” (I Cor. 8:13).

IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article “the” had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of “a pointer,” a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
 - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
 - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;

3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: “God is Spirit” John 4:24; “God is light” I John 1:5; “God is love” 4:8,16.

B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English “a” or “an”. The absence of the definite article could mean

1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
2. a focus on the category of something

C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.

B. We have stated earlier that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. Example: Rom. 6:10 (twice).

C. Word order in Koine Greek

1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
 - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader;
 - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader;
 - c. what the author felt deeply about.
2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
 - a. for linking verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) complement
 - b. for transitive verbs
 - (1) verb
 - (2) subject
 - (3) object
 - (4) indirect object
 - (5) prepositional phrase
 - c. for noun phrases
 - (1) noun
 - (2) modifier
 - (3) prepositional phrase
3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
 - a. “right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). The phrase “right hand of fellowship” is split and fronted to show its significance.
 - b. “with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), was placed first. His death was central.
 - c. “It was bit by bit and in many different ways” (Heb. 1:1), was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.

D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by

1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb’s inflected form. Example: “I, myself, will surely be with you. . .” (Matt. 28:20).
2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton (“not bound”). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
 - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
 - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
 - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
 - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)

3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: “to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
 4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
 - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects like “sleep” for death (John 11:11-14) or “feet” for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
 - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God’s name, like “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 3:21) or “a voice from heaven” (Matt. 3:17).
 - c. figures of speech
 - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24).
 - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36).
 - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55).
 - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
 - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11).
 - (6) sound plays between words
 - (a) “church”
 - (i) “church” (Eph. 3:21)
 - (ii) “calling” (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (iii) “called” (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (b) “free”
 - (i) “free woman” (Gal. 4:31)
 - (ii) “freedom” (Gal. 5:1)
 - (iii) “free” (Gal. 5:1)
 - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
 - (1) This was the figurative use of “food” (John 4:31-34).
 - (2) This was the figurative use of “Temple” (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61).
 - (3) This was a Hebrew idiom of compassion, “hate” (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13).
 - (4) “All” versus “many.” Compare Isa. 53:6 (“all”) with 53:11 & 12 (“many”). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
 5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: “The Lord Jesus Christ.”
 6. The special use of *autos*
 - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated “same.”
 - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun—“himself,” “herself,” or “itself.”
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
 2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a “word for word” translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV) with a “dynamic equivalent” (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.
 3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).
 4. The use of a very literal translation
 - a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901
 - b. *Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

APPENDIX THREE

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
 - A. Old Testament
 - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” also called “textual criticism.”
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

I. The textual sources of our English Bible

A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in A.D. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century A.D. and were finished in the ninth century A.D. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from “Letter of Aristeas.” The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman B.C. period (200 B.C. to A.D. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the “Essenes.” The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
 - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, “As many shall be amazed at him.”
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, “Just as many were astonished over you.”
 - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
 - (a) LXX, “so will many nations marvel at him”
 - (b) MT, “so he sprinkles many nations”
 - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, “then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand...”
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, “and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . .”
 - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
 - (1) LXX & DSS, “after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied”
 - (2) MT, “he shall see...of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied”

B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyrus and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century A.D., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century A.D., but most are from the third and fourth centuries A.D. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.
3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter *aleph* or (01), found at St. Catherine’s monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century A.D. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as “A” or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.

5. Codex Vaticanus, known as “B” or (03), found in the Vatican’s library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century A.D. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as “C” or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as “D” or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called “The Western Text.” It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
 - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
 - (1) P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶ (about A.D. 200), which record the Gospels
 - (2) P⁴⁶ (about A.D. 225), which records Paul’s letters
 - (3) P⁷² (about A.D. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
 - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about A.D. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
 - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
 - (6) other MSS which show this text type are \aleph , C, L, W, 33
 - b. Western text from North Africa
 - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
 - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
 - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
 - (4) Codex D “Bezae” follow this text type
 - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
 - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
 - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria’s church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
 - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
 - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
 - d. the fourth possible type is “Caesarean” from Palestine
 - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
 - (2) some witnesses to it are P⁴⁵ and W

II. The problems and theories of “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.”

A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
 - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
 - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
 - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
 - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.
 - c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.
2. intentional
 - a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
 - b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
 - c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
 - d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
 - e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants

7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants
 - a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, "No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original" (p. 68)
 - b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted...When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

APPENDIX FOUR

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."