



THOMAS NELSON

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The Gospel According to **MATTHEW**

The four Gospels present a fourfold view of the life of Christ. With the exception of scant references by Tacitus and Josephus, our entire knowledge of the life of Jesus comes from these gospel accounts. The early accounts probably were passed on verbally in the Aramaic language and then recorded in Greek manuscripts between A.D. 60 and 90. All four Gospels build upon genuine historical tradition and preserve different aspects of it.

The basic purpose of the Gospels is to present the gospel message, the Good News of the Redeemer-Savior. They present Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. The Gospels were written so that their readers would come to believe in Christ and receive eternal life (cf. John 20:31). They view Jesus as the Lord of Glory who is presently alive and active in heaven.

Order of the Gospels. The order of the Gospels has been generally recognized by the church throughout its history. “The Gospel of Matthew occupies first place in all extant witnesses to the text of the four Gospels and in all early lists of the canonical books of the New Testament” (R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary, p. 11). Matthew’s emphasis on the Old Testament preparation for the gospel makes it an ideal “bridge” from the Old to the New Testament.

The Gospels present four portraits of Jesus, each in its own characteristic manner. Matthew, the Hebrew tax collector, writes for the Hebrew mind. Mark, the travel companion of Paul and Peter, writes for the Roman mind. Luke, Paul’s physician-missionary, writes with the

Greek mentality in view. John’s gospel is different by nature from the other three. It is an interpretation of the facts of Jesus’ life rather than a presentation of its facts in historical sequence.

Authorship. The book itself is anonymous, but the earliest tradition credits it to Matthew, the disciple of Jesus. Papias, second-century bishop of Hierapolis; Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons; Origen in the third century; and Eusebius, who wrote his *Historia Ecclesiastica* in the fourth century—all agree that Matthew was the author of this gospel and that he originally wrote it in Hebrew (probably meaning Aramaic, the common spoken language of the early Christians). However, there is no trace of this Aramaic “original,” and the earliest quotations (early second century) from Matthew are in Greek.

It is difficult to determine at this time whether Matthew, as we know that gospel today, is a Greek translation of his Aramaic original or whether it was originally written in Greek. Scholars, both conservative and liberal, are divided on this matter. However, an examination of the Greek gospel does not substantiate the idea that it is a translation, for it has none of the characteristics of a translated work. In fact, the Gospel of Matthew includes a number of untranslated Aramaic terms.

A unique statement within the Book of Matthew provides internal evidence to its authorship. The account of the call of Matthew (ch. 9) is followed by that of a meal taken by Jesus in the company of “publicans and sinners.” One valid translation of this passage says the meal took place “at home.” The parallel account in

called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the ^astar appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

2:7 ^aNum. 24:17

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, ^athey presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God ^ain a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

2:11 ^aPs. 72:10;
Is. 60:6
2:12 ^a[Job 33:15,
16]; Matt. 1:20

The Flight to Egypt

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth

that **the young child** was found in a **house** (v. 11) indicates that the family had now moved out of the stable into a rented home at Bethlehem. Since the wise men brought three gifts, **gold, and frankincense, and myrrh**, it has been assumed that they were three in number. Significantly, they **worshipped him**, indicating their recognition of the deity of the One whom they were worshiping.

2:12–18. Being warned of God: A special divine revelation in the form of a warning was given both to the wise men and to Joseph in the form of a dream. Thus instructed, the wise men did not return to Herod, and Joseph and Mary fled with the baby into Egypt. There was a large Jewish population in Egypt at that time, especially in and around the city of Alexandria. The holy family would have been incon-



2:1. Bethlehem, which is Hebrew for “House of Bread,” lies six miles south of Jerusalem at 2,460 feet above sea level. It is known as the city of David. This is the city of the birth of David’s greater Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 2:4–7), as predicted by Micah the prophet (5:2; cf. Matt. 2:5, 6). In the New Testament it is mentioned only in the Gospels and always in reference to Christ’s birth. In A.D. 325 Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, built a church over some caves traditionally regarded as the birth site. In the sixth century Emperor Justinian I built on the same site a larger church which is now called the “Church of the Nativity.” No archaeological remains from the first three centuries of the Christian Era have been discovered. Today, Bethlehem is primarily an Arab town called Beit Lahm with about 15,000 inhabitants.



Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ^aOut of Egypt have I called my son.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was ¹mocked of the wise men, was exceeding ²wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the ³children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the ⁴coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by ¹Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18 ^aIn Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

2:15 ^a Num.
24:8; Hos. 11:1
2:16 ¹ deceived
² angry
³ male children
⁴ districts
2:17 ¹ Jeremiah
2:18 ^a Jer. 31:15

2:20 ^a Luke 2:39
^b Matt. 2:16
2:22 ^a Matt. 2:12,
13, 19
^b Matt. 3:13;
Luke 2:39
¹ instead of
² there
³ region
2:23 ^a Luke
1:26; 2:39; John
1:45, 46
^b Judg. 13:5
3:1 ^a Matt. 3:1–
12; Mark 1:3–8;
Luke 3:2–17;
John 1:6–8,
19–28
^b Josh. 14:10
3:2 ^a Dan. 2:44;
Mal. 4:6; Matt.
4:17; Mark 1:15;
Luke 1:17; 10:9;
11:20; 21:31

The Return to Nazareth

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 ^aSaying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which ^bsought the young child's life.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea ¹in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go ²thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a ^adream, he turned aside ^binto the ³parts of Galilee:

23 And he came and dwelt in a city called ^aNazareth: that it might be fulfilled ^bwhich was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

John the Baptist's Ministry

3 In those days came ^aJohn the Baptist, preaching ^bin the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for ^athe kingdom of heaven is at hand.

spicuous during their stay and would have been welcomed by members of their own race. **The death of Herod** occurred in 4 B.C. Our present calendar is off in its calculation by about six years. (This would place the birth of Christ at 6/5 B.C. Herod's death is recorded in detail by Josephus, *Antiquities* xvii 6.5.) Josephus calls him "a man of great barbarity towards all men." **Rachel weeping for her children** (v. 18) is a quotation of Jeremiah 31:15. The calamity of Israel's mourning at the time of the Exile is correlated here to this renewed calamity brought on by Herod, whose very act of ruling is a direct result of that captivity. Rachel refers to Benjamin's mother, who died outside Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19).

2:19–23. When Herod was dead he was succeeded by his son **Archelaus**, the son of his Samaritan wife, Malthace. Archelaus was as brutal as his father. Joseph, again warned in a dream, returned to Nazareth, avoiding any further residence in Judea. The phrase **He shall be called a Nazarene** is a reference to Christ's coming from the city of Nazareth. It should not be taken to mean that He was a Nazarite.

3:1. The forerunner of Christ was **John the Baptist**. He was the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, and a cousin of the Lord (cf. Luke 1:5–80). His birth was accompanied by the promise: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord ... and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:15). Jesus said of him that there was none "greater than John" (Matt. 11:11) during the Old Testament dispensation. This would imply that John the Baptist was the epitome of the message of the Old Testament itself. Matthew's reference to John the Baptist assumes that his readers were familiar with him. John is presented as the prophet sent in the spirit of Elijah "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). His appearance and dynamic preaching certainly depict him in the life-style of Israel's ancient prophet. Jesus would later say of him, "I say unto you, That Elias is come already" (Matt. 17:12).

3:2. Repent (Gr. *metanoō*) means a change of mind that results in a change of conduct. Repentance is not merely sorrow. It involves a complete change of



2:22. Archelaus, a son of Herod the Great, was given the most important district of his father's realm—Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. He was more wicked and cruel than his father, and was deposed by Rome. He ruled from 4 B.C. to A.D. 6. (Only Reference, Matt. 2:22.)

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, ^aThe voice of one crying in the wilderness, ^bPrepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 And ^athe same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern ¹girdle about his ²loins; and his ³meat was ^blocusts and ^cwild honey.

5 ^aThen went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

3:3 ^aIs. 40:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23
^bLuke 1:76
 3:4 ^a2 Kin. 1:8; Zech. 13:4; Matt. 11:8; Mark 1:6
^bLev. 11:22
^c1 Sam. 14:25, 26
¹belt
²waist
³food
 3:5 ^aMark 1:5
 3:6 ^aActs 19:4, 18
 3:7 ^aMatt. 12:34; Luke 3:7-9

6 ^aAnd were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come ¹to his baptism, he said unto them, ^aO ²generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from ^bthe wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits ¹meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within

^b[Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10] ¹for ²brood 3:8 ¹worthy of

attitude regarding God and sin and is often accompanied by a sense of sorrow and a corresponding change in conduct. Such repentance does not arise within man himself, but is the result of God's mercy in leading man to it (cf. Acts 5:31; Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25). Thus repentance involves the very process of conversion whereby men are born again. John's message of repentance was necessary in order to prepare people for the **kingdom of heaven** which was **at hand**. The phrase *kingdom of heaven* is used only in the Gospel of Matthew and seems to be based on similar references in the Book of Daniel. The phrase *kingdom of God* is used more frequently by Mark and Luke. The change is perhaps due to Matthew's Jewish emphasis. Since many Jews regarded it as blasphemous to refer to God by name, Matthew may have substituted the word *heaven* for

that reason. Usually the two phrases are used interchangeably in the Gospels.

3:3-7. Spoken of by the prophet Esaias: All four Gospels relate this prophecy of Isaiah to a fulfillment in the life and ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). **Make his paths straight** refers to the straightening or preparing of one's life in a right relationship with God in order to prepare for the coming of a King. John's dress of **camel's hair, and a leathern girdle** was similar to Elijah's clothing (2 Kin. 1:8) and was the usual dress of prophets (Zech. 13:4). **Locusts** were an allowable food (cf. Lev. 11:22) and were eaten by the poorest of people. The reference in verse 5 to **Jerusalem, and all Judea** relates to the people of those places. John's ministry was received with great enthusiasm in its early stages.

3:8-10. Fruits meet for repentance: John rebuked



2:23. Nazareth is situated in lower Galilee just north of the plain of Esdraelon (cf. Armageddon) and about 70 miles north of Jerusalem. It is a somewhat isolated town and thus is significant only in that it was the hometown of Joseph and Mary and the place where Jesus spent most of His first 30 years (cf. Luke 2:39, 51). When Jesus began His public ministry He made Capernaum His headquarters (4:13-16). The only significant relation between Nazareth and Christ's ministry was His rejection by its inhabitants (Luke 4:16-30). Few significant archaeological discoveries have been made at Nazareth except for demonstrating that Nazareth did exist long before New Testament times. (Since it is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Talmud, the Apocrypha, or by Josephus the Jewish historian, some have imagined that it did not exist historically at the time of Jesus). Presently Nazareth is a town of over 26,000 primarily Arab inhabitants.



Remains of a first-century house discovered in Nazareth in 2009

David Silverman/Getty Images

yourselves, ^aWe have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: ^atherefore every

3:9 ^a John 8:33; Acts 13:26; [Rom. 4:1, 11, 16; Gal. 3:29] 3:10 ^a [Ps. 92:12–14]; Matt. 7:19; Luke 13:7, 9; [John 15:6] 3:11 ^a Mark 1:4,

tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 ^aI indeed baptize you with water

8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26; Acts 1:5

the Pharisees, asking them to give evidence of “fruits meet for repentance” (v. 8). There can be no doubt that the New Testament concept of repentance grows out of its usage in the Old Testament, where the term (Heb. *shūb*) means far more than an intellectual change of mind. Genuine repentance proves itself by the fruits of a changed life. John the Baptist further rebuked them for their belief in nationalistic salvation. **Abraham to our father** means that they were trusting in their physical descent for salvation, rather than in God, which would have constituted a spiritual relationship to Abraham the “father of the faithful.”

3:11, 12. **I indeed baptize ... with water:** John's baptism in water was not Christian baptism. The death and resurrection of Christ had not yet occurred in

order to be depicted by this baptism. John's baptism was similar to the Old Testament offerings (washings) that symbolized a cleansing of personal repentance on the part of a believer. Notice that Jesus submitted to this baptism to “fulfill all righteousness” (v. 15). **He shall baptize ... with the Holy Ghost** refers to the spiritual rebirth of the regenerate who shall receive the baptism of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). This experience began at Pentecost (Acts 1) and was repeated upon every new group of converts (Samaritans, Gentiles, John's disciples) until it became normative for all Christian believers. The immediate context certainly indicates that to be baptized **with fire** is the result of judgment (notice the reference to purging and burning in the next verse). The threshing **fan** (v. 12) refers to a

THE BIRTH OF JESUS AND THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT



5 Then the devil taketh him up ^ainto the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, ^aHe shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and ^bin *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, **It is written again, ^aThou shalt not ¹tempt the Lord thy God.**

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and ^asheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

4:5 ^aNeh. 11:1, 18; Dan. 9:24; Matt. 27:53
4:6 ^aPs. 91:11
^bPs. 91:12
4:7 ^aDeut. 6:16
¹test
4:8 ^a[Matt. 16:26; 1 John 2:15–17]

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, **¹Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, ^aThou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

11 Then the devil ^aleaveth him, and, behold, ^bangels came and ministered unto him.

The Preaching Ministry of Jesus

12 ^aNow when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthaliim:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

4:10 ^aDeut. 6:13; 10:20; Josh. 24:14
¹Away with you
4:11 ^a[James 4:7]
^bMatt. 26:53; Luke 22:43; [Heb. 1:14]
4:12 ^aMatt. 14:3; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:20; John 4:43

out of the mouth of God. The source of bread is more important than the bread itself. Later, Jesus would say, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of” (John 4:32). His source of strength was obedience to the Father’s will and He would not even work a miracle to avoid personal suffering when such suffering was a part of God’s purpose for Him.

4:5–7. The second temptation took place in the **holy city** (Jerusalem) on the **pinnacle of the temple**, which towered above the Kidron Valley. Evidently, Jesus was transported there by Satan’s power, and this time the Devil quoted Scripture (out of context) in order to get Him to sin and ultimately to shake His faith in the Word. Satan used Psalm 91:11, 12 urging Jesus to **cast thyself down**. Again, Jesus replied with Scripture (Deut. 6:16) that He was not to **tempt ... God** by such a presumptuous action. The very passage of Scripture quoted by Satan actually goes on to promise God’s ultimate victory over him!

4:8. The third temptation takes place on an **exceeding high mountain**. The mountain is clearly real in the text, though its exact location is unidentified. Despite the grandeur of this temptation, nothing in the passage itself indicates that these temptations were only in the mind of Christ. Clearly, they are

depicted as real experiences that actually occurred in the human life of the Messiah. That Satan, the usurper, would attempt to give the kingdoms of the world to Jesus, the Messiah, the rightful King, is the height of absurdity!

4:9–11. For Christ to fall down and worship Satan would have been to acknowledge the Devil’s lordship over Him. In His direct rebuke **Get thee hence, Satan**, Jesus clearly asserts His lordship over the old serpent whose head He will soon crush. Matthew’s statement that Satan **leaveth him** shows that his order of the temptations is the chronological one (cf. Luke 4:1–13).

4:12–16. Matthew designates four clear geographical areas in relation to the ministry of Christ: Galilee (4:12), Perea (“beyond Jordan,” 19:1), Judea (4:25), and Jerusalem (21:1). The author then omits some of the early Judean ministry and begins with Jesus at Capernaum in Galilee where he first met Christ (cf. 9:9). **John was cast into prison:** The circumstances of the arrest and eventual beheading of John the Baptist are recorded in chapter 14. Apparently a widespread persecution of the followers of John and Jesus took place at this time. Luke 4:16–31 explains that the reason for Jesus **leaving Nazareth**



4:12. Galilee is the regional name for the northern part of Israel extending from the Esdraelon plain some 50 miles north and from the Sea of Galilee about 30 miles to the west. Its primary feature is the 13-mile-long Sea of Galilee (seven miles wide at its broadest point). In the Old Testament this lake is called Chinnereth (Num. 34:11; Josh. 12:3; 13:27); in the New Testament it is variously identified as Genesareth (Mark 6:53), Tiberias (John 21:1), and Galilee (John 6:1). It lies 695 feet below sea level with the Jordan River flowing through it. Some towns of Galilee that were situated on the seashore were Capernaum, Bethsaida, Tiberias, and Magdala. Of these only Tiberias exists today. Other significant Galilean towns include Nazareth and Chorazin. Galilee is important to the New Testament not only as the place of Jesus’ youth, but also as the primary region of His public ministry (the Sermon on the Mount, the Transfiguration, 25 of His 33 miracles, and 19 of His 32 parables). During New Testament times this region was governed successively by Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, and Herod Agrippa. Since Antipas ruled Galilee from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39, virtually all of the events of the Gospels and of the first decade of the church age relate to his time. Tiberias beside the sea was his capital.

15 ^aThe land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, *by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

16 ^aThe people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light ¹is sprung up.

17 ^aFrom that time Jesus began to

4:15 ^aIs. 9:1, 2
4:16 ^aIs. 42:7;
Luke 2:32
¹ has
dawned
4:17 ^aMark
1:14, 15
^bMatt. 3:2; 10:7
¹ near
4:18 ^aMatt.
4:18–22; Mark
1:16–20; Luke

preach, and to say, ^bRepent: for the kingdom of heaven is ¹at hand.

The Calling of the First Four Disciples

18 ^aAnd Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon

5:2–11; John 1:40–42

was an attempt on His life after a synagogue service at Nazareth. From this point on, Capernaum became the headquarters of Jesus' ministry to the house of Israel. This city was a Roman settlement near the Sea of Galilee and was the center of the Roman government of the northern provinces of Israel. **That it might be fulfilled** (vv. 14–16) refers to the coming of Christ into Galilee in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1, 2, "beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." Jesus Himself was that great Light that now would shine forth in His earthly ministry to the people of Galilee, who

had so long been despised by their southern Judean cousins.

4:17. Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: The message of John the Baptist is now clearly proclaimed by Jesus Christ. However, Jesus, as the Messiah, is not calling on His listeners to prepare for the coming of the kingdom but rather announces that the kingdom is here. The kingdom blessings promised in Isaiah 35:5, 6, to be fulfilled in a future kingdom, here become the credentials of the King at His first coming.

4:18–20. Simon called Peter, and Andrew became the first two disciples called publicly by Jesus.



4:13. Capernaum lay on the northwest shore of Galilee. The exact site (Tel Hum) has been confirmed in modern times through archaeology. A third-century synagogue built upon first-century foundations has been excavated as well as what is believed to be Peter's house. Capernaum is never mentioned in the Old Testament and is found in the New Testament only in the Gospels. Yet it was a central city in Christ's ministry; most of the time Christ spent in Galilee was in Capernaum. When Jesus began His public ministry He made it His home base (v. 13; cf. 9:1), partly because of its prominence in Galilee. It housed a tax collector (9:9), a high government official (John 4:46), and a centurion with his soldiers (8:5–9). It became the home of Peter and Andrew, and probably James and John (Mark 1:29; cf. Luke 5:10). Jesus performed many miracles in Capernaum including healings of the centurion's servant, the nobleman's son, Peter's mother-in-law, the paralytic, and probably the raising of Jairus's daughter (cf. also Luke 4:23). Later, Jesus condemned the people of Capernaum, for despite His many miracles, they still disbelieved (11:23).



Aerial view of Capernaum from the southwest

^bcalled Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, **Follow me, and ^aI will make you fishers of men.**

4:18 ^b Matt. 10:2; 16:18; John 1:40–42
4:19 ^a Luke 5:10
4:20 ^a Matt. 19:27; Mark 10:28

20 ^aAnd they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

21 ^aAnd going on from thence, he

4:21 ^a Mark 1:19

Andrew had introduced his brother to Jesus on an earlier occasion (cf. John 1:40). The invitation, **Follow me**, called these earlier believers into a permanent ministry to be shared with Christ. **I will make you fishers of men** clearly indicates the nature of this ministry. They would receive special training in bringing men into the kingdom. Having **left their nets**, these disciples entered into a new relationship

and would never again be able to fully return to the occupation they once held so dear.

4:21, 22. **James** and **John** were also brothers and fishing partners with Simon and Andrew. Matthew and Mark agree that they were **mending their nets**, but Luke seems to differ. The two accounts can be harmonized simply: As two men were mending nets, the other two were fishing. Jesus then came



4:18. **Peter** was originally named Simon. Jesus surnamed him “Rock” (Greek *Petros*; Aramaic *Cephas*). Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen from Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee (John 1:44) who later worked out of Capernaum (Mark 1:29). Andrew, a disciple of John the Baptist, immediately began to follow Jesus on the day John announced Him. At once he introduced Simon to Christ (John 1:35–42). Peter’s devotion to Christ brought him within the innermost circle of disciples. Peter shared in the greatest moments of Christ’s ministry; Peter was always listed first among the Twelve. Yet Peter’s devotion was at times an impulsive one. Peter’s faith in Christ’s command allowed him to walk on water; and then, after he had walked, his disbelief caused him to sink (14:28–31)! Peter’s sensitivity to God’s witness prompted his great confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” only to be followed by words inspired by Satan (16:16, 17, 22, 23).

Three events during Christ’s earthly ministry were significant to Peter’s life and future ministry: (1) his confession concerning Christ at Caesarea Philippi (ch. 16); (2) his involvement at Christ’s transfiguration (ch. 17); and (3) his threefold denial of Christ before the Crucifixion (ch. 26). After the ascension of Jesus, Peter continues as the leader, opening the door of the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2), to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14–17), and to the Gentiles (Acts 10; cf. 11:1, 18; 15:7, 14). However, his ministry in the early church remained primarily to the Jews (Gal. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:1). (First Reference, Matt. 4:18; Primary References, John 1; Matt. 16; John 21; Acts 1–5; 10–12.)



Enamel plate depicting Peter walking on water, c. A.D. 1170–80

Enamel plate depicting Peter walking on water, c.1170–80, English School/Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Germany/Bridgeman Images

saw other two brethren, James *the son of Zebedee*, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

The Healing Ministry of Jesus

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, ^ateaching in their synagogues, and preaching ^bthe gospel of the kingdom, ^cand healing ¹all manner of sickness and ²all manner of disease among the people.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they ^abrought unto him all sick people that were taken with ¹divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with ²devils, and those

4:23 ^aPs. 22:22; Matt. 9:35; Mark 1:21; 6:2; 10:1; Luke 4:15; 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20
^b[Matt. 24:14]; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16
^cMark 1:34; Luke 4:40; 7:21; Acts 10:38
¹Lit. every disease
²Lit. every sickness
4:24 ^aMark 1:32, 33; Luke 4:40
¹various
²demons
³epileptics
⁴were paralyzed
4:25 ^aMatt. 5:1; 8:1, 18; Mark 3:7, 8
¹The Ten Cities
5:1 ^aMatt. 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; Mark 3:13; Luke 6:17;

which were ³lunatick, and those that ⁴had the palsy; and he healed them.

25 ^aAnd there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from ¹Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

The Beatitudes

5 And seeing the multitudes, ^ahe went up into a mountain: and when he was ¹set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and ^ataught them, saying,

3 **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

9:28; John 6:3, 15 ¹seated 5:2 ^a[Matt. 7:29]; Mark 10:1; 12:35; John 8:2 5:3 ^aProv. 16:19; Is. 66:2; Luke 6:20–23

upon them and called them all to follow Him. The statement in verse 22 that they **immediately** responded to His call gives us a perfect picture of true obedience to the lordship of Christ.

4:23–25. The closing verses of the chapter summarize and survey the Galilean ministry of Jesus. This ministry concentrated on a presentation of the **gospel of the kingdom** to the Jews. Jesus as the Messiah had arrived to set up the long-awaited kingdom. Accompanying this announcement were miracles of healing. Going from city to city throughout Galilee caused His fame to spread quickly, so that **great multitudes of people** (v. 25) followed Him. This is no insignificant feat when one realizes that no prophet had arisen in Israel for over four hundred years. The silence of this period between the Testaments had been broken by the proclamation of the Good News of the kingdom!

5:1, 2. The opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount indicate that this message deals with the inner state of mind and heart that is the indispensable absolute of true Christian discipleship. It delineates the outward manifestations of character and

conduct of true believers and genuine disciples. Thus, the life of the believer, described by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, is a life of grace and glory, which comes from God alone. To make this quality of life the product of man's human efforts (as does the liberal) is the height of overestimation of man's ability and underestimation of his depravity. To relegate this entire message, Jesus' longest recorded sermon, to a Jewish-only life-style, as do some dispensationalists, is to rob the church of her greatest statement of true Christian living.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus states the spiritual character and quality of the kingdom He would establish, and the basic qualities of this kingdom are fulfilled in the church He would establish. Virtually every section of this message is repeated in substance elsewhere in the New Testament. Nothing here indicates that this message is to be limited in its application to the people of Israel only. Notice in the opening verse that **his disciples** had come to Jesus and **he ... taught them** the following message. **5:3. Blessed** means "happy." This is a basic description of the believers' inner condition as a result of



4:21. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, two of the 12 apostles, were fishermen in partnership with their father and also Simon Peter (Luke 5:10). Since James is normally mentioned first, he was probably older than his brother John. Peter, James, and John formed the inner circle among the disciples, who exclusively witnessed the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37), Christ's transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and the Gethsemane experience (Mark 14:33). But James and John are remembered with less distinction for their impulsive desire to destroy the non-receptive Samaritans with fire from heaven (Luke 9:54), and their desire to be first in Christ's kingdom (Mark 10:35–40). James is the first and only apostle whose martyrdom is recorded in Scripture. In A.D. 44 King Herod beheaded James and planned the same for Peter (Acts 12:1–3). John, by contrast, lived a very long life and was a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). Among the 12 apostles, only John and Peter are given individual recognition in the Book of Acts and in Paul's epistles. John wrote the fourth gospel, his three epistles, and the Revelation. John never mentions by name his brother James or himself, except in Revelation, and as the beloved disciple in the gospel. Hence, James is mentioned in Scripture only by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Acts included). (First Reference, Matt. 4:21; Primary References, Mark 9, 10; John 21.)

synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That thine ¹alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself ^ashall reward thee openly.

Teachings on Prayer

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the ¹hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that

6:4 ^a Luke 14:12–14
¹ charitable deed
6:5 ¹ pretenders

6:6 ^a 2 Kin. 4:33
¹ inner room
6:7 ^a Eccl. 5:2
^b 1 Kin. 18:26
6:8 ^a [Rom. 8:26, 27]
6:9 ^a Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; [John 16:24; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20]

they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, ^aenter into thy ¹closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, ^ause not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: ^bfor they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father ^aknoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this ^amanner therefore pray

Greek, “play actor”). Thus, Jesus warns against acting like the hypocrites, whose aim is to win human praise.

6:3. **Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth** means that one’s giving of finances to the work of the Lord should be done so freely and spontaneously that his right hand cannot keep up with his left hand.

6:4. The real key to success in this kind of giving is found in the phrase **thy Father which seeth in secret ... shall reward** you. Giving by faith, out of a cheerful heart, depends on our total confidence in the fact that God does indeed see us and knows our needs. These verses certainly do not condemn public giving, but rather they speak against giving out of the wrong attitude and for the wrong motive.

6:5, 6. Praying, like giving, is to be done to the Lord, not to man. Jesus said that people **love to pray standing in the synagogues**. Both a time and place for prayer were customary in the ancient Jewish synagogue (cf. Mark 11:25). Therefore, Jesus is not condemning the practice of public prayer, but rather the misuse of it. Because of the statement **enter into thy closet**, some have suggested that all public prayer is wrong. This would be contrary to the rest of New Testament statements about prayer, commandments and restrictions regarding prayer, and examples of prayer meetings (cf. Acts 12:12). The principle here is that the believer should not

make a show of his prayer nor of the answers he receives to prayer in such a way as to call unnecessary attention to himself.

6:7. Jesus warned that we **use not vain repetitions** (Gr. *battalogoō* denotes babbling or speaking without thinking). Such prayer was characteristic of the heathen. A good example of this is found in the ecstatic babblings of the false prophets in the Old Testament and in the prophets of Baal who confronted Elijah on Mount Carmel (cf. 1 Kin. 18:26–29).

6:8. Prayer is not man’s attempt to change the will of God. Prayer is not conquering God’s reluctance to answer, but laying hold of His willingness to help. Prayer in the life of the true believer is an act of total confidence and assurance in the plan and purpose of God. The following sample prayer is given to the disciples as an example of a suitable prayer. This prayer, often called the “Lord’s Prayer,” is in reality a disciple’s prayer. In no way does the prayer itself embody all of Christ’s teaching about prayer; and having just warned against vain repetition, He did not intend for this particular prayer to be merely recited with empty meaninglessness.

6:9. The beginning phrase, **Our Father**, is completely uncommon to the prayers of the Old Testament. The two major elements of the prayer are adoration and petition. **Hallowed be thy name** addresses the attention of the prayer toward God and reverence for His name and His person. Hal-



GOD THE FATHER

6:9. The Father is the first person of the Trinity. With only one exception (John 17:3), Jesus always spoke of God as the Father. The Scriptures identify the fatherhood of God in five areas: He is the Father of Creation (James 1:17), the Father of Israel (Jer. 31:9), the unique Father of Jesus Christ (3:17), a protective Father emphasizing His defense of the poor and oppressed (Ps. 68:5), and a redemptive Father when we become the children of God (John 1:13; Rom. 8:15). **Illustration:** Just as physical fathers provide many benefits, so our heavenly Father also provides a number of spiritual benefits. Christians may have fellowship with (1 John 1:3), access to (vv. 9, 32), guidance by (Ps. 119:9; 2 Tim. 3:17), protection by (John 10:29), and an inheritance from (Rom. 8:17) the Father. **Application:** Just because God is the Father of all, because He is the Father of Creation, does not mean that everyone will go to heaven. A person must be born of God (John 1:13) to become a son of God (John 1:12). Then God becomes a redemptive Father. (First Reference, John 1:14; Primary Reference, Matt. 6:9; cf. Gen. 15:18.)

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth.

4 And Jesus ^aknowing their thoughts said, *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?*

5 For ¹whether is easier, to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?*

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the ¹sick of the palsy,) *Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

8 But when the multitudes saw it, they ^amarvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Matthew Follows Jesus

9 ^aAnd as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the ¹receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, *Follow me.* And he arose, and followed him.

9:4 ^a Ps. 139:2; Matt. 12:25; Mark 12:15; Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 11:17
9:5 ¹ which
9:6 ¹ paralytic
9:8 ^a Matt. 8:27; John 7:15
9:9 ^a Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27
¹ tax office

9:10 ^a Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29
¹ at the table
² tax collectors
9:11 ^a Matt. 11:19; Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30; 15:2
^b [Gal. 2:15]
¹ tax collectors
9:12 ¹ are well
9:13 ^a Hos. 6:6; [Mic. 6:6–8]; Matt. 12:7
^b Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; 1 Tim. 1:15
9:14 ^a Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33–35; 18:12
¹ often
9:15 ^a John 3:29
^b Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23
¹ friends of the bridegroom

10 ^aAnd it came to pass, as Jesus sat ¹at meat in the house, behold, many ²publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with ^apublicans¹ and ^bsinners?

12 But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, *They that ¹be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, ^aI will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, ^bbut sinners to repentance.

Questions About Fasting

14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, ^aWhy do we and the Pharisees fast ¹oft, but thy disciples fast not?

15 And Jesus said unto them, *Can ^athe ¹children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and ^bthen shall they fast.*

9:9–12. **The receipt of custom** refers to the toll-booth in the street where tax collectors sat to receive various taxes. **In the house** means at home. We know from the other synoptic writers that this house was Matthew's. See Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29, where the expression is phrased "in his house."

9:13–15. **The righteous:** The word is used here in an ironic sense, meaning self-righteous. Ultimately, as the Scripture tells us, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). **The children of the bridechamber** refers to the wedding guests. **As long as the bridegroom is with them,** that is, while the



9:9. Matthew, also called Levi, an apostle, was by occupation a tax collector. He seems to have been an agent for Herod Antipas, stationed at Capernaum to collect revenue on goods passing between Damascus and the Mediterranean ports. Tax collectors ("publicans") were despised by the Jews and regarded as the lowest of sinners. They were perceived as extortionists and even as traitors since they served Rome. When Jesus called him, he immediately obeyed. From early times the church has regarded Matthew as the author of the first gospel. Mark and Luke identify him by the name Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). (First Reference, Matt. 9:9; Primary Reference, Matt. 10:3.)



The Calling of St. Matthew by James Tissot

The Calling of St. Matthew, illustration for 'The Life of Christ', c. 1886–94, Tissot, James Jacques Joseph/ Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA/Bridgeman Images

unto a man *that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure ^athings new and old.*

Without Honour in His Own Country

53 And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 ^aAnd when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works?

55 ^aIs not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and ^bhis brethren, ^cJames, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?

57 And they ^awere offended ¹in him.

13:52 ^a Song 7:13
13:54 ^a Ps. 22:22;
Matt. 2:23;
Mark 6:1; Luke
4:16; John 7:15
13:55 ^a Is. 49:7;
Mark 6:3; [Luke
3:23]; John 6:42
^b Matt. 12:46
^c Mark 15:40
13:57 ^a Matt.
11:6; Mark 6:3, 4
¹ at

^b Luke 4:24;
John 4:44
² except
13:58 ^a Mark 6:5;
6; John 5:44,
46, 47
14:1 ^a Mark
6:14–29; Luke
9:7–9
14:2 ¹ these
powers are at
work
14:3 ^a Matt. 4:12;
Mark 6:17; Luke
3:19, 20
14:4 ^a Lev. 18:16;
20:21
14:5 ^a Matt.
21:26; Luke
20:6

But Jesus said unto them, ^bA prophet is not without honour, ²save in his own country, and in his own house.

58 And ^ahe did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 At that time ^aHerod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,

2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore ¹mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

3 ^aFor Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

4 For John said unto him, ^aIt is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, ^abecause they counted him as a prophet.

cast away to be burned **of fire** (in hell). The imagery is similar to the parable of the tares (vv. 24–30).

13:53–58. Jesus then gave His disciples a firsthand opportunity to witness the truth of these parables in action by teaching at the **synagogue** in His hometown (Nazareth, not Capernaum). The people were **astonished**, that is, greatly amazed or astounded. **Carpenter's son** refers to the family trade of Joseph, Jesus' legal guardian and earthly "father," being the husband of Mary. The word *carpenter* (Gr. *tektōn*) may refer to either a carpenter or a stonemason. The indication is that Jesus had learned His family's trade. There is no valid reason for understanding **brethren** and **sisters** in any sense but the normal one. They are Jesus' half brothers and half sisters, the children naturally generated by Joseph and Mary after Jesus' virgin birth. Two of them, James and Judas (Jude), wrote New Testament epistles and played a prominent role in the early church.

14:1, 2. The occasion of John's death signaled a time for Jesus to retreat, lest He provoke an early death, before the appointed time. **Herod the tetrarch** is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, the ruler of Galilee and Perea. His ignorance of Jesus prior to this time is probably due to his self-indulgent, luxurious life-style that had little contact with religious figures. His guilty conscience over John's death caused him to think Jesus was John the Baptist **risen from the dead**.

14:3–8. John had been arrested because he challenged the legitimacy of Herod's divorce and incestuous remarriage. **Herodias** was the daughter of Aristobulus, a half brother of Antipas. She had been married to her uncle, Herod **Philip**, and had borne him a daughter, Salome. However, she divorced her husband and married Antipas, who was already married. Herodias was a guilty and vindictive woman who wanted John dead, and she devised a



KINGDOM PARABLES

13:52. In the Gospel of Matthew, the kingdom of heaven receives special treatment. The terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God* are often used interchangeably to refer to the whole body of believers. The seven parables in Matthew 13 prophetically describe the course of this age. First, there will come a period of sowing the gospel throughout the world (vv. 1–23). Second there will occur a counter-sowing by Satan (vv. 24–30, 36–43). Third, there will be an outward growth of Christendom, but not necessarily of the true church. It will grow from insignificant beginnings to exert worldwide influence (vv. 31, 32). The fourth parable of leaven (principle of corruption) contrasts true doctrine with the false doctrine sown by a corrupt church in an unconverted world (vv. 33–35). The fifth parable pictures Christ seeking the lost in all the world (v. 44), to gather a special people to Himself. The sixth parable of the lost pearl represents Christ finding the church (vv. 45, 46). The last parable tells how God will end the age in judgment (vv. 47–51). **Illustration:** Some believe that the seven parables, like the seven churches (Rev. 2, 3), suggest a development of the gospel in this age. **Application:** Even though the parables show growth of the church, each Christian should plant the seed of the gospel in the hearts of others. (First Reference, Ps. 126:5, 6; Primary Reference, Matt. 13:1–52; cf. Ezek. 37:11–14.)

6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.

7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.

9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Five Thousand Fed

13 When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

14:6¹ celebrated
14:8¹ prompted
by
² on a platter
14:9¹ at the
table
14:11¹ on a
platter
14:13^a Matt.
10:23; 12:15;
Mark 6:32–44;
Luke 9:10–17;
John 6:1, 2
¹ by himself

14:14^a Matt.
9:36; Mark 6:34
14:15^a Mark
6:35; Luke 9:12
¹ hour is
already late
14:19^a 1 Sam.
9:13; Matt.
15:36; 26:26;
Mark 6:41; 8:7;
14:22; Luke
24:30; Acts
27:35; [Rom.
14:6]

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

16 But Jesus said unto them, **They need not depart; give ye them to eat.**

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

18 He said, **Bring them hither to me.**

19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

plan to get rid of him. At the king's birthday party, her daughter performed a provocatively enticing dance which so appealed to the drunken Herod that he **promised with an oath** she could have whatever she wanted. She asked for **John Baptist's head in a charger** (a table platter).

14:13–19. The feeding of the five thousand is the Lord's only miracle recorded in each of the four Gospels (Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13). According to John, Andrew, who had brought Peter to Jesus, now brought a boy's lunch consisting merely of **five loaves, and two fishes** (small baked rolls and dried fish, an adequate lunch for a boy, but hardly a crumb for the immense crowd). The sim-

licity of the story and its inclusion by all four evangelists should eliminate any doubt of its historical accuracy.

14:20, 21. Not only is the miracle itself amazing but its result was equally stunning. **Twelve baskets full** of fragments remained over and above what was eaten. The baskets (Gr. *kophinoi*) were small, carried on the arm, and used as a satchel. These may have belonged to the disciples, who received a basket full of blessing as a result of their labor to feed others. Collection of the fragments emphasized the adequacy and immensity of Christ's provision. Besides the **five thousand men** a large uncounted group of women and children were fed.



14:1. Herod Antipas, identified as Herod the tetrarch in the Gospels, was the son of Herod the Great and brother of Archelaus (2:22). Of the Herods, Antipas figures most prominently in the Gospels since he ruled over the regions where both John the Baptist and Jesus conducted most of their ministries—Perea and Galilee. Antipas is remembered primarily for his imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist. Antipas had married his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. Though Antipas respected and feared John, nevertheless he had John beheaded as the result of a plot by Herodias. The Gospels mention three occasions involving Jesus and Antipas. The first relates Antipas's fear when he learned of Jesus' ministry. He feared that John whom he had beheaded was resurrected (14:2). The second (Luke 13:31–33) relates the fear of others that Antipas would kill Jesus as He passed through Perea on His final trip to Jerusalem. On the third occasion Antipas finally meets Jesus, when He was sent from Pilate to be examined (Luke 23:6–12). After a long reign of 43 years (4 B.C.–A.D. 39) Antipas was deposed by Rome and exiled. (First Reference, Matt. 14:1; Primary Reference, Matt. 14.)

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and ^awhatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be

16:19 ^a Matt. 18:18; John 20:23

bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

prevail should be understood as meaning “shall not stand against.” The imagery would then picture the church as being on the offensive against the gates of hell. Here hell (Gr. *haidēs*) probably represents the kingdom of Satan, not just death and the grave. While Jesus’ resurrection certainly will overcome the sting of death, it will also enable His church to aggressively and offensively attack the gates of hell

(cf. usage as Satan’s kingdom in Job 38:17; Is. 38:10; Ps. 107:18) by snatching out victims from darkness into His glorious kingdom of light. The church is on the offensive here and hell is on the defensive.

16:19, 20. The Lord promises to Peter and the other apostles **the keys of the kingdom**. This means that Peter will have the right to enter the kingdom himself, and preaching the gospel would be the means



16:13. Caesarea Philippi was a Greek town in the northernmost regions of Israel (120 miles north of Jerusalem and 50 miles southwest of Damascus) situated in a beautiful location at the foot of Mount Hermon, and the headwaters of the Jordan River. It had been called Panias, honoring the Greek god Pan. Herod the Great built a marble temple there to Caesar Augustus. Herod’s son, Philip the tetrarch, further adorned the city and renamed it in honor of Caesar. To distinguish it from the city on the coast he identified it as “of Philip,” hence, Caesarea Philippi. This city is mentioned only twice in the New Testament, both passages relating Peter’s great confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:13–16; Mark 8:27–29). The transfiguration of Christ probably took place on the nearby slopes of Mount Hermon (Matt. 17:1–13). The Greek name is preserved in the present Syrian town of nine thousand, named Baniyas.



The headwaters of the Jordan at Caesarea Philippi

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SON OF GOD

16:16. When the expression *Son of God* is used concerning Christ, it delineates the relationship between the first two members of the Trinity. The Hebrew expression *Son of* implies one with the same nature as the father. In this sense there is no real difference between “Son of God” and “God the Son.” Both emphasize the deity of Christ and His unique relationship with the Father. **Illustration:** When Jesus identified God as His Father, implying that He was “the Son of God,” the Jews understood this as a claim to deity (John 5:18). When Peter identified Jesus as “the Son of the living God” (v. 16), it was the result of spiritual insight (v. 17). **Application:** As we become increasingly intimate with Christ, we should also become increasingly aware that Jesus is the Son of God. (First Reference, Ps. 2:7; Primary Reference, Matt. 16:16; cf. John 3:16.)



CHURCH

16:18. The word *church* is a translation of *ekklesia*, meaning “called out” or “assembly.” In the New Testament it usually refers to a local group of Christians. In this sense a church is an assembly of baptized believers under the discipline of the Word of God. They are organized to carry out the Great Commission, the administration of New Testament ordinances, and the exercise of spiritual gifts. When a group of Christians today follows this example, it is a church in the biblical sense of the word. In the New Testament, Christians assembled as churches for fellowship, instruction, and worship, and to carry out the Great Commission. **Illustration:** Perhaps the best-known New Testament churches were at Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus, and the other six cities mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. **Application:** Every Christian should follow the example of New Testament believers by identifying with a local church, and getting involved in its ministry. (First Reference, Matt. 16:18; Primary Reference, Matt. 16:18; cf. Acts 2:42.)