

THE NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW

JESUS THE KING IN DAVID'S LINE

Since the last Old Testament prophet, Malachi (c. 440 BC), God had said nothing to his people. But suddenly, he speaks again—through Jesus; and Matthew's "Gospel" (Greek for "good news") is the first of four books about his life and message. While each Gospel has its own purpose, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are similarly constructed and are called the "Synoptic" (Greek for "seen together") Gospels.

Although anonymous, early tradition ascribes this Gospel to Matthew, the tax collector, one of the Twelve (Matt 9:9). Matthew is the most Jewish gospel, with many Old Testament references, and was probably written in the late 50s or early 60s AD.

The Anticipated King

Matthew claims that Jesus is Israel's long-awaited king and Messiah. To prepare us for these claims, he begins with Jesus' genealogy (1:1-17), showing his link to David, Israel's greatest king, and Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. He is (1:18) "Jesus the Messiah" (or Jesus Christ—Christ is the Greek translation of "Messiah"), the long-expected deliverer. Matthew shows how this Messiah is, against all Jewish expectation, both God and man.

He records the miraculous way that Jesus—"Immanuel, God with us"—came into this world (1:18-25) and how his birth was acknowledged even by Gentiles (2:1-12). But Jesus was also fully human: fleeing a brutal persecution that fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (vv. 13-18), growing up like all of us (vv. 19-23), being baptized by John (3:13-17), and experiencing temptation (4:1-11). But with the preparations over, his ministry could begin (4:12-17). He called his first disciples (vv. 18-22) and began teaching and healing (vv. 12-25).

The New Moses

Matthew's gospel is well-organized, as we might expect from a former tax collector. He builds his story of Jesus around five long teaching blocks, all concluding with "when Jesus had finished" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1) and interspersed with smaller blocks of teaching and miracles. This organization into five blocks was probably meant to reflect the five books of God's law and so to present Jesus to his Jewish readership as "the new Moses". The five blocks of teaching are:

1. The Sermon on the Mount (chap. 5-7)
2. The Commission of the Twelve (10:5-42)
3. Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-52)
4. The Messiah's Community (chap. 18)
5. The Olivet Discourse (chap. 24-25)

Miracles and Teaching

The first block of teaching, The Sermon on the Mount (chap. 5-7), explained what God's Kingdom is like. It turns this world's values upside down (5:2-12), especially those of the religious elite. It calls us to love enemies (5:43-44), to live by "the golden rule" (7:12), and to trust God as Father (6:9; see article at chap. 6). He taught us how to pray to the Father (6:5-14) and trust him (6:19-34).

In chapters 8-9 we find many kinds of miracles, showing Jesus' power (8:27), authority (9:6) and compassion (9:36). This section includes the call of Matthew himself (9:9-13) and Jesus sending out his disciples to preach and heal (chap. 10).

All of this led to increasing tensions with the religious leaders (e.g., 12:1-50; 15:1-20; 16:1-12) and rejection by his home town (13:53-58).

Chapter 13 groups seven parables (see chart at chap. 13) that teach about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew used "Kingdom of Heaven" instead of "Kingdom of God" because of Jewish sensibilities about using God's name). More Kingdom parables are found in chapters 18 and 20.

Two significant miracles—feeding 5,000 (14:13-21) and walking on water (14:22-33)—lead into two key events: Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16) and Jesus' Transfiguration (17:1-13).

The Final Week

Matthew spends a substantial part of his Gospel (chap. 21 onwards) focusing on the final week of Jesus' life. This in itself shows how important he believed this was.

He begins with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and cleansing of the Temple (21:1-17). Jesus teaches right to the end, especially about the End Times (chap. 24-25), warning that false messiahs and false prophets will come (24:24) and providing numerous "signs of the times"—though the main emphasis is not on signs but on living in constant readiness for his return, like faithful stewards who know they will be held accountable (see article at chap. 25).

Chapters 26-27 cover Jesus' final hours: the last supper, prayer in Gethsemane, betrayal, Peter's denial, his trials, crucifixion and burial. Through all of this, he is faithfully submitting to his Father's will (26:39). The disciples' sadness turns to great joy when he rises from the dead (28:1-10)—a truth opposed from the very beginning (vv. 11-15).

The Gospel climaxes with the risen Lord Jesus sending his followers into the world to preach his message and make disciples ("the Great Commission")—a core aspect of the *church's mission* (see article at chap. 28).

MATTHEW

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Matt 1:1-17

Matthew's "record of ancestors" (Matt 1:1) is in effect a survey of the history of the people of God from its beginning with Abraham, the ancestor of Israel, to the coming of the Messiah, "a descendant of David" (v. 1). Matthew emphasizes the completeness of this history by setting it out in three balancing periods of fourteen generations each, and the fact that it is only with difficulty that the actual history can be made to fit into this pattern indicates that for the author this is not so much a statistical observation as a theological reflection on the working out of God's purpose for his people. It shows that the preparation is now complete, and that the stage is set for the dawning of the time of fulfillment in the coming of the promised Messiah.

This record holds many puzzles, but its main aim is clear: to locate Jesus within the story of God's people and to do it with a special focus on the Davidic monarchy as the proper context for a theological understanding of the role of the person whom Matthew, more than the other Gospel writers, will delight to refer to not only as "Messiah" but also more specifically as "Son of David."

TOPICAL TIES

Who Is Jesus? Matt 16

The "I Am" Sayings of Jesus John 10

CROSS-REFERENCES

1:5 ▶ Rahab and Spiritual Growth Josh 2
1:1-16 ▶ Why Does the Bible Have so Many Genealogies? 1 Chr 1
1:1-17 ▶ The Connection between Judah and Jesus Gen 49:8-12

The Ancestors of Jesus the Messiah

1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham*:

- 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac.
Isaac was the father of Jacob.
Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.
- 3 Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah (whose mother was Tamar).
Perez was the father of Hezron.
Hezron was the father of Ram.*
- 4 Ram was the father of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the father of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the father of Salmon.
- 5 Salmon was the father of Boaz (whose mother was Rahab).
Boaz was the father of Obed (whose mother was Ruth).
Obed was the father of Jesse.
- 6 Jesse was the father of King David.
David was the father of Solomon (whose mother was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah).
- 7 Solomon was the father of Rehoboam.
Rehoboam was the father of Abijah.
Abijah was the father of Asa.*
- 8 Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat.
Jehoshaphat was the father of Jehoram.*
Jehoram was the father* of Uzziah.
- 9 Uzziah was the father of Jotham.
Jotham was the father of Ahaz.
Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah.
- 10 Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh.
Manasseh was the father of Amon.*
Amon was the father of Josiah.
- 11 Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin* and his brothers (born at the time of the exile to Babylon).
- 12 After the Babylonian exile:
Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.
- 13 Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud.
Abiud was the father of Eliakim.
Eliakim was the father of Azor.
- 14 Azor was the father of Zadok.
Zadok was the father of Akim.
Akim was the father of Eliud.
- 15 Eliud was the father of Eleazar.
Eleazar was the father of Matthan.
Matthan was the father of Jacob.
- 16 Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary.
Mary gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

17 All those listed above include fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Babylonian exile, and fourteen from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah.

The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while

1:1 Greek *Jesus the Messiah, Son of David and son of Abraham*. 1:3 Greek *Aram*, a variant spelling of Ram; also in 1:4. See 1 Chr 2:9-10.

1:7 Greek *Asaph*, a variant spelling of Asa; also in 1:8. See 1 Chr 3:10. 1:8a Greek *Joram*, a variant spelling of Jehoram; also in 1:8b.

See 1 Kgs 22:50 and note at 1 Chr 3:11. 1:8b Or *ancestor*; also in 1:11. 1:10 Greek *Amos*, a variant spelling of Amon; also in 1:10b.

See 1 Chr 3:14. 1:11 Greek *Jeconiah*, a variant spelling of Jehoiachin; also in 1:12. See 2 Kgs 24:6 and note at 1 Chr 3:16.

WOMEN IN THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

These five women prove that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy, and everyone can become part of his family and be used by him.

While hardly gripping for us today, Matthew's introduction—a long genealogy—was hugely important for his original Jewish-background readers. Jews used genealogies to determine inheritance, legitimacy, and royal or priestly pedigree; so Matthew uses this to prepare for his presentation of Jesus the Messiah and his claim to David's throne. Luke, writing for Gentiles, leaves his genealogy till later (chap. 3), tracing Jesus' link all the way back to Adam, showing his identification with the whole human race.

The fact that Matthew included women is hugely significant, since descent was usually traced through men, like in Luke's genealogy. Matthew adds five women—Tamar (v. 3), Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), Bathsheba (v. 6) and Mary (v. 16)—quite an incredible mixture of characters.

Tamar was a Canaanite who disguised herself as a prostitute to trick her father-in-law Judah (the tribe from which Jesus came) into fathering a child (Gen 38). She became pregnant with twins, one of whom was Perez who was in the lineage of Jesus.

Rahab was also a Canaanite, and a prostitute. She hid the Jewish spies because she had heard of what God was doing for Israel (Josh 2), and her faith saved her when Jericho was destroyed (Heb 11:31). She was the mother of Boaz who married *Ruth*, the Moabitess (Ruth 4:13), whose loyalty to her mother-in-law provided a powerful opportunity for redemption. Their son Obed was the grandfather of King David.

Bathsheba—discreetly described as the woman who “had been Uriah's wife”, to avoid recalling David's adultery—was the mother of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24), one of Israel's greatest and wisest kings.

Mary, of course, was the mother of Jesus, a woman who “found favor with God” (Luke 1:30) and who experienced the miracle of the virgin birth, thereby bringing God's Son into the world to be our Savior.

In a world that often tried to disguise unhelpful pedigree, Matthew was showing that Jesus came for everyone. He is a Savior for all, as we see in his ministry where he became known as “a friend of sinners” (Luke 11:19) and where women were at the core of his group of followers (Luke 8:1-2). No one is beyond the reach of God's mercy, and everyone can become part of his family and be used by him.

she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement* quietly.

²⁰As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,* for he will save his people from their sins.”

²²All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!

She will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel,*
which means ‘God is with us.’”

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Visitors from the East

2 Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men* from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose,* and we have come to worship him.”

³King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. ⁴He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?”

⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote:

⁶ ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah,
are not least among the ruling cities* of Judah,
for a ruler will come from you
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. ⁸Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!”

⁹After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! ¹¹They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up! Flee to Egypt with the child and his mother,” the angel said. “Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

1:19 Greek *to divorce her*. **1:21** Jesus means “The Lord saves.” **1:23** Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10 (Greek version). **2:1** Or *royal astrologers*; Greek reads *magi*; also in 2:7, 16. **2:2** Or *star in the east*. **2:6a** Greek *the rulers*. **2:6b** Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2.

SHOWING COMPASSION TO REFUGEES Matt 2:12-15

Today there are millions of people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Some remain displaced in their own countries while others become refugees who are forced to leave their homelands.

Forced displacement is a theme in the stories of many Bible characters. The book of Ruth tells the story of the family of Elimelech from Bethlehem who left home for Moab because of famine. Daniel was a young Jew removed from his home to live in Babylon.

Jesus too became a refugee. The issue for his family was the murderous intent of Herod, whose hatred and hard-heartedness were demonstrated in his brutal slaughter of Bethlehem’s infant sons. The drama of the family’s flight included an angelic warning, an escape by night, and the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy (Matt 2:12-15). God was in control, but the threat was real and we can well imagine the fear experienced by Joseph and Mary.

As we reflect on Jesus’ refugee experience, Christians should recognize the similar difficulties refugees face today. God calls his people to show compassion on the foreigners among us (Lev 19:33-34; Matt 25:35; Heb 13:2).

TOPICAL TIES

Imitating Jesus’ Compassion Matt 9:36
The Supremacy of Love 1 Cor 13

CROSS-REFERENCES

1:18-25 ▶ Joseph & Mary and Spiritual Growth Luke 2;
The Virgin Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-7
1:21 ▶ The Work of Jesus Rom 3
2:1-18 ▶ The Significance of Bethlehem Mic 5:2

14That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, 15and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."*

16Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men's report of the star's first appearance. 17Herod's brutal action fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

18 "A cry was heard in Ramah—
weeping and great mourning.
Rachel weeps for her children,
refusing to be comforted,
for they are dead."*

The Return to Nazareth

19When Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt. 20"Get up!" the angel said. "Take the child and his mother back to the land of Israel, because those who were trying to kill the child are dead."

21So Joseph got up and returned to the land of Israel with Jesus and his mother. 22But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there. Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee. 23So the family went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what the prophets had said: "He will be called a Nazarene."

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, 2"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."* 3The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,

"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!
Clear the road for him!'"*

4John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. 5People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. 6And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

7But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize,* he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? 8Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. 9Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. 10Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

11"I baptize with* water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* 12He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

13Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. 14But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

15But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.*" So John agreed to baptize him.

2:15 Hos 11:1. 2:18 Jer 31:15. 3:2 Or *has come, or is coming soon*. 3:3 Isa 40:3 (Greek version). 3:7 Or *coming to be baptized*. 3:11a Or *in*. 3:11b Or *in the Holy Spirit and in fire*. 3:15 Or *for we must fulfill all righteousness*.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD APPEARS

Matt 3:1-17

John the Baptist used two important metaphors to call attention to the urgency of the hour (Matt 3:2). He said, "the ax of God's judgment is poised" and "He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork" (Luke 3:9, 17).

John's images conjure up the vision of a woodsman who goes into the forest and begins to chip away with his ax at a huge tree. As his work progresses, the ax moves to the inner core of the tree, and the giant oak totters on one slender thread of wood. One more blow brings the tree crashing to the ground. This is the moment of breakthrough. John was declaring that the kingdom is about to come crashing through.

The image of the farmer was drawn from the agricultural environment of John's day. John was talking about the tool farmers used to separate the wheat from the chaff. He had already been to the toolshed to fetch his winnowing fork. The moment had come for the task of separation. John speaks to the moment of history, the crisis moment when people will be judged whether they are for the kingdom of God or against it. The King has arrived, and his arrival brings crisis to mankind.

TOPICAL TIES

The Kingdom of God Mark 10

CROSS-REFERENCES

2:13-23 ▶ Dreams and Visions Dan 7
3:2-15 ▶ John the Baptist and Spiritual Growth Mark 6
3:6-11 ▶ The Meaning of Christian Baptism Acts 2:41
3:8 ▶ Understanding Repentance Ezra 9

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Matt 4:1-11

The key to understanding this story is in Jesus' three scriptural quotations. All come from Deuteronomy 6-8, when Moses addresses the Israelites before their entry into Canaan in which he reminds them of their forty years of wilderness experiences. It has been a time of preparation and proving God's faithfulness. He has deliberately put them through deprivation as an educative process. They have been learning or should have been learning what it means to live in trusting obedience to God: "Just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good" (Deut 8:5). They should have learned not to depend on bread alone but rather on God's Word (Deut 8:3), not to put God to the test (Deut 6:16), and to make God the exclusive object of their worship and obedience (Deut 6:13).

Now another "Son of God" is in the wilderness, this time for forty days rather than forty years, as a preparation for entering his divine calling. In the wilderness he faces those same tests, and he has learned the lessons which Israel had imperfectly grasped. His Father is testing him in the school of deprivation, and his triumphant rebuttal of the devil's suggestions will ensure that the filial bond can survive in spite of the conflict that lies ahead.

TOPICAL TIES

Satan As Tempter Gen 3:4-5
How to Read and Understand the Bible Properly Ps 119
Growing Closer to God through His Word Ps 119:55-68
Resisting Temptation 1 Cor 10

CROSS-REFERENCES

4:18-20 ▶ The Call of God Isa 6:8;
Responding Properly to the Good News Mark 1:15;
The Call to Discipleship Luke 14;
Witnessing to Unbelievers Acts 13:32;
Sharing the Good News Rom 10:15

¹⁶After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened* and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

The Temptation of Jesus

⁴Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. ²For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

³During that time the devil* came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People do not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, ⁶and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say,

'He will order his angels to protect you.
And they will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'"

⁷Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'"

⁸Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹"I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

¹⁰"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say,

'You must worship the LORD your God
and serve only him.'"

¹¹Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

The Ministry of Jesus Begins

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ¹³He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵"In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,
beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness

have seen a great light.
And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,
a light has shined.'"

¹⁷From then on Jesus began to preach, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."*

The First Disciples

¹⁸One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ²⁰And they left their nets at once and followed him.

²¹A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, repairing their nets. And he called them to come, too. ²²They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Crowds Follow Jesus

²³Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And

3:16 Some manuscripts read *opened to him*. 4:3 Greek *the tempter*. 4:4 Deut 8:3. 4:6 Ps 91:11-12. 4:7 Deut 6:16. 4:10 Deut 6:13. 4:15-16 Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version). 4:17 Or *has come, or is coming soon*.

he healed every kind of disease and illness. ²⁴News about him spread as far as Syria, and people soon began bringing to him all who were sick. And whatever their sickness or disease, or if they were demon possessed or epileptic or paralyzed—he healed them all. ²⁵Large crowds followed him wherever he went—people from Galilee, the Ten Towns,* Jerusalem, from all over Judea, and from east of the Jordan River.

The Sermon on the Mount

5 One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ²and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

- ³ “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,*
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
- ⁴ God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.
- ⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,*
for they will be satisfied.
- ⁷ God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- ⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.
- ⁹ God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.
- ¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹²Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Teaching about Salt and Light

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But

4:25 Greek *Decapolis*. **5:3** Greek *poor in spirit*. **5:6** Or *for righteousness*.

TRUE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER Matt 5:1-12

Jesus describes happy and fortunate people. The opening section (Matt 5:3-10) of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount pronounces blessings on several categories of people:

- The “poor” (v. 3) are those who realize their own inadequacy and rely on God’s grace. Although they may lack material wealth, they are inwardly rich.
- The mourners (v. 4) are those who refuse to close their eyes to human sorrow; they sympathize with the tragedy of life.
- The “humble” (v. 5) are the opposite of self-assertive people. Their reward—to inherit the earth—has been announced already in Psalm 37:11, to which Jesus refers.
- Those who “hunger and thirst for justice” (Matt 5:6) are consumed with the desire to see God’s will done—in themselves and among humanity at large.
- The “merciful” (v. 7) are “those whose hearts are pure” (v. 8). They are “those who work for peace,” (v. 9) reflecting God’s character of mercy, purity, and peace. In a world where the accepted standards are the opposite of these values, the people Jesus describes are not likely to have an easy time. In fact, they are almost sure to be “persecuted for doing right” (v. 10). But, says Jesus, such persecution is no ground for complaint, but rather for exultation (vv. 11-12).

TOPICAL TIES

Be Different Deut 6:1-15; Practicing Mercy Mic 6:8; Humbling Yourself before God Phil 2:5-8; Facing Up to Persecution Rev 6:9-10

BEING SALT AND LIGHT IN THE WORLD

Matt 5:13-16

In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus provides a series of images which explain why it is important that disciples should both be different and be seen to be different. Salt is one of the essentials for human life; disciples are no less essential to the well-being of "the earth," human life in general. The two most significant uses of salt in the ancient world were for flavoring and for the preservation of food; either or both of those uses would provide an appropriate sense here: the disciples are to provide flavor to the world they live in (perhaps with the thought of salt as wisdom, as in Colossians 4:5-6), and/or they are to help to prevent its corruption. The two ideas are not incompatible; disciples are to make the world a better place. "The earth" (like "the world," Matt 5:14) represents the sphere of their influence.

Where there is light, people can find their way and everything is clear; where there is darkness, they stumble and are lost. Here the light Jesus brings is provided also by his disciples, who will soon be commissioned to share in his ministry of proclamation and deliverance. The world needs that light, and it is through the disciples that it must be visible (Phil 2:15).

TOPICAL TIES

Be Different Deut 6:1-15
The People of God Deut 7
Exercising Godly Influence in Our Society
Jer 29:4-14
The Call to Discipleship Luke 14
Making the Most of Life's Opportunities
Col 4:5

CROSS-REFERENCES

5:28-30 ▶ Dealing with Lust Job 31:1
5:29-30 ▶ Barriers to Spiritual Growth
1 Tim 6

anyone who obeys God's laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20^aBut I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Teaching about Anger

21^a"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.'"^a 22But I say, if you are even angry with someone,^a you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot,^a you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone,^a you are in danger of the fires of hell.^a

23^a"So if you are presenting a sacrifice^a at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, 24leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

25^a"When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26And if that happens, you surely won't be free again until you have paid the last penny.^a

Teaching about Adultery

27^a"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.'^a 28But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29So if your eye—even your good eye^a—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30And if your hand—even your stronger hand^a—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Teaching about Divorce

31^a"You have heard the law that says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.'^a 32But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

Teaching about Vows

33^a"You have also heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.'^a 34But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, 'By heaven!' because heaven is God's throne. 35And do not say, 'By the earth!' because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, 'By Jerusalem!' for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. 36Do not even say, 'By my head!' for you can't turn one hair white or black. 37Just say a simple, 'Yes, I will,' or 'No, I won't.' Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

38^a"You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'^a 39But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile,^a carry it two miles. 42Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

43^a"You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor'^a and hate your enemy. 44But I say, love your enemies!^a Pray for those who persecute you! 45In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father

5:21 Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17. 5:22a Some manuscripts add *without cause*. 5:22b Greek uses an Aramaic term of contempt: *If you say to your brother, 'Raca.'* 5:22c Greek *if you say, 'You fool.'* 5:22d Greek *Gehenna*; also in 5:29, 30. 5:23 Greek *gift*; also in 5:24. 5:26 Greek *the last kodrantes* [i.e., quadrans]. 5:27 Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18. 5:29 Greek *your right eye*. 5:30 Greek *your right hand*. 5:31 Deut 24:1. 5:33 Num 30:2. 5:38 Greek *the law that says: 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'* Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21. 5:41 Greek *million* [4,854 feet or 1,478 meters]. 5:43 Lev 19:18. 5:44 Some manuscripts add *Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you*. Compare Luke 6:27-28.

in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷If you are kind only to your friends,* how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

6 “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ²When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
 may your name be kept holy.
¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.
 May your will be done on earth,
 as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today the food we need,*
¹² and forgive us our sins,
 as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
¹³ And don’t let us yield to temptation,*
 but rescue us from the evil one.*

¹⁴“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷But when you fast, comb your hair* and wash your face. ¹⁸Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

5:47 Greek your brothers. **6:11** Or Give us today our food for the day; or Give us today our food for tomorrow. **6:13a** Or And keep us from being tested. **6:13b** Or from evil. Some manuscripts add For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. **6:17** Greek anoint your head.

LOVING OUR ENEMIES Matt 5:43-44

In teaching his disciples to love their enemies, Jesus is challenging what appears to have become a popular distortion of the law of Moses, which nowhere commands people to hate their enemies. From the starting point that as long as you loved your neighbor you were keeping the law, it was easy to move on to the idea that there was no specific Mosaic requirement to “love your enemy” (although you were to rescue his wandering donkey, if you found it), and to conclude that hating one’s enemy was no breach of the law. How easy it is for us to rationalize our prejudices or put strict legal limits on what God might ask of us!

Jesus cuts through this thinking, teaching his followers that their love must extend even to their enemies. What’s more, they are to pray for those who persecute them.

To love like this both imitates our heavenly Father and makes us different from everyone else. Our heavenly Father’s kindness is all-encompassing. Simply to love those people who love us, or to be kind to our friends, is unremarkable: who wouldn’t do that? Christian love stands out because it takes us far outside our comfort zones. Jesus calls his followers to be more loving than anyone else.

TOPICAL TIES

Treating Others with Impartiality Exod 23:1-9

The Folly of Revenge Prov 25:21-22

Imitating Jesus’ Compassion Matt 9:36

CROSS-REFERENCES

5:33-37 ▶ Being People of Integrity Dan 6

5:38-42 ▶ Responding to Insults Prov 12:16

6:1-33 ▶ The Privilege of Adoption Gal 4:4-28

6:6 ▶ The Benefits of Solitude Dan 10:8

6:14-15 ▶ Being the Forgiving People of God Matt 18

6:16-18 ▶ Learning the Value of Fasting Dan 9:3

GOD AS OUR FATHER

What distinguishes Jesus from every other religious leader is his view of God, whom he said was not only sovereign, holy, and all-powerful, but also a personal Father.

Jesus and the Father

Christians are so accustomed to calling God “Father” that we forget how revolutionary Jesus was in using that term to refer to God. Israel and its kings (Israel’s representatives) had been called God’s son (Exod 4:22-23; 2 Sam 7:14; Hos 11:1), but calling God “Father” is only rarely done in the Old Testament. However, “Father” was Jesus’ favorite term for God, used nearly 170 times in the Gospels, reflecting this intimate relationship (e.g., John 5:19-23). This so outraged his opponents that they tried to kill him (e.g., John 5:18; 10:27-33). But Jesus pushed the intimacy even further, calling God “Abba,” which in Aramaic is similarly intimate like the English for “daddy” (Mark 14:36).

The Father in Jesus’ Teaching

The parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-32) shows what our heavenly Father is like—gracious and forgiving, no matter how much we don’t deserve it. Jesus assured us of the Father’s intimate care (Matt 6:25-34), and in the Lord’s Prayer encouraged us to bring all our spiritual longings and practical needs to him (“Our Father in heaven ...” vv. 9-13), assuring us that the Father will never disappoint or deceive us (7:7-11). Jesus modeled his own complete trust of his Father to the very end, even as he was dying (Luke 23:46). After the resurrection, he again spoke of his Father reassuringly to Mary Magdalene, noting that she can also call God by this most intimate term (John 20:17).

The Early Church and Father

Teaching about God as Father was so engrained in the disciples that they retained Jesus’ favorite Aramaic word “Abba” even when Christianity moved into the Greek-speaking world (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6-7). In fact, every New Testament letter has references to God as Father, showing how widespread it had become (e.g., Eph 1:3-8; Jas 1:17; 1 Jn 3:1-3).

The Father and Us

Spiritual growth means learning to trust God as Father, not just intellectually but in the reality of life. The Father may allow hard things to come to us, but only to discipline, shape, and teach us how to depend on him (Heb 12:5-13). Knowing him as Father means we can be assured that “nothing can ever separate us from God’s love” (Rom 8:38).

Teaching about Money and Possessions

19“Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

22“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. 23But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

24“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

25“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? 27Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

28“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, 29yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. 30And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

31“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ 32These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33Seek the Kingdom of God* above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

34“So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Do Not Judge Others

7“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. 2For you will be treated as you treat others.* The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*

3“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye* when you have a log in your own? 4How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? 5Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

6“Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy.* Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Effective Prayer

7“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

9“You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

The Golden Rule

12“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

6:33 Some manuscripts do not include of God. 7:2a Or For God will judge you as you judge others. 7:2b Or The measure you give will be the measure you get back. 7:3 Greek your brother’s eye; also in 7:5. 7:4 Greek your brother. 7:6 Greek Don’t give the sacred to dogs.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PRAYER

Matt 6:5-13

Jesus expects his followers to pray. In the “Lord’s Prayer,” he encourages us to pray not only on our own, but also with others. Often, though, new Christians find it difficult to pray aloud. If you are nervous and tense about this, then wait a while until you are relaxed and can express yourself naturally in prayer. Praying aloud on your own can be a first step to praying aloud with others.

However, we are not to be hypocritical, only praying publicly to gain others’ approval. If we pray with others publicly, then that should be the fruit of a life of our own private prayer. Here are some practical guidelines if you are praying aloud with others:

- Be yourself; don’t put on a “prayer voice” when you pray. Speak naturally, clearly, and audibly.
- Be awe-filled, fresh, and excited; you’re talking to your Father in heaven.
- Don’t mention details of people’s private lives.
- Don’t pray too long; you can say a lot in a short, but direct, prayer.
- If you are leading others in public prayer, e.g., in a church service, write down an outline beforehand to guide you.
- Remember that the best way to learn how to pray is ... to pray.

TOPICAL TIES

Calling God Abba, Father Mark 14:36

The Lord’s Prayer Luke 11:1-4

The Power of Petitionary Prayer

Acts 4:24-31

Spiritual Disciplines: Putting the Focus on God Acts 13:2-3

The Power of Prayer Jas 5:13-18

CROSS-REFERENCES

6:24 ▶ The Ungodly Use of Riches Ps 73:12

6:33 ▶ The Kingdom of God Mark 10

7:1-6 ▶ The Difference between Judging and Judgmentalism Luke 6:37-42

7:7-11 ▶ Answers to Prayer 2 Kgs 19:19-20;

Praying with Boldness Luke 11:9-10;

The Power of Petitionary Prayer Acts 4:24-31

The Narrow Gate

13“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell* is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

15“Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. 16You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. 19So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. 20Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

21“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ 23But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

Building on a Solid Foundation

24“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

28When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

8 Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. 2 Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. “Lord,” the man said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”

3 Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared. 4 Then Jesus said to him, “Don’t tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy.* This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.”

The Faith of a Roman Officer

5 When Jesus returned to Capernaum, a Roman officer* came and pleaded with him, 6 “Lord, my young servant* lies in bed, paralyzed and in terrible pain.”

7 Jesus said, “I will come and heal him.”

8 But the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. 9 I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and

7:13 Greek *The road that leads to destruction.* 8:4 See Lev 14:2-32. 8:5 Greek *a centurion*; similarly in 8:8, 13. 8:6 Or *child*; also in 8:13.

THE GOLDEN RULE Matt 7:12

The Golden Rule—“Don’t do to others what you wouldn’t want them to do to you”—had existed in various forms before Jesus’ time; but all were worded negatively. Jesus turned this on its head, and expressed the principle positively: “Do to others whatever you would wish them to do to you” (Matt 7:12). This immediately rules out any laid-back approach to life in which, as long as you don’t harm others, you are doing okay. Jesus says that God wants us to purposefully go out and do good to others. For “this is the essence of all that is taught in the law and prophets,” he said (v. 12).

This teaching has practical consequences for how Christians should live. It means we cannot be passive, merely avoiding actions that harm others. We have to be like Jesus who “went around doing good” (Acts 10:38). That means going out of our way to offer help, provide care, give hospitality, serve others, even at inconvenience to ourselves. The service of others should take priority over our own comfort.

The challenge each of us must face is, “What can I do today to be more like Jesus and fulfill this command?”

TOPICAL TIES

Imitating Jesus’ Compassion Matt 9:36

The Supremacy of Love 1 Cor 13

Love Is a Choice 1 Cor 13:4-7

Loving Others 1 Jn 4:7-8

CROSS-REFERENCES

7:13-14 ▶ Entering the Narrow Door Luke 13:22-30

7:15-20 ▶ Recognizing False Prophets Num 22

8:1-3 ▶ Using Touch to Encourage Others Mark 1:41-42

8:1-9:34 ▶ Miracles Display God’s Lordship Exod 14:1-31;

The Miracles of Jesus Luke 5;

The Power of Jesus Acts 10:38

I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.”

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following him, he said, “I tell you the truth, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel! ¹¹And I tell you this, that many Gentiles will come from all over the world—from east and west—and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven. ¹²But many Israelites—those for whom the Kingdom was prepared—will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

¹³Then Jesus said to the Roman officer, “Go back home. Because you believed, it has happened.” And the young servant was healed that same hour.

Jesus Heals Many People

¹⁴When Jesus arrived at Peter’s house, Peter’s mother-in-law was sick in bed with a high fever. ¹⁵But when Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her. Then she got up and prepared a meal for him.

¹⁶That evening many demon-possessed people were brought to Jesus. He cast out the evil spirits with a simple command, and he healed all the sick. ¹⁷This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said,

“He took our sicknesses
and removed our diseases.”*

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he instructed his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake.

¹⁹Then one of the teachers of religious law said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

²⁰But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man* has no place even to lay his head.”

²¹Another of his disciples said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.”

²²But Jesus told him, “Follow me now. Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead.”*

Jesus Calms the Storm

²³Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. ²⁴Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”

²⁶Jesus responded, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!” Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.

²⁷The disciples were amazed. “Who is this man?” they asked. “Even the winds and waves obey him!”

Jesus Heals Two Demon-Possessed Men

²⁸When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes,* two men who were possessed by demons met him. They came out of the tombs and were so violent that no one could go through that area.

²⁹They began screaming at him, “Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God’s appointed time?”

³⁰There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance. ³¹So the demons begged, “If you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs.”

³²“All right, go!” Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.

³³The herdsmen fled to the nearby town, telling everyone what happened to the demon-possessed men.

³⁴Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus, but they begged him to go away and leave them alone.

8:17 Isa 53:4. **8:20** “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. **8:22** Greek *Let the dead bury their own dead*. **8:28** Other manuscripts read *Gerasenes*; still others read *Gergesenes*. Compare Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26.

OBEYING, NOT JUST LISTENING TO, JESUS

Matt 7:21-27

Some of the Sermon on the Mount’s most challenging words come at its end, where Jesus challenges us that it is not just listening to what he says that counts, but actually doing it. It is only in listening and doing that our lives are built on firm foundations and that we need fear neither the storms of life nor the judgment at the end of it.

Such teaching is a constant theme of Scripture. The Old Testament prophets constantly challenged Israel to not only say they were God’s people but to *live like it*. James says that just listening to God’s words but not living them out is as foolish as someone looking at themselves in a mirror and then forgetting what they look like (James 1:22-25). John reminds us that “our actions will show that we belong to the truth” (1 Jn 3:19).

Jesus has already just said that “not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter” (Matt 7:21). We can’t call Jesus “Lord” if we aren’t obeying him (v. 22-23), for it is obedience that is the real hallmark of a true disciple.

TOPICAL TIES

Obedience As the Mark of Genuine Devotion to God 1 Sam 15
Obeying Jesus As Lord 1 Jn 2

CROSS-REFERENCES

8:19-22 ▶ Making Poor Excuses for Not Following Jesus Luke 9:57-62
8:26 ▶ Overcoming Fear Ps 34:4
8:28-34 ▶ Recognizing Jesus’ Authority over Demons Mark 5:12

IMITATING JESUS' COMPASSION

Matt 9:36

The famous poet and art critic John Ruskin said that a good artist must possess three qualities: (1) an eye to see and appreciate the beauty of what he desires to catch on canvas; (2) a heart to feel and register the beauty and atmosphere of the scene; (3) a hand to perform, to transfer to canvas what the eye has seen and heart has felt.

Are not these qualities essential to disciples? We need eyes to see the spiritual need of those around us. Physical need is more discernible than spiritual need because it makes a visual impression on us, whereas spiritual need is sensed only by those who are spiritual.

How did Jesus see his world? He saw a crowded, helpless world, people with no sense of direction (v. 36). Do we have eyes that see?

We need a heart to feel for the spiritual needs of men and women. Compassion is more than pity. If we are sensitively in touch with the Christ of the broken heart we will share his concern. Do we share our Lord's concern and compassion?

We need a hand to perform, to act out our compassion. Christ's compassion was not stillborn; he did something about it. Seeing and feeling are sterile unless we are moved to action.

TOPICAL TIES

Jesus' Great Compassion Luke 7:13
The Supremacy of Love 1 Cor 13
Love Is a Choice 1 Cor 13:4-7
Loving Others 1 Jn 4:7-8

CROSS-REFERENCES

9:1-8 ▶ The Priority of Forgiveness
Mark 2:1-21
9:9-13 ▶ Spending Time with "Sinners"
Luke 5:27-32
9:13 ▶ Obedience As the Mark of Genuine
Devotion to God 1 Sam 15
9:14-15 ▶ Learning the Value of Fasting
Dan 9:3

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man

9 Jesus climbed into a boat and went back across the lake to his own town. ²Some people brought to him a paralyzed man on a mat. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Be encouraged, my child! Your sins are forgiven."

³But some of the teachers of religious law said to themselves, "That's blasphemy! Does he think he's God?"

⁴Jesus knew* what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you have such evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'? ⁶So I will prove to you that the Son of Man* has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

⁷And the man jumped up and went home! ⁸Fear swept through the crowd as they saw this happen. And they praised God for giving humans such authority.

Jesus Calls Matthew

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. ¹¹But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?*"

¹²When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." ¹³Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.*' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

A Discussion about Fasting

14 One day the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked him, "Why don't your disciples fast* like we do and the Pharisees do?"

¹⁵Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests mourn while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

¹⁶"Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.

¹⁷"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the old skins would burst from the pressure, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine is stored in new wineskins so that both are preserved."

Jesus Heals in Response to Faith

18 As Jesus was saying this, the leader of a synagogue came and knelt before him. "My daughter has just died," he said, "but you can bring her back to life again if you just come and lay your hand on her."

¹⁹So Jesus and his disciples got up and went with him. ²⁰Just then a woman who had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding came up behind him. She touched the fringe of his robe, ²¹for she thought, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed."

²²Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, "Daughter, be encouraged! Your faith has made you well." And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³When Jesus arrived at the official's home, he saw the noisy crowd and heard the funeral music. ²⁴"Get out!" he told them. "The girl isn't dead; she's only asleep." But the crowd laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd was put outside, however, Jesus went in and took the girl by the hand, and she stood up! ²⁶The report of this miracle swept through the entire countryside.

Jesus Heals the Blind

27 After Jesus left the girl's home, two blind men followed along behind him, shouting, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"

9:4 Some manuscripts read *saw*. 9:6 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. 9:11 Greek *with tax collectors and sinners*? 9:13 Hos 6:6 (Greek version). 9:14 Some manuscripts read *fast often*.

28 They went right into the house where he was staying, and Jesus asked them, “Do you believe I can make you see?”

“Yes, Lord,” they told him, “we do.”

29 Then he touched their eyes and said, “Because of your faith, it will happen.” 30 Then their eyes were opened, and they could see! Jesus sternly warned them, “Don’t tell anyone about this.” 31 But instead, they went out and spread his fame all over the region.

32 When they left, a demon-possessed man who couldn’t speak was brought to Jesus. 33 So Jesus cast out the demon, and then the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed. “Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!” they exclaimed.

34 But the Pharisees said, “He can cast out demons because he is empowered by the prince of demons.”

The Need for Workers

35 Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. 38 So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

10 Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority to cast out evil* spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness. 2 Here are the names of the twelve apostles:

first, Simon (also called Peter),

then Andrew (Peter’s brother),

James (son of Zebedee),

John (James’s brother),

3 Philip,

Bartholomew,

Thomas,

Matthew (the tax collector),

James (son of Alphaeus),

Thaddaeus,*

4 Simon (the zealot*),

Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

5 Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: “Don’t go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, 6 but only to the people of Israel—God’s lost sheep. 7 Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.*

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!

9 “Don’t take any money in your money belts—no gold, silver, or even copper coins. 10 Don’t carry a traveler’s bag with a change of clothes and sandals or even a walking stick. Don’t hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve to be fed.

11 “Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a worthy person and stay in his home until you leave town. 12 When you enter the home, give it your blessing. 13 If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing

10:1 Greek *unclean*. **10:3** Other manuscripts read *Lebbaeus*; still others read *Lebbaeus who is called Thaddaeus*. **10:4** Greek *the Cananean*, an Aramaic term for Jewish nationalists. **10:7** Or *has come, or is coming soon*.

BALANCING INNOCENCE AND WISDOM Matt 10:16

Matthew 10:16 is a bridge between Jesus sending out the Twelve in verses 5-15 and the more general treatment of disciples being persecuted. It acts as a pointer to the eventually more serious vulnerability of disciples confronting a hostile world: the threat is real and open. As in John 10:12, the sheep are helpless in the face of an attack by wolves. It is an image of the Christian presence in the world which sits uncomfortably alongside much of the subsequent history of the church, as a power structure and itself often the agent of persecution.

Two further animal similes fill out the picture. The vulnerability of sheep is enhanced by their proverbial stupidity, but disciples are not to be like that. The snake’s instinct for self-preservation (by getting out of the way when trouble threatens) is a more helpful model. As a result of the Eden story, the snake was proverbial for cunning. Disciples under threat are not to be helpless and gullible, but must maintain the initiative. Jesus offsets that more obvious connotation of snakes by the harmlessness of doves; the disciples’ cunning is to be directed not to harming their opponents, but to their own survival and the commendation of the gospel (Rom 12:17-21).

TOPICAL TIES

Discerning the Spiritual Battle 2 Kgs 6:17

Cultivating Discernment Prov 3:21

Facing Persecution Luke 21:16

CROSS-REFERENCES

9:29 ▶ Using Touch to Encourage Others Mark 1:41-42

JESUS AS THE SON OF MAN

Matt 11:19

"Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite title. It enabled him to claim to be the Messiah without actually using the word, for in Jewish thinking it had become equated with a military deliverer who would free Israel by force. But Jesus' messiahship was not about a sword, but a cross. So he preferred this enigmatic title—one which drew together two strands of Jewish thinking.

First, it picked up the idea of humanity as frail and dependent on God, like in Psalm 8:3-5 (where "son of man" is used in the Hebrew) or Ezek 2:1. But second, it recalled Daniel's vision of "someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven" (Dan 7:13) who would one day come to rule in glory and power. It was Jesus' claim to be this figure before the Sanhedrin that led to a charge of blasphemy (Matt 26:62-66).

These two strands enabled Jesus to show that he was both fully human (e.g., John 1:14; Heb 2:14-18) and fully divine (e.g., John 1:1; Col 2:9). It was this glorious Son of Man whom John saw in his vision (Rev 1:13-16; 14:14).

Whenever we struggle, this title reminds us that Jesus both understands our weaknesses and has power to deal with them.

TOPICAL TIES

Who Is Jesus? Matt 16
The "I Am" Sayings of Jesus John 10

CROSS-REFERENCES

10:15 ▶ Warning against Sexual Immorality
Jude 1:7
10:29-31 ▶ Trusting in God's Providence
Ruth 2;
Precious to God Dan 10:19
10:31 ▶ Overcoming Fear Ps 34:4
10:37-38 ▶ The Cost of Discipleship
Luke 14:25-33

stand; if it is not, take back the blessing. ¹⁴If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.

¹⁶"Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. ¹⁷But beware! For you will be handed over to the courts and will be flogged with whips in the synagogues. ¹⁸You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me.* ¹⁹When you are arrested, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. God will give you the right words at the right time. ²⁰For it is not you who will be speaking—it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹"A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. ²²And all nations will hate you because you are my followers.* But everyone who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When you are persecuted in one town, flee to the next. I tell you the truth, the Son of Man* will return before you have reached all the towns of Israel.

²⁴"Students* are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. ²⁵Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons,* the members of my household will be called by even worse names!

²⁶"But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. ²⁷What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

²⁸"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* ²⁹What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin*? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

³²"Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴"Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵ 'I have come to set a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.
³⁶ Your enemies will be right in your own household!*

³⁷"If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁸If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

⁴⁰"Anyone who receives you receives me, and anyone who receives me receives the Father who sent me. ⁴¹If you receive a prophet as one who speaks for God,* you will be given the same reward as a prophet. And if you receive righteous people because of their righteousness, you will be given a reward like theirs. ⁴²And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."

Jesus and John the Baptist

11 When Jesus had finished giving these instructions to his twelve disciples, he went out to teach and preach in towns throughout the region.

10:18 Or *But this will be your testimony against the rulers and other unbelievers.* **10:22** Greek *on account of my name.* **10:23** "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself. **10:24** Or *Disciples.* **10:25** Greek *Beelzebul*; other manuscripts read *Beezeboul*; Latin version reads *Beelzebub*. **10:28** Greek *Gehenna*. **10:29** Greek *one assarion* [i.e., one "as," a Roman coin equal to 1/16 of a denarius]. **10:35-36** Mic 7:6. **10:41** Greek *receive a prophet in the name of a prophet.*

2John the Baptist, who was in prison, heard about all the things the Messiah was doing. So he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, 3“Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting,* or should we keep looking for someone else?”

4Jesus told them, “Go back to John and tell him what you have heard and seen— 5the blind see, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” 6And he added, “God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.”*

7As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. “What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of wind? 8Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people with expensive clothes live in palaces. 9Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. 10John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

‘Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
and he will prepare your way before you.’*

11“I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is! 12And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing,* and violent people are attacking it. 13For before John came, all the prophets and the law of Moses looked forward to this present time. 14And if you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come.* 15Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

16“To what can I compare this generation? It is like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends,

17 ‘We played wedding songs,
and you didn’t dance,
so we played funeral songs,
and you didn’t mourn.’

18For John didn’t spend his time eating and drinking, and you say, ‘He’s possessed by a demon.’ 19The Son of Man,* on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, ‘He’s a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!’ But wisdom is shown to be right by its results.”

Judgment for the Unbelievers

20Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn’t repented of their sins and turned to God. 21“What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. 22I tell you, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you.

23“And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead.* For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today. 24I tell you, even Sodom will be better off on judgment day than you.”

Jesus’ Prayer of Thanksgiving

25At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. 26Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

11:3 Greek *Are you the one who is coming?* 11:6 *Or who are not offended by me.* 11:10 Mal 3:1. 11:12 *Or the Kingdom of Heaven has suffered from violence.* 11:14 See Mal 4:5. 11:19 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 11:23 Greek *to Hades.*

THE REST THAT JESUS PROMISES Matt 11:28

The gracious invitation “Come to me” carries the thought that it is Jesus only who has access to the Father and to the resources of the Father. It is because he is the only One who knows the Father and because only those to whom he reveals the Father will have knowledge of him that it is so important to give heed to his invitation. The invitation is for all the troubled: none of the troubled are omitted.

Traditionally in the King James Version the first invited have been “ye that labor,” and there is a good deal to be said for that translation. But Jesus is not here speaking about work but about need. It seems that we should understand this to mean “the weary” [as in NLT]. With them are joined those who carry heavy burdens. Jesus is calling anyone who is wearied with life’s burdens. To all such he says, “I will refresh you.” The verb seems not to imply the rest that is the complete cessation from labor, which is made clear when Jesus goes on (in vv. 29-30) to speak of his “yoke,” of learning, and of his “burden.” The rest in mind is the rest that enables the worker to go back to the task with renewed vigor.

TOPICAL TIES

The Importance of Rest Ps 127
Making Time to Rest Mark 6:31
Learning and Unlearning Rom 12

CROSS-REFERENCES

11:2-5 ▶ John the Baptist and Spiritual Growth Mark 6
11:29 ▶ Growing in Gentleness Prov 15:1-4

27“My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

28Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

A Discussion about the Sabbath

12 At about that time Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off some heads of grain and eating them. 2But some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, “Look, your disciples are breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath.”

3Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. 5And haven’t you read in the law of Moses that the priests on duty in the Temple may work on the Sabbath? 6I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! 7But you would not have condemned my innocent disciples if you knew the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’* 8For the Son of Man* is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

9Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, 10where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?” (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.)

11And he answered, “If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you work to pull it out? Of course you would. 12And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.”

13Then he said to the man, “Hold out your hand.” So the man held out his hand, and it was restored, just like the other one! 14Then the Pharisees called a meeting to plot how to kill Jesus.

Jesus, God’s Chosen Servant

15But Jesus knew what they were planning. So he left that area, and many people followed him. He healed all the sick among them, 16but he warned them not to reveal who he was. 17This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him:

18 “Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen.

He is my Beloved, who pleases me.

I will put my Spirit upon him,

and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

19 He will not fight or shout

or raise his voice in public.

20 He will not crush the weakest reed

or put out a flickering candle.

Finally he will cause justice to be victorious.

21 And his name will be the hope

of all the world.”*

Jesus and the Prince of Demons

22Then a demon-possessed man, who was blind and couldn’t speak, was brought to Jesus. He healed the man so that he could both speak and see. 23The crowd was amazed and asked, “Could it be that Jesus is the Son of David, the Messiah?”

24But when the Pharisees heard about the miracle, they said, “No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan,* the prince of demons.”

25Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, “Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A town or family splintered by feuding will fall apart. 26And if Satan is casting out Satan, he is divided and fighting against himself. His own kingdom will not survive. 27And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. 28But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. 29For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.

30“Anyone who isn’t with me opposes me, and anyone who isn’t working with me is actually working against me.

31“So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven—except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. 32Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.

33“A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad.

34You brood of snakes! How could evil men like you speak what is good and right? For whatever is in your heart

12:7 Hos 6:6 (Greek version). 12:8 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 12:18-21 Isa 42:1-4 (Greek version for 42:4).

12:24 Greek *Beelzeboul*; also in 12:27. Other manuscripts read *Beezebul*; Latin version reads *Beelzebub*.

determines what you say. ³⁵A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. ³⁶And I tell you this, you must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak. ³⁷The words you say will either acquit you or condemn you."

The Sign of Jonah

³⁸One day some teachers of religious law and Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove your authority."

³⁹But Jesus replied, "Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

⁴¹"The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent. ⁴²The queen of Sheba* will also stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here—but you refuse to listen.

⁴³"When an evil* spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, seeking rest but finding none. ⁴⁴Then it says, 'I will return to the person I came from.' So it returns and finds its former home empty, swept, and in order. ⁴⁵Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before. That will be the experience of this evil generation."

The True Family of Jesus

⁴⁶As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. ⁴⁷Someone told Jesus, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, and they want to speak to you."*

⁴⁸Jesus asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹Then he pointed to his disciples and said, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. ⁵⁰Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother!"

Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed

13 Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake. ²A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore. ³He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

"Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

¹⁰His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"

¹¹He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets* of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. ¹²To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. ¹³That is why I use these parables,

For they look, but they don't really see.

They hear, but they don't really listen or understand.

¹⁴This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says,

12:42 Greek *The queen of the south*. **12:43** Greek *unclean*. **12:47** Some manuscripts do not include verse 47. Compare Mark 3:32 and Luke 8:20. **13:11** Greek *the mysteries*.

JESUS' ATTITUDE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Matt 12:40

For Jesus, our "Old Testament" was his only Scriptures. Jesus loved God's Word and allowed it to guide his life. He read it (Luke 4:16-21), quoted it in his teaching (Matt 22:34-40), directed his opponents to it (John 8:13-18), referred to its stories (Matt 12:40), accepted its characters as historical (Luke 17:26-27), quoted from it to settle arguments (Matt 22:23-32), interpreted events in light of it (Luke 7:24-27), used it to resist Satan (Matt 4:4), prophesied from it (24:15-24), and knew his death and resurrection was in fulfillment of it (Luke 24:44-47). In fact, it is impossible to fully understand Jesus' teaching without understanding the Old Testament.

Jesus never criticized, contradicted, or explained away the Old Testament, which he said had abiding validity (Matt 5:18; John 10:35). He was certainly not embarrassed by any part of it, nor felt a need to apologize for it, as some Christians feel obliged to do today.

We therefore cannot dismiss the Old Testament, although we have to interpret all that it says in the light of Christ's coming, to which it pointed and for which it prepared.

TOPICAL TIES

How to Read and Understand the Bible Properly Ps 119

Spiritual Growth: Responding to God's Word Mark 4:1-20

Jesus' Use of the Old Testament Luke 20:9-43

Meeting Jesus through His Word Luke 24

CROSS-REFERENCES

12:17-21 ▶ Becoming a Servant Like Jesus Isa 42

12:31-32 ▶ Committing the Unforgivable Sin Mark 3:22-30

12:39-41 ▶ Jonah and Spiritual Growth Jon 2

13:1-23 ▶ Hindrances to Spiritual Growth Mark 4;

Spiritual Growth: Responding to God's Word Mark 4:1-20

13:9 ▶ Listening to God 1 Sam 3:1-10

‘When you hear what I say,
you will not understand.
When you see what I do,
you will not comprehend.
15 For the hearts of these people are hardened,
and their ears cannot hear,
and they have closed their eyes—
so their eyes cannot see,
and their ears cannot hear,
and their hearts cannot understand,
and they cannot turn to me
and let me heal them.’*

16“But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it.

18“Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: 19The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don’t understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. 20The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. 21But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. 22The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. 23The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

Parable of the Wheat and Weeds

24Here is another story Jesus told: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. 25But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. 26When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.

27“‘The farmer’s workers went to him and said, ‘Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?’

28“‘An enemy has done this!’ the farmer exclaimed.

“‘Should we pull out the weeds?’ they asked.

29“‘No,’ he replied, ‘you’ll uproot the wheat if you do. 30Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.’”

Parable of the Mustard Seed

31Here is another illustration Jesus used: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. 32It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.”

Parable of the Yeast

33Jesus also used this illustration: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”

34Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. 35This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet:

“I will speak to you in parables.

I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world.”*

Parable of the Wheat and Weeds Explained

36Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, “Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field.”

37Jesus replied, “The Son of Man* is the farmer who plants the good seed. 38The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. 39The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world,* and the harvesters are the angels.

40“Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. 41The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!

13:14-15 Isa 6:9-10 (Greek version). 13:35 Some manuscripts do not include *of the world*. Ps 78:2. 13:37 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 13:39 *Or the age*; also in 13:40, 49.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Parable" (from the Greek, *parabole*, meaning "placing beside"): an illustration in the form of brief narrative meant to teach a moral or religious truth.

	Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1	The Growing Seed		4:26-29	
2	The Two Debtors			7:41-43
3	The Lamp under a Basket	5:14-15	4:21-25	8:16-18
4	The Good Samaritan			10:30-37
5	The Friend in Need			11:5-8
6	The Rich Fool			12:16-21
7	The Wide and Narrow Gates	7:13-14		13:23-30
8	The Wise and the Foolish Builders	7:24-27		6:46-49
9	New Wine in Old Wineskins (Cloth)	9:16-17	2:21-22	5:37-39
10	The Strong Man	12:29	3:27	11:21-22
11	The Farmer Scattering Seed	13:3-8, 18-23	4:3-8, 14-20	8:5-8, 11-15
12	The Wheat and Weeds	13:24-30, 36-43		
13	The Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
14	The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
15	The Yeast	13:33		13:20-21
16	The Hidden Treasure	13:44		
17	The Valuable Pearl	13:45-46		
18	The Fishing Net	13:47-50		
19	The Homeowner	13:52		
20	The Humble Guest			14:7-11
21	The Cost of Discipleship			14:28-33
22	The Lost Sheep	18:10-14		15:4-6
23	The Unforgiving Debtor	18:23-35		
24	The Lost Coin			15:8-9
25	The Lost (Prodigal) Son			15:11-32
26	The Shrewd Manager			16:1-13
27	The Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31
28	The Master and Servant			17:7-10
29	The Persistent Widow			18:1-9
30	The Pharisee and Tax Collector			18:10-14
31	The Vineyard Workers	20:1-16		
32	The Two Sons	21:28-32		
33	The Evil Farmers	21:33-41	12:1-9	20:9-16
34	The Great Feast	*22:1-14		*14:16-24
35	The Fig Tree	24:32-35	13:28-31	21:29-33
36	The Faithful Servant	24:42-51	13:34-37	12:35-48
37	The Ten Bridesmaids	25:1-13		
38	The Three Servants (Talents)	25:14-30		19:12-27
39	The Sheep and the Goats	25:31-46		

* Some consider these two passages represent separate parables given the differences in the details.

Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

44“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

45“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. 46When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!

Parable of the Fishing Net

47“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. 48When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. 49That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, 50throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 51Do you understand all these things?”

“Yes,” they said, “we do.”

52Then he added, “Every teacher of religious law who becomes a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven is like a homeowner who brings from his storeroom new gems of truth as well as old.”

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

53When Jesus had finished telling these stories and illustrations, he left that part of the country. 54He returned to Nazareth, his hometown. When he taught there in the synagogue, everyone was amazed and said, “Where does he get this wisdom and the power to do miracles?” 55Then they scoffed, “He’s just the carpenter’s son, and we know Mary, his mother, and his brothers—James, Joseph,* Simon, and Judas. 56All his sisters live right here among us. Where did he learn all these things?” 57And they were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

Then Jesus told them, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family.” 58And so he did only a few miracles there because of their unbelief.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 When Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee,* heard about Jesus, 2he said to his advisers, “This must be John the Baptist raised from the dead! That is why he can do such miracles.”

3For Herod had arrested and imprisoned John as a favor to his wife Herodias (the former wife of Herod’s brother Philip). 4John had been telling Herod, “It is against God’s law for you to marry her.” 5Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of a riot, because all the people believed John was a prophet.

6But at a birthday party for Herod, Herodias’s daughter performed a dance that greatly pleased him, 7so he promised with a vow to give her anything she wanted. 8At her mother’s urging, the girl said, “I want the head of John the Baptist on a tray!” 9Then the king regretted what he had said; but because of the vow he had made in front of his guests, he issued the necessary orders. 10So John was beheaded in the prison, 11and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. 12Later, John’s disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand

13As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns. 14Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15That evening the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.”

16But Jesus said, “That isn’t necessary—you feed them.”

17“But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish!” they answered.

13:55 Other manuscripts read *Joses*; still others read *John*. **14:1** Greek *Herod the tetrarch*. Herod Antipas was a son of King Herod and was ruler over Galilee.

GOD’S WORK HINDERED BY UNBELIEF Matt 13:58

The place was Nazareth, Jesus’ own hometown, where he had grown up. He had taught there so that they were astonished at his wisdom and miraculous powers (Matt 13:54). Then he withheld his power, and stopped doing these miracles. Why? “Because of their unbelief” (v. 58). He arrested their thoughts by what he did and said. Then they allowed unworthy prejudice to prevent their complete and reasonable response to the astonishment of their minds. This was their unbelief. Not that they did not believe that he had said and done wonderful things, but that they did not permit that intellectual conviction to lead them to corresponding action of the will. That is the point at which the Lord is always hindered. It is not that he needed their faith to enable him to do anything. It was rather that Jesus’ teaching, and wonders, for people who do not yield themselves to him, is of no value to them. Is it not perpetually so that Christ is limited in the individual soul, and in the church, because of unbelief? He comes to the soul and the assembly, and astonishes with his teaching and power. However, that astonishment leads to nothing; he is hindered, and the mighty works cease.

TOPICAL TIES

The Danger of Hardness of Heart Ps 95:7-11
Stubborn Refusal to Repent Amos 4

CROSS-REFERENCES

13:22 ▶ Giving All Our Worries to God 1 Pet 5:7
13:52 ▶ Becoming an Obedient Servant Isa 50:4-5

18“Bring them here,” he said. 19Then he told the people to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he gave the bread to the disciples, who distributed it to the people. 20They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers. 21About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

Jesus Walks on Water

22Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. 23After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

24Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. 25About three o'clock in the morning* Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. 26When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, “It’s a ghost!”

27But Jesus spoke to them at once. “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “Take courage. I am here!”

28Then Peter called to him, “Lord, if it’s really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water.”

29“Yes, come,” Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. 30But when he saw the strong* wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. “Save me, Lord!” he shouted.

31Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. “You have so little faith,” Jesus said. “Why did you doubt me?”

32When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. 33Then the disciples worshiped him. “You really are the Son of God!” they exclaimed.

34After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. 35When the people recognized Jesus, the news of his arrival spread quickly throughout the whole area, and soon people were bringing all their sick to be healed. 36They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

Jesus Teaches about Inner Purity

15 Some Pharisees and teachers of religious law now arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus. They asked him, 2“Why do your disciples disobey our age-old tradition? For they ignore our tradition of ceremonial hand washing before they eat.”

3Jesus replied, “And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? 4For instance, God says, ‘Honor your father and mother,’* and ‘Anyone who speaks disrespectfully of father or mother must be put to death.’* 5But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.’ 6In this way, you say they don’t need to honor their parents.* And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. 7You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote,

8 “These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

9 Their worship is a farce,
for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.”*

10Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “Listen,” he said, “and try to understand. 11It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.”

12Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you realize you offended the Pharisees by what you just said?”

14:25 Greek *In the fourth watch of the night.* 14:27 Or *The ‘I Am’ is here;* Greek reads *I am.* See Exod 3:14. 14:30 Some manuscripts do not include *strong.* 15:4a Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16. 15:4b Exod 21:17 (Greek version); Lev 20:9 (Greek version). 15:6 Greek *their father;* other manuscripts read *their father or their mother.* 15:8-9 Isa 29:13 (Greek version).

THE VALUE AND DANGER OF TRADITIONS

Matt 15:3-20

Traditions are one of the ways that God’s truth is passed to the next generation so that each can “set its hope anew on God” (Ps 78:7), but there are also dangers with traditions. When the Pharisees complained to Jesus about his disciples ignoring their tradition of ceremonial hand washing before eating, Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy in choosing which of God’s laws they keep: “you skillfully sidestep God’s law in order to hold on to your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

Jesus says that traditions should:

Help us love God: it is easy for traditions to become just about the act, but what matters to God is our heart. Jesus quotes Isaiah: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Matt 15:8).

Be biblically-based: “for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God” (v. 9). We should hold all our traditions lightly unless God has commanded us to keep them, e.g., the act of baptism (28:19).

Consider others: Jesus says that the issue isn’t the food that goes into us, but the words and actions that come out of us, giving examples that defile us and harm others (15:18-19). Our traditions should encourage us to love others rather than make us feel self-righteous.

TOPICAL TIES

Responding Properly to God’s Law
Mark 7:5

CROSS-REFERENCES

14:13-21:22 ▶ The Miracles of Jesus Luke 5
14:14 ▶ Imitating Jesus’ Compassion
Matt 9:36
14:22-23 ▶ Slowing Down to Spend Time
with God Luke 5:16
15:8-9 ▶ Paying Lip Service to God
Isa 29:1-14

¹³Jesus replied, “Every plant not planted by my heavenly Father will be uprooted, ¹⁴so ignore them. They are blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into a ditch.”

¹⁵Then Peter said to Jesus, “Explain to us the parable that says people aren’t defiled by what they eat.”

¹⁶“Don’t you understand yet?” Jesus asked. ¹⁷“Anything you eat passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer. ¹⁸But the words you speak come from the heart—that’s what defiles you. ¹⁹For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander. ²⁰These are what defile you. Eating with unwashed hands will never defile you.”

The Faith of a Gentile Woman

²¹Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Gentile* woman who lived there came to him, pleading, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.”

²³But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged him to send her away. “Tell her to go away,” they said. “She is bothering us with all her begging.”

²⁴Then Jesus said to the woman, “I was sent only to help God’s lost sheep—the people of Israel.”

²⁵But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶Jesus responded, “It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.”

²⁷She replied, “That’s true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters’ table.”

²⁸“Dear woman,” Jesus said to her, “your faith is great. Your request is granted.” And her daughter was instantly healed.

Jesus Heals Many People

²⁹Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee and climbed a hill and sat down. ³⁰A vast crowd brought to him people who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn’t speak, and many others. They laid them before Jesus, and he healed them all. ³¹The crowd was amazed! Those who hadn’t been able to speak were talking, the crippled were made well, the lame were walking, and the blind could see again! And they praised the God of Israel.

Jesus Feeds Four Thousand

³²Then Jesus called his disciples and told them, “I feel sorry for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. I don’t want to send them away hungry, or they will faint along the way.”

³³The disciples replied, “Where would we get enough food here in the wilderness for such a huge crowd?”

³⁴Jesus asked, “How much bread do you have?”

They replied, “Seven loaves, and a few small fish.”

³⁵So Jesus told all the people to sit down on the ground. ³⁶Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, thanked God for them, and broke them into pieces. He gave them to the disciples, who distributed the food to the crowd.

³⁷They all ate as much as they wanted. Afterward, the disciples picked up seven large baskets of leftover food.

³⁸There were 4,000 men who were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children. ³⁹Then Jesus sent the people home, and he got into a boat and crossed over to the region of Magadan.

Leaders Demand a Miraculous Sign

16 One day the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, demanding that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority.

²He replied, “You know the saying, ‘Red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow; ³red sky in the morning means foul weather all day.’ You know how to interpret the weather signs in the sky, but you don’t know how to interpret the signs of the times! ⁴Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign, but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah.” ⁵Then Jesus left them and went away.

Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

⁵Later, after they crossed to the other side of the lake, the disciples discovered they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶“Watch out!” Jesus warned them. “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

⁷At this they began to argue with each other because they hadn’t brought any bread. ⁸Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said, “You have so little faith! Why are you arguing with each other about having no bread? ⁹Don’t you understand even yet? Don’t you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up? ¹⁰Or the 4,000 I fed with seven loaves, and the large baskets of leftovers you picked up? ¹¹Why can’t you understand that I’m not talking about bread? So again I say, ‘Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’”

¹²Then at last they understood that he wasn’t speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter’s Declaration about Jesus

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴

15:22 Greek *Canaanite*. **16:2-3** Several manuscripts do not include any of the words in 16:2-3 after *He replied*. **16:4** Greek *the sign of Jonah*. **16:13** “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

WHO IS JESUS?

One of life's most important issues is deciding who we think Jesus is. To see him as a prophet, as some were doing (Matt 16:14), isn't enough. It was only when Peter acknowledged who he truly was that he was blessed (vv. 13-19). The titles Jesus used, and those that others gave him and he accepted, show how he was both man and God.

Jesus Is Man

Son of Man (e.g., Matt 16:13; 26:64)—Jesus' favorite title, used only by himself, to avoid using "Messiah" which would be misunderstood. It spoke of his human frailty (Ps 8:3-5), yet hinted at the man who would one day rule in power (Dan 7:13-14).

Son of David (e.g., Matt 1:1; 12:23)—an important title to Jesus' hearers, who expected a descendant of David to become Israel's king one day, like God promised (2 Sam 7:11-16).

Messiah, or in Greek, **Christ**, (e.g., Matt 16:16; 26:63-64)—God's "anointed one" who would free his people by overthrowing their enemies and preparing for God's kingdom on earth. Jesus would do all this, but not how they expected.

Servant (e.g., Matt 20:26-28)—the fulfillment of Isaiah's promised suffering servant (Isa 52:13-53:12). The Gospels often quote from Isaiah's servant songs to reinforce Jesus' claims (e.g., Matt 8:17; Mark 9:12).

Jesus Is God

Son of God (e.g., Matt 16:16; 26:63-64)—the one who was with the Father from the beginning, who "was with God, and ... was God" (John 1:1), underlining his relationship with the Father.

Word (e.g., John 1:1, 14; 1 Jn 1:1-2)—the one who was eternally with the Father and through whom everything was created (John 1:1-4; Col 1:15-16).

Lord (e.g., Matt 7:21; Mark 2:28)—underlining his claim to rule over all things, sitting at God's right hand (Matt 22:41-46). It was only after the resurrection that the full significance of this title was understood (John 20:28), and it became the central Christian confession (Rom 10:9).

Other Titles

Among his many other titles are: Immanuel (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23), Lamb of God (John 1:29), Savior (Luke 2:11; 2 Pet:1:1), High Priest (Heb 2:17), Great Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4), and King of all kings (Rev 17:14).

Spiritual maturity is rightly responding to the one to whom they point—growing not just in our knowledge, but also in our obedience.

TOPICAL TIES:

The "I Am" Sayings of Jesus John 10
Obeying Jesus As Lord 1 Jn 2

14“Well,” they replied, “some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

15Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?”

16Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah,* the Son of the living God.”

17Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John,* because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. 18Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’),* and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell* will not conquer it. 19And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid* on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit* on earth will be permitted in heaven.”

20Then he sternly warned the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus Predicts His Death

21From then on Jesus* began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

22But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him* for saying such things. “Heaven forbid, Lord,” he said. “This will never happen to you!”

23Jesus turned to Peter and said, “Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”

24Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. 25If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. 26And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?* Is anything worth more than your soul? 27For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. 28And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.”

The Transfiguration

17 Six days later Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. 2As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. 3Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus.

4Peter exclaimed, “Lord, it’s wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I’ll make three shelters as memorials*—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

5But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.” 6The disciples were terrified and fell face down on the ground.

7Then Jesus came over and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” 8And when they looked up, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus.

9As they went back down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man* has been raised from the dead.”

10Then his disciples asked him, “Why do the teachers of religious law insist that Elijah must return before the Messiah comes?*

16:16 Or *the Christ*. *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean “anointed one.” **16:17** Greek *Simon bar-Jonah*;

see John 1:42; 21:15-17. **16:18a** Greek *that you are Peter*. **16:18b** Greek *and the gates of Hades*. **16:19a** Or *bind*, or *lock*.

16:19b Or *loose*, or *open*. **16:21** Some manuscripts read *Jesus the Messiah*. **16:22** Or *began to correct him*. **16:26** Or *your self*? also in 16:26b.

17:4 Greek *three tabernacles*. **17:9** “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. **17:10** Greek *that Elijah must come first*?

WHY DID ISRAEL’S LEADERS REJECT JESUS? Matt 16:5-12

When the long-awaited Messiah arrived, one might have expected Israel’s religious leaders and scholars to have welcomed him. Instead they rejected him because his message about God’s kingdom cut across their expectations.

The Pharisees rejected him because his view of the Jewish law was different. Aware that disobedience had led Israel into exile, they believed that meticulous obedience to that law was now required, insisting on keeping the law’s many oral traditions, e.g., ritual washings, obligatory fasting, and rules for keeping the Sabbath. These brought them into conflict with Jesus who had no time for these human rules, declaring they undermined the heart of what God intended (Matt 5:21-48).

The teachers of religious law had created those oral traditions as they had sought to interpret and apply the law during the exile; by Jesus’ day these interpretations were seen as important as the law itself. They rejected Jesus because he claimed they had let go of God’s commands in favor of human traditions (Mark 7:8).

The Sadducees rejected Jesus for different reasons. Although they had theological differences, their main concerns were political. They had become influential in Jerusalem, controlling the Temple and the high priesthood and were afraid that Jesus might upset the political balance which would lead to them losing influence if Rome clamped down.

TOPICAL TIES

The Hypocrisy of the Pharisees Matt 23:1-36

CROSS-REFERENCES

15:18-20 ▶ Cleansing the Sinful Heart Mark 7:20-23

16:5-12 ▶ Beware the Yeast of Spiritual Pride Mark 8:14-21

16:16 ▶ Peter and Spiritual Growth 2 Pet 1

11 Jesus replied, “Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. 12 But I tell you, Elijah has already come, but he wasn’t recognized, and they chose to abuse him. And in the same way they will also make the Son of Man suffer.” 13 Then the disciples realized he was talking about John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

14 At the foot of the mountain, a large crowd was waiting for them. A man came and knelt before Jesus and said, 15 “Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16 So I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn’t heal him.”

17 Jesus said, “You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” 18 Then Jesus rebuked the demon in the boy, and it left him. From that moment the boy was well.

19 Afterward the disciples asked Jesus privately, “Why couldn’t we cast out that demon?”

20 “You don’t have enough faith,” Jesus told them. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.”*

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

22 After they gathered again in Galilee, Jesus told them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. 23 He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead.” And the disciples were filled with grief.

Payment of the Temple Tax

24 On their arrival in Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax* came to Peter and asked him, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the Temple tax?”

25 “Yes, he does,” Peter replied. Then he went into the house.

But before he had a chance to speak, Jesus asked him, “What do you think, Peter? Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered?”

26 “They tax the people they have conquered,” Peter replied.

“Well, then,” Jesus said, “the citizens are free! 27 However, we don’t want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a large silver coin.* Take it and pay the tax for both of us.”

The Greatest in the Kingdom

18 About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”

2 Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. 3 Then he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

5 “And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf* is welcoming me. 6 But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.

7 “What sorrow awaits the world, because it tempts people to sin. Temptations are inevitable, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting. 8 So if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It’s better to enter eternal life with only one hand or one foot than to be thrown into eternal fire with both of your hands and feet. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It’s better to enter eternal life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.*

SAYING “NO” TO OURSELVES

Matt 16:24

When Jesus calls us to take up our cross, he calls us to leave sin. As Christians, we are called upon to do all we can, God helping us, to kill every sin in our lives (Rom 8:13). He also calls us to put aside our personal comfort and ambition to meet the needs of his kingdom. A regular job is a blessing. But Jesus gave up his carpentry to preach and meet the needs of the kingdom of God. Similarly, during his ministry Jesus had no permanent home (Matt 8:20). His prayer in Gethsemane shows his attitude (26:39). Jesus calls us to do the same.

If we’re honest, the idea of the cross may frighten us, but in Jesus we have a sympathetic Savior who urges us lovingly forward:

- He promises us that through truly following him we will know the joy of growing and being effective (John 12:24-26; 15:2).
- He warns us that comfortable selfishness ends in tragedy (Matt 16:25-26).
- He promises us that heaven will more than make up for the difficulties we experience for Christ now (2 Cor 4:17-18).

With the above, we become more like Jesus. Jesus loved us and gave himself for us (Gal 2:20). As we follow him we will find ourselves (Matt 10:39).

TOPICAL TIES

The Call to Discipleship Luke 14
The Cost of Discipleship Luke 14:25-33

CROSS-REFERENCES

17:1-8 ▶ The Transfiguration of Jesus Mark 9:2-13
17:3 ▶ Moses and Spiritual Growth Exod 6; Elijah & Elisha and Spiritual Growth 1 Kgs 19
17:14-20 ▶ Living Faith Hab 2

17:20 Some manuscripts add verse 21, *But this kind of demon won’t leave except by prayer and fasting.* Compare Mark 9:29.
17:24 Greek *the two-drachma [tax]*; also in 17:24b. See Exod 30:13-16; Neh 10:32-33. 17:25a Greek *Simon?* 17:25b Greek *their sons or others?*
17:27 Greek *a stater* [a Greek coin equivalent to four drachmas]. 18:5 Greek *in my name.* 18:9 Greek *the Gehenna of fire.*