

**NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The Gospel According to  
*Matthew*

*By Gene Cunningham*

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(2 Timothy 2:3)

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## NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

### **Preface**

While I was teaching in Myanmar/Burma in March 2019, some of my long-term, advanced students suggested that I go through the New Testament and provide basic notes, which they could then be able print as a study Bible. They specifically asked that I focus on issues that are a major area of confusion in the churches where they work. Therefore, the following commentary will focus on these five primary areas:

1. What is the nature of God's grace and how is it received?
2. What is God's plan of salvation and the clear message of the Gospel?
3. What is the Bible's teaching on the security and assurance of the believer?
4. How is the believer to live the Christian life and be effective in witness/service?
5. What does prophecy say about the last days and the order of end-times events?

### **Practical Suggestions**

These notes are purposely brief in nature. This work is not intended to be a complete commentary. All through the work I have kept in mind those who live in remote areas of our world, who labor to both understand and to teach others the Word of God. They do not have access to Bible school or seminary training. Neither are they able to afford the vast array of books available to pastors and teachers who live in more advanced countries.

I encourage all who utilize these notes to study them with an open Bible. Pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21) as you study. Read the context of the passage carefully. Look up and compare the references that are provided. Above all, let the Word of God, and not these notes, guide your insight into God's Word. As I always tell my students: "Never take my word for anything; search the Scriptures and prove what is true" (Acts 17:10–12; 1 John 4:1).

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled by means of the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

**We must be believers in Jesus Christ** (John 3:16).

It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that, apart from spiritual birth, man is blind to the things of God. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again"* (John 3:6).

**We must be filled by means of the Spirit** (1 Cor. 2:12).

Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When *"we confess our sins,"* God is always *"faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.

**We must approach in faith** (Heb. 11:6).

Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

## DEDICATION

*“This will be written for the generation to come,  
that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.”*

Psalm 102:18

While it is my hope and prayer that these notes will be helpful to all current students of the Word of God, I send them forth with a special dedication to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are yet to come on the scene of world history (Rev. 7:1–8). They will be the heroes of the faith in the coming time of Tribulation following the soon coming Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

To these brothers and sisters of the future, I want you to know you have been thought of, prayed for, and loved—before you even knew your mission. We of the Church Age salute you for the sufferings you will endure and the victories you will win. We bid you to be strong in the Lord, for your victory is sure in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the labor put into these notes by many hands and through many prayers, be a help to you as you boldly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in a dark and dangerous time!

## INTRODUCTION

The book of Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels. Its theme is the presentation of the King and the offer of His kingdom, and His rejection by the Nation of Israel as a whole. The result was His crucifixion and resurrection.

The book begins, “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*” (Matt. 1:1). It reaches its climax with the crucifixion of Jesus, under the sign posted by Pilate, “*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews*” (Matt. 27:37). The conclusion of the book is the commissioning of the apostles to carry the message of the Gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18–20).

Matthew has been called “the Gospel of Judgment” because of Jesus’ condemnation for their unbelief (Matt. 8:12; 23:13–39) and His prophecies of future judgment (Matthew 24–25). However, Israel’s rejection of the Savior opened the door for the formation of the Church, fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 9:26–27, and the grafting in of the Gentiles into the root of Israel (Rom. 1:16, 11:24–28) until the time of the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18) and the restoration of Israel through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Matthew was completed by the year 60 A.D. This was just six years before the beginning of the Jewish-Roman war that resulted in the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the Nation of Israel. This Gospel was a final warning to Israel of God’s impending wrath for their unbelief.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

### MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

The miraculous conception of Jesus by the virgin Mary was a fulfillment of prophecy.

#### **The Genealogy of Jesus**

Matthew 1:1–17 (Luke 3:23–38; Ruth 4:18–22)

**1:1** “*Jesus Christ*” (Messiah). This genealogy shows “*Jesus*” (meaning “the salvation of the Lord”) to be the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–17) and also of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 22:14–18).

**1:3–16** “*Tamar ... Rahab ... Ruth ... the wife of Uriah ... Mary.*” It was not customary to mention women in ancient Jewish lineages. These five women show the power of God’s grace to transform lives. Though Mary was a pure virgin, each of the other women was compromised by either sinful conduct or nationality. Yet God’s grace transforms the most defiled, making them heroes of the faith.

**1:6** “*David ... begot Solomon.*” It is here that the lineages of Matthew and of Luke separate. Matthew follows the lineage of Joseph through Rehoboam, which includes Jeconiah (Matt. 1:11). It was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 22:24–30; Jer. 36:29–31) that none of Jeconiah’s (Also called “Jeconiah,” “Coniah,” and “Jehoiachin”) descendants would sit on the throne of David, due to his evil reign (2 Kings 24:8–9; 2 Chron. 36:9–10). While Matthew follows the line of Joseph—Jesus’ legal right to the throne; Luke follows the line of Mary through Nathan (Luke 3:31)—Jesus’ physical link to David. This is why Luke writes, “*(as was supposed) the son of Joseph,*” (Luke 3:23), since Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.

**1:16** “*of whom was born Jesus.*” The word “*whom*” is feminine, referring to Mary. Matthew is careful to protect Jesus from any physical link to Joseph (note: “*before they came together,*” v. 18). The virgin birth is essential to the story of the Person and work of Christ.

#### **The Supernatural Conception and Birth of Jesus Christ**

Matthew 1:18–25 (Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–21)

**1:19** “*Joseph her husband.*” From the point of engagement/betrothal on, the Jews considered a couple to be bound to each other legally. Jacob considered Rachel his wife, even before they came together.

**1:20** “*conceived ... of the Holy Spirit.*” The conception and birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary was essential for Him to be born without a sin nature and able, therefore, to be the Savior of the world. In other words, He was not born under the sin of Adam. See Genesis 5:3 and Romans 5:12.

**1:21–23** “*Jesus ... Immanuel.*” Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 to show that this virgin-born son was “*God with us.*” The name “*Immanuel*” reveals His identity as God in the flesh, and “*Jesus*” reveals His purpose—to bring the salvation of God to mankind.

**1:24–25** “*Joseph ... did not know her.*” Mary remained a virgin until the birth of Jesus, after which she and Joseph had other children (Matt. 13:55–56).

**1:25** “*And he called His name Jesus.*” In obedience to God’s command (v. 21), Joseph gave Him the name “*Jesus,*” which is the equivalent of the Hebrew name “*Joshua.*” It means both “the Lord is salvation” and “salvation is of the Lord.” Here, at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel, he makes clear that “*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32) and also that “*there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). It is important to see that Mary referred to Jesus as “*God my*

*Savior*” (Luke 1:47). In Roman Catholic teaching, Mary is said to be sinless. Here, she acknowledges her need of a Savior, just like all other men.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 2**

The wise men from the East come to worship; Herod plots to kill Jesus.

### **The Coming of the Wise Men**

Matthew 2:1–12

**2:1–6** *“In Bethlehem.”* The location of Jesus’ birth was crucial for the fulfillment of the prophecy from Micah 5:2, which is quoted in v. 6. This small village was known as *“the city of David”* (Luke 2:4, 11).

**2:2** *“King of the Jews.”* The story of Jesus’ life begins and ends with this title (Matt. 27:37). *“His star in the East.”* Remember that the wise men came from the East, where they saw His star. These wise men were no doubt the descendants of those wise men of Babylon over whom Daniel was placed (Dan. 2:48). His prophecy of the final days of Israel (Dan. 9:24–27) would have been known to them. They would have been watching and waiting for the sign of this star. See Numbers 24:17.

**2:3–4** *“When Herod ... had gathered all the chief priests and scribes.”* Here, we see the beginning of the alliance of the Jewish religious leaders with the Roman authorities against the Lord Jesus. Herod was not a Jew, but an Edomite (Gen. 36:1, 8; Mal. 1:2–3; Rom. 9:13) ruling under the power of Rome.

**2:10** *“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”* The reappearance of the star, and its movement directly over the house (no longer a stable), shows that this *“star”* was miraculous—possibly even an angel lighting the way.

**2:11** *“Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”* From the days of the early church, these have been recognized as symbolic of Jesus’ deity/royalty (gold), His absolute purity (frankincense), and His substitutionary death (myrrh). Where frankincense was used for fragrance, myrrh was used for embalming the dead. These gifts would have provided for their flight to and stay in Egypt.

**2:12** *“Being divinely warned in a dream.”* Not all dreams are messages from God. Here, God used dreams to protect Jesus (Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22).

### **The Plot to Kill the Christ-Child**

Matthew 2:13–23

**2:15** *“Out of Egypt I called My Son.”* This prophecy of Hosea 11:1 is true both of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and of the deliverance of the Christ-Child through Egypt. In the Old Testament, prophecies often have a dual fulfillment.

**2:17, 23** *“Then was fulfilled ... that it might be fulfilled.”* Matthew takes great care to show that every aspect of Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection is a direct fulfillment of the ancient prophecies concerning Him. Sixteen times, from Matthew 1:22–27:35, he speaks of the fulfillment of prophecy. In His first coming, Jesus fulfilled over 330 prophecies of the Old Testament. God’s Word cannot fail!

**2:18** *“A voice was heard in Ramah.”* Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15, speaking of the wailing when Israel was exiled to Babylon. Again, Old Testament prophecies often have a near and a far fulfillment. Usually the far fulfillment is the greater.

**2:23** “*And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.*” Matthew claims this was a fulfillment of many “*prophets,*” who said, “*He shall be called a Nazarene.*” No such prophecy can be found in the Old Testament. However, several of the prophets call Him “*Branch*” (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). The root of the word Nazareth is *Netzer*, which means “branch,” and is also related to Hebrew words meaning “consecrated” (a Nazarite), “Sufferer,” and “Despised.” See John 1:46.

### **MATTHEW CHAPTER 3**

The ministry of John identifies Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior.

#### **The Baptism of Jesus**

Matthew 3:1–17 (Mark 1:1–11; Luke 3:1–22; John 1:29–34)

**3:1** “*John the Baptist.*” John was the older cousin of Jesus. See Luke 1:5–45. John was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 11:9, 11).

**3:2, 6** “*Repent ... baptized ... confessing their sins.*” John’s ministry was unique in Israel, in that he called on Jews to repent and be baptized. These were the same requirements formerly used to bring proselyte Gentiles into Judaism. John was declaring that Jews were no better than Gentiles before God. They needed to repent—that is, change their mind about their standing before God—and confess that they, like the Gentiles, were sinners. Most Jews believed that their lineage from Abraham saved them (v. 9).

**3:2** “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” It was common knowledge that the “*kingdom of heaven*” could not come until the appearance of the Messiah. It was the last promise of the Old Testament (Mal. 3:1–2; 4:1–2).

**3:3** “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness.*” The prophecy of Isaiah 40:1–8 anticipates the ministry and message of John.

**3:6** “*Baptized.*” The baptism of John is one of seven mentioned in the New Testament. As careful study shows, the word baptize (*baptizo*) does not mean to sprinkle or immerse in water but, rather, to identify the recipient with another. Three of these baptisms utilize water; four do not.

#### **Baptism without Water**

1. The baptism of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1–2). Here, Israel was identified with Moses as God’s deliverer from Egypt.
2. The baptism of the cross (Luke 12:50). Here Jesus, the Savior, was identified with sinners.
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). At the moment of salvation, the believer is identified with Christ and imputed with His righteousness. (Gen. 15:6; Psalm 32:1–2).
4. The baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11–12). This refers to the judgment of all those who do not believe. They are the chaff burned “with unquenchable fire.”

#### **Baptism with Water**

1. The baptism of John (Matt. 3:11a). This was a call to Israel to publicly confess that they were sinners (Mark 1:4–5), and also a means of identifying Jesus as the true Messiah (John 1:29–34).

2. The baptism of Jesus by John (Matt. 3:13–17; John 1:29–34). Jesus is identified as the Savior of the world.
3. The baptism of Christian believers (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 16:33). Here, new believers confess their identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

**Baptism plays no part in our salvation!** It has value only after one has believed and entered eternal life, as the first step in discipleship (Matt. 28:19).

**3:7 “Brood of vipers.”** John knew the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees to the baptism was an indication of their hypocrisy. Jesus used the same terms to refer to them in Matthew 23:13–33. **“The wrath to come.”** This is a common theme running through Matthew. He sets before them, in vv. 8–12, only two options: repentance and faith, or the wrath of God.

**3:11 “He who is coming after me.”** John’s message was focused on *“prepar[ing] the way of the LORD”* (Isa. 40:3). In Isaiah, the word *“LORD”* is Jehovah. John did not offer salvation himself, but pointed people to Jesus, who would *“save [deliver] His people from their sins”* (Matt. 1:21). **“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”** The promise of the Holy Spirit means the bringing of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–28).

**3:12 “Unquenchable fire.”** It is clear in this verse that this is the fire of everlasting judgment. These are the only two options facing all men of every nation.

**3:13 “Jesus came from Galilee ... to be baptized.”** The baptism of Jesus by John was different than that of any other man or woman. It was *“to fulfill all righteousness”* (v. 15). First, the coming of the Spirit in the form of a dove revealed Him to be the Son of God. See John 1:32–34. Second, it identified Jesus with the repentant and believing remnant of Israel as their Savior. Finally, it put the seal of God upon the ministry of John, confirming that he was a true and faithful prophet.

**3:17 “This is My beloved Son.”** This confirms Jesus as the Son spoken of in Psalm 2:7 and Proverbs 30:4. See also Luke 4:18–19, Jesus’ first public statement, where He quotes Isaiah 61:1–2, which speaks of the Spirit, the LORD (the Father), and Himself, as the first clear presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 4**

This covers the temptation and triumph of Jesus over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

### **The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness**

Matthew 4:1–11 (Luke 4:1–13)

**4:1 “Jesus was led ... by the Spirit ... to be tempted by the devil.”** The word *“tempted”* can be translated either *“tested”* or *“tempted.”* God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). Jesus, as man, could be *“tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:14–16; 7:25–26). The Spirit will lead us into testing (James 1:2–4, 12), but not into temptation (Matt. 6:13).

**4:3 “If You are the Son of God.”** Literally, Satan said, **“Since You are the Son of God.”** Satan knew who Jesus was, and knew that only He could turn stones into bread. If Satan could cause Jesus to sin, the plan of salvation would fail.

**4:4 “Man shall not live by bread alone.”** Here, Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. This, along with *“It is written,”* makes it clear that Jesus’ victory—both here and throughout His life—would be based on obedience to the written Word of God. The Living Word (John 1:1) was a perfect reflection of the written Word.

**4:5–6** “*The devil ... said ... it is written.*” Even the devil can use Scripture, taken out of context, to try to deceive man and accomplish his will. Satan has been deceiving mankind from the very beginning (Gen. 3).

**4:7** “*You shall not tempt the Lord your God*” (Deut. 6:16). In times of trial and temptation, we are to trust God, but never to test Him. He always proves Himself faithful to those who trust and seek after Him (Heb. 11:6).

**4:10** “*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve*” (Deut. 6:13; 10:12). Jesus defeated the devil by using God’s Word at every temptation. This is the example of how we are to be victorious also.

**4:11** “*Then the devil left Him.*” James gives us the promise, “*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). These three temptations illustrate the three signs of loving the world (1 John 2:15–17). “*Angels came and ministered to Him.*” Angels are also servants to those who believe in Jesus, though we may never see them (Heb. 1:14; 13:1–2).

### **Jesus Begins His Ministry in Capernaum**

Matthew 4:12–25 (Mark 1:14–39; Luke 4:14–44)

**4:12–13** “*Jesus heard ... He departed ... and dwelt in Capernaum.*” The arrest of John was the beginning of persecution by the religious and political leaders. Capernaum was known for the great signs Jesus did there and for their unbelief (Matt. 11:23–24).

**4:15–16** “*Light has dawned.*” This quote is from Isaiah 9:1–2 and foretells of Jesus as “*the light of the world*” (John 1:4–5, 9; 8:12). This prophecy also anticipates Jesus’ ministry to the Gentiles.

**4:17** “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” Jesus is the fulfillment of John’s message (Matt. 3:2, 11): The King is announcing the coming of His kingdom. Again, this repentance was a confession of sinfulness and a turning in faith to the only One who could give righteousness (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 5:17–18). The “*kingdom*” here refers to the rule of God, brought to Earth through Jesus Christ, and exemplified in His people (Matt. 6:10).

**4:19–20** “*Follow Me.*” This was a typical call of a rabbi to those chosen to be his disciples. It would take three years of following Him—learning from Him—before the disciples were ready to become “*fishers of men.*” (see The Great Commission in Matt. 28:18–20). Note the immediate response of Peter, Andrew, James, and John in v. 20.

**4:23** “*Jesus went about ... teaching ... preaching ... and healing.*” This is the guide for all true ministry. We first teach those who believe (Matt. 5:1–2), then we preach (evangelize) to those who do not yet know Him (Matt. 4:17), and then we meet physical needs as we are able (Matt. 4:24). The spiritual needs of men always come before the physical needs, but we do not ignore the needs of the body (James 2:14–16).

**4:25** “*Great multitudes followed Him.*” Jesus’ popularity with the common people was the cause of the envy and hatred of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 5**

The Sermon on the Mount: Jesus presents the law of His kingdom.

### **The Beatitudes**

Matthew 5:1–12 (Luke 6:20–26)

**5:1** “*The multitudes.*” This is also mentioned in Matthew 4:25 and in 7:28, where the Greek word for “*multitudes*” is the same word but translated “*the people.*” “*His disciples came to Him.*” Although Jesus addressed His teaching

to His disciples, who had already believed in Him, the crowd was also listening. **“He was seated.”** At that time, it was typical for rabbis to sit down to teach.

**5:2 “Then He ... taught them.”** Here, the Lord who wrote the Law at Sinai (Exod. 31:18) expounds its true meaning (see additional note in Matt. 5:17). Only those who are *“born again [from above]”* (John 3:3) and empowered by the Holy Spirit are able to obey it (Rom. 8:1–4; Gal. 5:16, 18).

**Note:** In vv. 3–11 we see a series of steps in the spiritual development of the disciple.

**5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”** This statement sets the tone for all of the Beatitudes. In Greek, there are two words for *“poor.”* One means *“to have very little, to be in need.”* Matthew uses the second word, meaning *“absolutely destitute.”* To be *“poor in spirit”* means spiritually destitute—to come to God with absolutely nothing to offer (Luke 18:13–14), seeking His supply for our spiritual need. This is genuine humility (1 Peter 5:5–6).

**5:4–11 “Blessed.”** Each of the other seven blessings flow out of the first. Those who come to God destitute of soul receive His grace by faith alone and, by spiritual growth, will develop the following characteristics. These beatitudes show us the blessedness of those who *“grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 3:18). The word *“blessed”* means to share God’s happiness or joy. **“Those who mourn.”** When we recognize our spiritual poverty (v. 3), we mourn our spiritual lack and seek the provisions of God’s grace.

**5:5 “The meek.”** In the original Greek language, meekness meant to be in total submission to a higher command. It is the mourning of v. 4 that leads us to surrender completely to God’s Word and will. **“They shall inherit.”** Inheritance is not equal to entering eternal life. Salvation is a free gift (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8–9). Inheritance is for those who are *“sons of God”* (Gal. 3:26, 29; 4:6–7). All believers share in the inheritance (1 Peter 1:4–5), but those who grow and serve have a greater portion (Col. 3:24; Heb. 6:12; see also Rom. 8:16–17).

**5:6 “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”** The surrender of our will to God (v. 5) will inevitably lead us to a spiritual hunger/thirst to know God through His Word. The righteousness we receive by faith in Christ, we now desire to live out in our lives (Phil. 2:3–13; 1 Thess. 1:3–10; Titus 2:11–14; 2 Peter 1:5–7).

**5:7 “The merciful.”** As we grow, our first evidence of conformity to Christ is that we show mercy to others (Mal. 6:8; Matt. 9:13; 12:7). In essence, mercy withholds judgment that is due. We show this mercy by not being judgmental toward others (Matt. 7:1–5).

**5:8 “The pure in heart.”** We purify the heart by daily confession of our sins (1 John 1:9), and by seeking the cleansing power of God’s Word (Eph. 5:26). The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to sanctify (purify) the believer from the inside out (John 17:17; 1 Thess. 4:3a; 5:23). This process of inner purification will continue throughout the life of the believer (Prov. 4:18; 2 Peter 3:18).

**5:9 “The peacemakers.”** The disciple who grows to this point becomes a living testimony to the power of God to save and to transform one’s life. Another way to say *“peacemaker”* is to say one who is a *“minister of reconciliation”* (2 Cor. 5:17–21). By consistent spiritual growth, we become His true ambassadors, and can now effectively bring others to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**5:10 “Persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”** Those who live Christ-like lives will be persecuted as He was (John 15:20; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 3:13–14).

**5:12 “Great is your reward in heaven.”** Jesus speaks often of gaining eternal reward for faithful obedience (Matt. 5:46; 6:1–2, 4, 6, 20).

### **Believers Are to be Salt and Light**

Matthew 5:13–16 (Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34–35)

**5:13–16** “*You are the salt ... [the] light.*” The lives of believers ought to have a flavor that draws the spiritually hungry and also reflects the light of Christ to the world (John 1:4–5; 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:7).

### **Jesus Reveals the True Meaning of the Law and Prophets and the Nature of True Righteousness**

Matthew 5:17–48

**5:17** “*I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.*” Jesus Christ will ultimately fulfill all Old Testament prophecy. He fulfilled the Law by obeying it perfectly. By His substitutionary death on the cross, He removes our sin and gives us His own righteousness (Rom. 3:21–26; 4:5; 5:18–19; 8:4).

**5:20** “*Your righteousness.*” The scribes and Pharisees had only self-righteousness. All human good, apart from God, is “*filthy rags*” and “*whitewashed tombs*” (Isa. 64:6; Matt. 23:27). The righteousness of God comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–22; 4:3; 1 Cor. 1:30).

### **Murder Begins in the Heart**

Matthew 5:21–22

**5:21–22** “*But I say to you.*” Jesus uses this phrase nine times in Matthew chapter 5. He contrasts His true teaching with the distorted teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. They followed the oral tradition rather than Moses (Matt. 15:2–6; Mark 7:2–13). He speaks as the Author of the Law, which caused amazement in the multitude (Matt. 7:28–29). “*Whoever murders ... whoever says, ‘You fool.’*” Jesus is showing here that hatred is equal to murder. Apart from salvation through faith in Him, we are all in danger of hell-fire (James 4:7–12).

### **Peacemakers Seek Reconciliation**

Matthew 5:23–26

**5:24** “*Be reconciled.*” This is what peacemakers do even at their own sacrifice (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:14–21; 1 Peter 3:10–12). God desires mercy more than sacrifice (Matt. 5:7; 9:13; 12:7; Luke 6:35–38; James 2:12–13; 3:17).

### **Adultery Begins in the Heart**

Matthew 5:27–30

**5:27–28** “*Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her.*” Here, Jesus shows that true spirituality is a matter of the inner condition of the heart—not just of outward conduct.

**5:29–30** “*If your right eye causes you to sin.*” Jesus is using hyperbole, or a figure of speech, to illustrate His point. See Proverbs 23:2. What is the point? If we removed each member of the body that commits sin, we would have to kill the entire body. As believers in Christ, we have a new birth where the “*old man*” is put to death, that the “*new man*” might live (Rom. 6:6; 8:13; 1 Cor. 15:22, 36; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10).

### **Marriage is Not to be Violated**

Matthew 5:31–32 (Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18)

**5:31–32** “*Except sexual immorality.*” The ideal of the marriage bond is that nothing short of unfaithfulness should break it. Even then, forgiveness and restoration are possible. Marriage is a reflection of the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22–33).

## **Oath Taking is Forbidden**

Matthew 5:33–37 (James 5:12)

**5:34** *“Do not swear at all.”* The taking of oaths and vows, or the use of God’s name, should not be used to give our words validity. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15; James 5:12).

**5:38** *“An eye for an eye.”* This was known as the *Lex Talionis* (law of retaliation) and was given to civil authorities to execute justice (Exod. 21:1, 23–25; Lev. 24:19–20; Deut. 19:18–21). This was never for the gratification of personal vengeance.

## **The Law of Love**

Matthew 5:38–48 (Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 13:1–13)

**5:39** *“Turn the other [cheek] to him also.”* Jesus is not forbidding defending oneself. Rather, He is teaching restraint and longsuffering when wronged. We only have two cheeks!

**5:44** *“Love your enemies.”* The law of love is the foundation of all spiritual power. Love for God cannot fail to result in love for all for whom Christ died (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37–40; 1 John 3:11–14; 4:7–11).

**5:45–48** *“That you may be sons of your Father ... therefore you shall be perfect.”* We only become “sons of God” through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14–15; Gal. 4:4–7; 1 John 3:1). We are only “perfect” when we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. The word “perfect” is also used in the New Testament for maturity or spiritual completeness (2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:12–15; Col. 4:12; James 1:4; 1 Peter 5:10).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 6**

True righteousness is hidden in the heart and brings blessings in time and rewards in eternity.

### **Spiritual Giving, Spiritual Praying, Spiritual Fasting**

Matthew 6:1–18 (2 Cor. 8:1–9; 9:6–11; Luke 11:1–4; Psalm 69:10)

**6:1** *“Do not do your ... deeds ... to be seen.”* Three outward acts of service to God—giving, praying, and fasting—are not to be for public display. Wrong motives rob us of eternal reward. See 1 Peter 3:4.

**6:2, 5** *“Do not sound a trumpet ... as the hypocrites do.”* Jesus reserved the word “hypocrite” for unbelievers who practiced outward shows of piety, but without any inner reality. He uses it in His fearful condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:13–33).

**6:2, 5, 16** *“They have their reward.”* The word translated “have” literally means “to be paid in full.” If the inner motive of the act is to be seen, that is all the reward to be gained.

**6:4, 6** *“Your Father who sees in secret.”* Jesus introduced the idea of God as the Father of those who believe. See Matthew 5:45. To Jews who would not even speak the Name of God, this was a revolutionary idea. God looks not just at the act, but at the motive (heart).

**6:9–13** *“In this manner, therefore, pray.”* Jesus gives this prayer as a model (also in Luke 11:1–4), not just something to repeat over and over (Matt. 6:7). Prayer should glorify God, seek His will, trust Him to provide our needs, forgive our sins, and deliver us from evil. See the contrast in Luke 18:10–14.

**6:14–15** *“If you forgive.”* We cannot ask God to forgive us when we refuse to forgive others. This is the same as asking God to purify us while we are engaged in sin.

**6:16** *“When you fast.”* Jesus assumed His followers would fast. It was a means of humbling oneself (Psalm 69:10), and expressed the craving of the soul for God over the need of the body for food (Neh. 1:4; Ezra 8:23; Acts 13:2; 2 Cor. 6:3–5).

### **True Spirituality of the Heart Lays up Treasure in Heaven**

Matthew 6:19–24

**6:20** *“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”* All that is done in faith and obedience in this life will be rewarded in eternity (Gen. 15:1; Psalm 19:11; Mark 9:41; 1 Cor. 3:8; James 1:12; Heb. 10:35; 11:26; Rev. 22:12).

**6:21** *“Where your treasure is.”* We keep watch over what we value. If we live for Jesus Christ and eternity, we will be careful to guard our thoughts (Prov. 4:23) and conduct for His glory (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:6–8).

**6:24** *“You cannot serve God and mammon.”* From vv. 21–34, Jesus is demonstrating the contrast between living for time versus living for eternity. Money (“*mammon*”) is the means to food, clothing, shelter, and other concerns of the body. Faith brings rest from anxiety and worry (Matt. 11:28–30).

### **True Spirituality Brings Rest from Worry**

Matthew 6:25–34

(This is the faith-rest life of Heb. 4:1–16; Matt. 11:28–30.)

**6:33** *“Seek first the kingdom of God.”* We enter God’s kingdom when we receive His righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus (Col. 1:12–14; James 2:5; 1 John 5:13). Then, kingdom life is ours when we live according to His will (Matt. 6:10; Rom. 14:17). When our spiritual priorities are right, God will provide all other needs.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 7**

This chapter deals with the outward fruits of our faith.

### **We are Not to Judge Others**

Matthew 7:1–6 (Luke 6:37–42)

**7:1** *“Judge not.”* Only Jesus Christ is fit to judge (John 5:22; James 4:11–12; 5:9). We will each be judged by how strict or how merciful we are to others (James 2:13). The Pharisee judged the publican, but the publican judged only himself (Luke 18:10–14).

**7:6** *“Do not give what is holy to the dogs ... swine.”* Dogs and swine represent those who hate Jesus Christ and persecute His people. Notice how Jesus was silent before His enemies. He did not try to answer these “*dogs*.” (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 27:14; Mark 14:60–61; 15:4–5; Luke 23:9).

### **The Power of Persistent Prayer**

Matthew 7:7–11 (Luke 11:9–13; 18:1–8)

**7:7** *“Ask ... seek ... knock.”* Our prayers should be dependent, specific, and persistent. Jesus illustrates this by the parable in Luke 18:1–8. The promise of answered prayer applies to all that is in accordance with God’s will (John 15:7; 16:23; 1 John 5:14–15).

## **The Law of Love is the Golden Rule**

Matthew 7:12–14

**7:12** *“This is the Law and the Prophets.”* This has been called the “Golden Rule” and comes from Leviticus 19:18. Jesus stressed that love for God and for others was the true goal and meaning of *“the Law and the Prophets”* (Matt. 22:36–40).

## **The Narrow Way is the Way of Faith and the Fruit of Obedience**

Matthew 7:13–27 (Matt. 12:33; Luke 6:43–45; 13:24–27)

**7:13–27** *“Enter by the narrow gate.”* This section sets before all men two ways. The narrow way is the way of faith, fruitfulness, and security. In contrast, the broad path is built on lies, evil deeds, and final destruction.

**7:16** *“You will know them by their fruits.”* This verse is often misquoted to mean we can judge who is a true believer by evaluating their life. Jesus says here that false prophets (false teachers) will always teach error and live selfish and self-serving lives (2 Peter 2:1–3). Like wolves, they feed off of the sheep. See Ezekiel 34. For outward fruits of our faith see Galatians 5:22–23.

**7:21–23** *“Lord, Lord ... I never knew you.”* The will and work of God is to believe on His Son, Jesus Christ (John 6:29; Matt. 12:50; Heb. 11:6). In the final judgment, to be known by Him as one of His flock will mean everything!

## **The Wise Man of Faith and the Foolish Unbeliever**

Matthew 7:24–29 (Luke 6:47–49)

**7:24–27** *“A wise man ... a foolish man.”* The foundation rock is Jesus Himself (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). The life built by faith and obedience will stand for all eternity (1 Cor. 3:12–15; 1 John 2:17). The fool builds life apart from Jesus Christ, and his life ends in destruction (Phil. 3:18–9; 2 Thess. 1:8–9; 2:8). *“Truly, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [wisdom]”* (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

**7:29** *“He taught them as one having authority.”* Jesus spoke as the Giver and Author of the Law. See Mark 1:22 and John 7:46. He alone could interpret it correctly. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is rebuking and correcting many false teachings of the rabbis that were current at the time.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 8**

Jesus demonstrates His authority over illness, nature, and demons.

### **Jesus’ Compassion for Those who Suffer**

Matthew 8:1–17 (Mark 1:29–31, 40–45; Luke 4:38–39; 5:12–16; 7:1–10)

**8:2** *“A leper ... worshiped Him, saying, Lord ...”* In the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus paraphrased Deuteronomy 6:13, *“You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve”* (Matt. 4:10). By accepting this leper’s worship, Jesus confirms that He is God in the flesh.

**8:3** *“I am willing; be cleansed.”* Leprosy was a picture of the defilement of sin, and the wages of death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus’ healing of the leper shows His power over sin and death.

**8:5** *“Jesus ... entered Capernaum.”* In this city, Jesus began His public ministry (Matt. 4:12–17), did most of His miracles, and was met with the most unbelief (Matt. 11:23). *“A centurion came to Him.”* The centurion was commander of one hundred Roman soldiers. Luke records that he sent servants to Jesus (Luke 7:2–6). These servants represented the centurion; there is no contradiction in the stories.

**8:9** *“I also am a man under authority.”* The centurion recognizes that just as his authority came from Rome, so the authority of Jesus came from Heaven.

**8:10** *“He marveled ... ‘I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.’”* The only other time Jesus “*marveled*” was regarding the unbelief of His own people (Mark 6:6). The only other time He spoke of “great faith” was to the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:28). Both were Gentiles, which leads to what Jesus says in vv. 11–12.

**8:11** *“Many will come from east and west and sit down ... in the kingdom.”* Jesus is referring to a prophecy in Psalm 107:1–3. It speaks of multitudes of believing Gentiles entering into His kingdom.

**8:12** *“Sons of the kingdom will be cast out.”* The phrase “*sons of the kingdom*” was a term the Jews used of themselves, based on their lineage from Abraham (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8). Jesus is saying that believing Gentiles will enter the kingdom, but unbelieving Jews will be cast out. *“Outer darkness ... weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* These phrases were well known to the Jews of Jesus’ time, being used by the rabbis for the torments of Hell. See Luke 13:27–30, where Jesus is speaking about unbelievers.

**8:17** *“He Himself took our infirmities.”* Quoted from Isaiah 53:4, all sickness is a result of the entrance of sin into the world. By dying on the cross for our sins and rising again, Jesus proved His power over all the effects of the fall of Adam.

### **The Cost of Discipleship**

Matthew 8:18–22 (Luke 9:57–62; 14:25–33)

**8:20** *“Foxes have holes ... but the Son of Man.”* The “*Son of Man*” is a title used in Messianic prophecies (Dan. 7:13–14). Jesus’ earthly life was marked by poverty and rejection. He was truly the outcast Savior (Jer. 14:8–9). Those who choose the path of discipleship will likewise suffer (Matt. 16:24–27; 2 Tim. 3:12.)

### **Jesus’ Power over Nature**

Matthew 8:23–27 (Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25)

**8:26** *“Why are you fearful?”* Fear and faith cannot coexist. Faith conquers fear, which is Satan’s most powerful tool (Heb. 2:14–15). The most repeated command in all the Bible is “*Fear not.*”

### **Jesus’ Power over Evil Spirits**

Matthew 8:28–34 (Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39)

**8:29** *“Jesus, You Son of God.”* The demons know who Jesus is, and they know He will ultimately cast them into the Lake of Fire.

**8:32** *“The herd of swine ... ran violently.”* Demonic possession can cause insanity, extreme violence, and even suicide—in both men and beasts. The story in Mark 5:1–6 focuses on only one of the men who worshiped Jesus.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 9**

Jesus’ power to heal is based on His authority to forgive sins.

### **Jesus Forgives and Heals the Paralyzed Man**

Matthew 9:1–8 (Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26)

**9:2** *“Son ... your sins are forgiven.”* The scribes rightly knew that God alone can forgive sin (Luke 5:21). They refused to accept that Jesus was God in the flesh. Jesus’ power over sickness was due to His victory over sin.

## **The Call of Matthew—Levi, the Author of This Gospel**

Matthew 9:9–13 (Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32)

**9:9** *“A man named Matthew.”* Here, we meet the author of this Gospel. As a tax collector, he would be hated by the Jews as a traitor working for Rome.

**9:10** *“As Jesus sat ... in the house.”* Most likely, this was Matthew’s house. The guests would be Matthew’s friends. Tax collectors and sinners were considered one and the same group.

**9:13** *“I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”* This quote from Hosea 6:6 is used again in Matthew 12:7. The Pharisees were meticulous about observing the Law and offering sacrifices and tithes over the smallest things (Matt. 23:23), yet their hearts were dark and hard. Those who think they are righteous have no need of a Savior, just as those who are healthy will not seek a physician. Jesus had compassion, both on the sick and the sinful, but could not help the self-righteous.

## **Jesus Questioned about Fasting**

Matthew 9:14–17 (Mark 2:18–22; Luke 5:33–39)

**9:14–17** *“We ... fast ... but Your disciples do not fast.”* Fasting was most often a sign of sorrow, or of repentance (Esther 4:3; Psa. 35:13; 69:10). Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah by using the term *“bridegroom,”* as did John (John 3:29). Jesus came to bring the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6; 12:24). Any attempt to force this *“new wine”* into the *“old wineskins”* of the Old Covenant would destroy both.

## **Jesus’ Power over Death**

Matthew 9:18–26 (Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56)

**9:22** *“Be of good cheer ... your faith has made you well.”* Much greater than physical healing is the healing of the soul. This can be done only by faith in Jesus—the Great Physician.

## **Jesus Heals the Blind**

Matthew 9:27–31 (Matt. 11:5; Mark 8:22–25; Luke 4:18; 7:21)

**9:29** *“According to your faith.”* God values faith above all other virtues. This is because faith is an expression of our total helplessness and reliance upon His grace alone. Any attempt to add our works to His grace is an act of unbelief.

**9:30** *“See that no one knows.”* See Matthew 8:4. Jesus did not want people seeking Him only for physical healing. Rather, He wanted people seeking Him for cleansing from sin.

## **The Pharisees Accuse Jesus of Working Miracles by Satan’s Power**

Matthew 9:32–34

**9:34** *“The ruler of the demons.”* They are referring to Satan, also known as *“Beelzebub.”* See Matthew 10:25 and Luke 11:15. They are accusing Jesus of being in league or association with the devil.

## **Jesus Shows Compassion on the Multitudes**

Matthew 9:35–38 (Luke 10:1–3)

**9:35** *“Teaching ... preaching ... and healing.”* As in Matthew 4:23, these are the activities of true ministry, in their proper order.

**9:38** *“Pray the Lord of the harvest.”* God the Father is referred to here, although the Holy Spirit, who both guides the messenger of the Gospel and convicts the hearts of men (John 16:7–13), could also be included.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 10**

Jesus gives power, instruction, and authority to the twelve disciples.

### **The Mission of the Twelve**

Matthew 10:1–15 (Mark 3:13–19; 6:7–13; Luke 6:12–16; 9:1–6)

**10:1** *“He ... called His twelve disciples.”* Jesus had just asked the disciples to pray for workers in God’s harvest field. It is possible that these twelve, excepting Judas, were the ones who were praying.

**10:2–4** *“The names of the twelve.”* Peter is always named first in every list. Here, they are named in pairs, probably the way that they were sent out. See Luke 10:1–2.

### **Instructed for Ministry and Warned of Persecution**

Matthew 10:5–42 (Mark 6:7–13; 13:9–13; Luke 9:1–6; 21:12–17)

**10:5–42** *“Jesus ... commanded them.”* The commands for this missionary effort were:

1. They were to go only to Israel, vv. 5–6.
2. They were to proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven, and thus the King, were at hand, v. 7.
3. They were to offer freely what they had been given in grace, v. 8.
4. They were not to take provisions, vv. 9–10.
5. They were to bring either peace or judgment, based on the response of the people, vv. 11–15.
6. They were to expect and endure persecution, vv. 16–25.
7. They were to be bold and fearless in proclaiming the truth, vv. 26–31.
8. They were to be willing to take up the cross (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) of discipleship, looking for their reward in eternity, vv. 32–42.

There is much here that ministers/pastors and missionaries today should carefully consider.

**10:42** *“Shall by no means lose his reward.”* Though serving the Lord here is met with unbelief and persecution, we have the assurance of eternal reward for all faithful service (1 Cor. 3:8; Heb. 10:35).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 11**

Jesus declares blessing on all who believe in Him and calls for judgment on all who reject Him.

### **John’s Question to Jesus, and the Lord’s Praise of John**

Matthew 11:1–19 (Luke 7:18–35)

**11:1** *“Jesus ... departed ... to teach and to preach.”* Like John, the disciples go before Him to prepare for His coming.

**11:2** *“John ... heard in prison ... ‘Are You the Coming One?’”* In the loneliness of prison, John begins to question if Jesus is the promised Messiah.

**11:4–19 “Go ... tell John.”** Jesus reassures John that He is the Messiah—based on His works (Matt. 11:5; Isa. 29:18–19; 35:4–6; 61:1–3). John, no doubt, expected Jesus to execute judgment (Joel 2:1–2, 30–32; Obad. 17–18; Zech. 14:1–15; Mal. 3:2–18), not realizing these were Second Coming prophecies.

**11:10 “This is he of whom it is written.”** Jesus said that John fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 3:1, as well as Isaiah 40:1–8. Jesus declares him to be the greatest man ever “*born of women*,” yet not as great as the “*least in the kingdom of heaven*.”

**11:12 “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence.”** John’s ministry resulted in both violent opposition as well as “*great multitudes*” seeking to hear Jesus (Matt. 5:1; 8:1, 18; 9:8, 36).

**11:14 “If you are willing ... he is Elijah.”** Had Israel accepted Jesus as Messiah, John would have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy (Mal. 4:5; Luke 1:17). Since they rejected Him, Elijah will come yet before His Second Coming (Rev. 11:3–12).

**11:18–19 “John came ... the Son of man came.”** Jesus shows, by the contrast of Himself with John, that neither the strict conduct of John, nor the joyful conduct of Jesus, was accepted by the religious leaders. The Jewish religious leaders accused both John and Jesus of demon possession (Matt. 9:34; 11:18). “*Wisdom is justified by her children*.” Those who responded to John’s message and trusted in Jesus Christ, vindicated the wisdom of God in providing salvation by grace through faith. By believing, they showed themselves to be children of God’s wisdom.

### **Jesus Declares Judgment on the Unrepentant Cities**

Matthew 11:20–24 (Luke 10:13–16; also Gen. 19:12–14)

**11:20 “Cities ... most of His mighty works ... they did not repent.”** Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were close together. In spite of seeing and hearing of His mighty miracles, they largely rejected His claim as Messiah/Savior. Their unbelief, in the face of greater evidence, would bring greater judgment.

**11:22–23 “Tyre and Sidon ... Sodom.”** It was in the region of Tyre and Sidon that Jesus commended the Canaanite woman for her great faith (Matt. 15:28). His point is that greater judgment will be given where greater privilege and light has been given (Luke 12:48).

### **God Gives Grace and Rest to the Humble; Jesus Calls All to Himself**

Matthew 11:25–30 (Luke 10:21–22)

**11:25 “I thank You, Father.”** Jesus declares that God reveals His truth to those of child-like faith (Matt. 18:1–5). Those who assume they are wise are blinded (Rom. 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:18–31).

**11:27 “To whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”** As in Matthew 5:3–10, God reveals Himself to the humble in heart. Jesus declares, in John 14:6–7, that no one can come to the Father but through simple faith in Him. In the following verses, 28–30, it is clear that Jesus invites all to find rest of soul in Him.

**11:28–30 “Come to Me ... I will give you rest.”** There are two invitations here and two kinds of rest. The first (v. 28) is to come to Jesus in faith to find eternal rest from the burdens of sin and death. The second (v. 29) then, after our salvation, is to take up the yoke of discipleship—to learn from Him (Eph. 4:20–24) and to find daily rest in His service (Heb. 4:8–11). This promise of “*rest*” points us directly to the “*Sabbath*” questions of Matthew 12:1–8.

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 12

The Pharisees, jealous of the multitudes following Jesus, increase their attacks on Him.

### **Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath**

Matthew 12:1–14 (Mark 2:23–28; 3:1–6; Luke 6:1–11)

**12:1–2** *“On the Sabbath.”* The Pharisees had added many rules and regulations for Sabbath observance that were not part of Moses’ Law. According to the teaching of the rabbis, the disciples broke two Sabbath laws: First of harvesting, and second of threshing—both of which were considered labor. In their view, these offenses required that sacrifice for cleansing be offered.

**12:3–8** *“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”* Jesus responds to the attack of the Pharisees with four arguments: David and his men ate consecrated bread and were guiltless because they were about the service of the Lord (1 Sam. 21:6). Also, David was the Lord’s anointed (1 Sam. 16:13). Second, even the priests in the Temple worked on the Sabbath, but also were in service to the Lord. Yet, He Himself was greater than the temple. Third, quoting Hosea 6:6, God declares that He desires mercy more than sacrifices. Finally, Jesus declares Himself *“Lord ... of the Sabbath,”* a direct claim to be God in the flesh.

**12:9–14** *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”* Since the Pharisees considered healing a work, it was not to be done on the Sabbath. They were more interested in keeping rules and regulations than in helping the needy.

**12:12** *“How much more value ... is a man than a sheep?”* Jesus reveals their hypocrisy. They would deliver a sheep, but not a man!

**12:14** *“Then the Pharisees ... plotted ... how they might destroy Him.”* The opposition of the Pharisees now hardens into the plot to kill Jesus.

### **The Ministry of Jesus Fulfilled Prophecy**

Matthew 12:15–21

**12:17–21** *“That it might be fulfilled.”* Matthew repeatedly shows Jesus’ words and works to be a fulfillment of prophecy, here from Isaiah 42:1–4. This passage includes His ministry to Gentiles and His graciousness and gentleness to the weak and wounded.

### **The Unpardonable Sin of the Pharisees**

Matthew 12:22–32 (Mark 3:20–30)

**12:23** *“Could this be the Son of David?”* This title spoke of the coming King from the lineage of David, who would fulfill the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–17; Matt. 9:27; 21:9).

**12:24–37** *“Blasphemy against the Spirit.”* The Pharisees repeatedly rejected Jesus’ claims to be the Messiah/Savior. Their unbelief brought about the increasing hardening of the heart (Rom. 1:18–32; Eph. 4:17–19) that led to accusing Jesus of being an agent of the devil. It is possible for anyone to harden his heart to the point where God seals him in that hardness (Rom. 9:18). Once this point is reached, there is no chance of repentance or faith. The unforgivable sin is continued refusal to believe in Jesus Christ (Matt. 21:41; John 3:16–19, 36).

**12:29** *“Then he will plunder his house.”* By Jesus’ words and works, He was binding Satan and setting free his slaves.

**12:30** *“He who does not gather with Me.”* Either we receive Jesus, or we reject Him. There is no middle ground. Either we work with Him, or against Him. This is true of all mankind.

**12:31** *“Blasphemy against the Spirit.”* This refers to persistent unbelief in the face of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11; Heb. 3:7–15).

### **Every Tree is Known by Its Fruit**

Matthew 12:33–37 (Matt. 7:15–20; Luke 6:43–45)

**12:33** *“A tree is known by its fruit.”* We identify a tree by the kind of fruit it produces (James 3:12).

**12:34** *“Brood of vipers!”* This accusation links them to their father, Satan (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9). *“For out of the ... heart the mouth speaks.”* Our words reveal the condition of our heart.

**12:37** *“For by your words you will be justified ... condemned.”* With our mouth we express our faith or unbelief (Luke 19:22; Rom. 10:8–13).

### **The Sign of Jonah: Jesus Predicts His Resurrection**

Matthew 12:38–42 (Luke 11:29–32; John 2:18–22)

**12:38–40** *“The sign of the prophet Jonah.”* Jesus predicts His burial and resurrection. He also affirms that the story of Jonah actually happened.

**12:41–42** *“Greater than Jonah ... Solomon.”* The witness of Jesus’ words and works was greater than all others combined.

### **Reforming the Life Without Renewing the Soul Leads to a Worse End**

Matthew 12:43–45 (Luke 11:24–26; see 2 Peter 2:18–22)

**12:43–45** *“The last state ... is worse than the first.”* Moral reform without regeneration (new birth) leaves a vacuum that even greater evil can fill. Jesus came into a dark world with the light of God (John 1:4–5, 9–11; 8:12). Many of His generation rejoiced in His mighty works, but would not receive Him as Savior. The spiritual vacuum of the nation after His crucifixion would be filled with even worse evil.

### **The True Family of Jesus is Those who Believe**

Matthew 12:46–50 (Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21)

**12:48–50** *“Who is My mother ... whoever does the will of My Father.”* Jesus declares that the spiritual bond between Him and those who believe in Him is greater than flesh and blood. It is the Father’s will that we believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (Matt. 18:14; John 6:29, 40).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 13**

In the face of growing hostility and unbelief, Jesus begins teaching in parables about the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.

### **The Parable of the Sower**

Matthew 13:1–9 (Mark 4:1–9; Luke 8:4–8)

**13:3** *“He spoke ... to them in parables.”* A parable is a story from daily life containing spiritual lessons. A parable generally has one main truth that is being stressed.

**13:3–9** *“Behold, a sower went out to sow.”* This parable is explained in vv. 18–23. The ultimate lesson is that we all, as disciples, ought to be like the good soil and bear much fruit.

**13:9** *“He who has ears.”* We all have physical ears, but Jesus is speaking of spiritual ears of faith—humble and willing to listen to spiritual teaching.

### **The Purpose of the Parables**

Matthew 13:10–17 (Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10)

**13:10–17** *“It has been given to you.”* The Spirit of God reveals the truth of His Word to those who come in faith. They cannot be understood by human intellect (1 Cor. 2:9–16). These parables were designed to conceal truth from unbelievers, but to reveal it to His disciples (Isaiah 6:9–10).

**13:12** *“Whoever has ... does not have.”* Faith will always multiply and increase; unbelief will always diminish and lose, even though truth was given.

**13:17** *“Many prophets and righteous men desired.”* With the coming of Jesus, the desire of the prophets was fulfilled. We experience things they could only hope for (1 Peter 1:10–12).

### **Parable of the Sower Explained**

Matthew 13:18–23 (Mark 4:13–20; Luke 8:11–15)

**13:23** *“He who received seed on the good ground.”* God’s Word can only be received by simple childlike faith (Matt. 18:1–4; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:17; John 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:12–14; Col. 2:6). Those who receive it will bear fruit to varying degrees. Let us strive to bring forth *“much fruit”* (John 15:2–5) by abiding in Him!

### **The Parable of the Tares**

Matthew 13:24–30

**13:24–30** *“His enemy ... sowed tares.”* This parable is explained in vv. 36–43. Jesus is showing that between His First and Second Coming, it will be difficult to distinguish His true followers from false teachers and false disciples. Remember that when Jesus taught this, Judas, a tare, was present (John 6:63–64, 70–71; 13:10–11).

**13:30** *“Let both grow together until the harvest.”* The harvest refers to the judgment at Jesus’ Second Coming. See v. 42 with Revelation 14:14–20; 19:11–21. John the Baptist warned of the same judgment (Matt. 3:11–12).

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

Matthew 13:31–32 (Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19)

**13:31–33** *“Like a mustard seed ... like leaven.”* Though Jesus began with only eleven true disciples, His kingdom would spread throughout the world. This Gospel ends in Matthew 28:18–20 with the commission to go into all the world. The Book of Acts shows the growth of the kingdom in the early Church. (Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:32; 8:4–6).

### **The Parable of the Leaven**

Matthew 13:33–35 (Luke 13:20–21)

**13:34–35** *“Things ... kept secret from the foundation of the world.”* Jesus introduced new revelation never before revealed. These are called “mysteries” and were further developed by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 11:25; 16:25–26; Eph. 3:3–12; Col. 1:26–27; 1 Tim. 3:16).

## **Jesus Explains the Parable of the Tares**

Matthew 13:36–43

**13:38** “*Sons of the kingdom.*” The Jews assumed they were “*sons of the kingdom*” by relationship to Abraham (Matt. 3:9). Jesus told them that even so they would be cast into Hell for their unbelief (Matt. 8:12). Here, Jesus uses the term for those who have received Him by faith.

## **Parables of the Value of the Kingdom**

Matthew 13:44–46

**13:44–46** “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure ... one pearl of great price.*” Nothing on this Earth is worth sacrificing the kingdom of God for (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36). The decision to follow Christ often means willing to let go of this life (Phil. 1:21; 3:7).

## **The Parable of the Dragnet**

Matthew 13:47–50

**13:47–50** “*Like a dragnet ... cast into the sea.*” The work of disciples is to gather as many as possible to hear the Gospel message. At the end of the age, when Jesus returns, His angels will separate the wicked (unbelievers) from the just (believers) (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 14:14–20). Note that in Revelation 14, Jesus harvests the believers; the angels harvest the unbelievers.

## **The Wise Scribe (Teacher)**

Matthew 13:51–52

**13:52** “*Treasure ... new and old.*” Every scribe (teacher) who is well instructed about the kingdom is able to present treasures of truth, bringing together the old (Old Testament) and the new (New Testament).

## **Jesus Rejected in Nazareth**

Matthew 13:53–58 (Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:16–30)

**13:55–56** “*His brothers ... His sisters.*” Mary was a virgin until the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:24–25). After that, Jesus’ half-brothers and half-sisters were born (Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19).

**13:57** “*They were offended at Him.*” The wisdom of Jesus, along with His miracles (v. 54), should have convinced them of His identity as the promised Messiah. Instead, because of their familiarity with His family, they rejected Him. Familiarity tends to result in contempt.

**13:58** “*Because of their unbelief.*” Jesus did not “*cast [His] pearls before swine.*” See Matthew 7:6.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 14**

Herod’s fear; the death of John; the feeding of five thousand; Jesus walks on water.

## **John the Baptist Beheaded by Herod**

Matthew 14:1–12 (Mark 6:14–29; Luke 9:7–9)

**14:1–2** “*Herod ... heard ... about Jesus.*” This was one of the three sons of Herod the Great. His guilty conscience feared that John had been raised from the dead.

**14:3–12 The death of John.** *“It is not lawful for you to have her”* (v. 4). Herod (son of Herod the Great) and Herodias (granddaughter of Herod the Great) both left previous marriages to be united. This was an act of incest (Lev. 18:8–18). John was put to death for faithfully rebuking Herod.

### **The Feeding of Five Thousand**

Matthew 14:13–21 (Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)

**14:13–21 The feeding of the “multitudes.”** This miracle is the only one recorded in all four Gospels (Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6). Here, we see that the ministry of Jesus was motivated by love and compassion, accomplished by divine power, made use of little to do great work, and was above and beyond the need. All of us, like the small boy (John 6:9) have something to surrender to the Lord that He is able to multiply for His glory.

### **Jesus Walks on the Sea**

Matthew 14:22–33 (Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21)

**14:22–33 Jesus walks on the water.** As was His custom, Jesus retired alone to pray. See Mark 1:35. In the fourth watch of the night (v. 25, 3–6 a.m.), Jesus demonstrates His power over nature. Only God could do this. Peter was at first bold, then fearful, because he took his eyes off the Lord. Great faith never loses sight of Jesus Christ as the Master over all of life’s problems. Fear always leads to doubt (1 Tim. 2:8).

**14:27 “Be of good cheer! It is I.”** Jesus is literally saying, “I AM,” the name of God (Exod. 3:14). In John 8:24, Jesus said, *“If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”* See again the note on Matthew 1:21–23.

### **The Healing Power of Jesus**

Matthew 14:34–36 (Mark 6:53–56)

**14:34–36 “Beggd Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment.”** These people had no doubt heard of the faith of the woman recorded in Matthew 9:20–21. Our faith is great only when we trust in the greatness of the Savior (Matt. 8:10).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 15**

Jesus rebukes the religious leaders but shows compassion on the common people.

### **Defilement Comes from Within**

Matthew 15:1–20 (Mark 7:1–23)

**15:1–2 “Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders.”** The hatred of the religious leaders intensifies through the book of Matthew. The rabbis had taken laws that applied to the priesthood (Lev. 22:1–16) and applied them to everyone. See also Mark 7:2–4.

**15:3 “You also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition.”** Jewish culture was built around oral interpretations of the Law of Moses that sadly had become more binding than Scripture itself. The Word of God must never be replaced by any culture or tradition (Isa. 40:6–7; 1 Peter 1:24–25).

**15:4–6 “Honor your father and your mother.”** This honor included caring for aged parents. But Jewish tradition said that if you dedicate your wealth to the Temple, you are exempt from the need to care for your parents. See Mark 7:9–13. It was common to falsely pledge to give to the Temple, but then to keep it all.

**15:7–9** “*Hypocrites! ... Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*” See Isaiah 29:13. The use of the word “hypocrite” was one of Jesus’ greatest rebukes for religious pretense. See Matthew 23:13–39. It is a dangerous thing when the teachings of men overrule the Scriptures!

**15:10–11** “*What comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.*” The mouth speaks from what is in the heart (vv. 18–20; James 3:1–12).

**15:12–14** “*The Pharisees were offended.*” Here, we see the weakness of the disciples. They still feared the Pharisees.

**15:15–20** “*Out of the heart.*” The Pharisees were concerned with outward appearance (Matt. 6:1–2; Luke 11:39–44). Jesus always put the emphasis on the inner spiritual reality, not the external ritual. See Romans 6:17; Ephesians 3:16–17; Hebrews 10:22.

### **The Faith of a Gentile Woman**

Matthew 15:21–28 (Mark 7:24–30)

**15:22** “*O Lord, Son of David!*” This Gentile woman acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah/Savior.

**15:23–24** “*I was not sent except to the lost sheep ... of Israel.*” It was only right that the Jews should be first to receive the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) as both the Scriptures and the Savior had come through them. Only after Israel rejected Jesus did He give the great commission to His disciples (Matt. 28:18–20).

**15:25–27** “*Children’s bread ... little dogs.*” The Jews often referred to Gentiles as “dogs.” Here, Jesus uses a word that means “little puppies.” He is testing both her faith and her humility. Great faith always involves great humility (Matt. 8:8–10; 18:1–4; 1 Peter 5:5).

**15:28** “*Great is your faith!*” Jesus said this only twice, both times to Gentiles (Matt. 8:10).

### **Jesus Heals the Multitudes**

Matthew 15:29–31 (Mark 7:31–37)

**15:29–31** “*They glorified the God of Israel.*” Jesus is still in Gentile country (Mark 7:31). Where most of the Jews rejected Him, these Gentiles gladly received Him in simple faith.

### **Jesus Feeds Four Thousand**

Matthew 15:32–39 (Mark 8:1–10)

**15:32–39** “*I have compassion on the multitude.*” Jesus cares not only for the souls of men, but also for their daily needs (Matt. 6:11). In spite of seeing these miracles, the disciples still did not fully understand His power or His purpose. See Matthew 16:9–11.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 16**

Jesus rebukes religious evil; is identified by Peter; predicts His death and resurrection; and calls the disciples to full surrender.

### **Jesus Rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees for Their Unbelief**

Matthew 16:1–12 (Mark 8:11–13; Luke 12:54–56)

**16:1** “*The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and [tested] Him.*” These two groups were normally enemies. Their

hatred for Jesus brought them together. While Pharisees were fanatical about the Law, Sadducees were from the Priesthood, denied the future resurrection of the body, and were dedicated to wealth and luxury. Here, like the devil in Matthew 4, they are coming to tempt Jesus.

**16:3** *“You cannot discern the signs of the times.”* They rejected John’s fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 40:3–5; Matt. 3:3; 11:10), Jesus’ fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1 (Matt. 11:3), and many other prophecies which they knew. Jesus calls them *“hypocrites.”* See Matthew 23:13–29.

**16:4** *“He left them and departed.”* The word *“left”* used here means “to forsake, to abandon.” Jesus has turned His back on the religious leaders of Israel!

**16:6** *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”* Leaven is often used to indicate the power of evil teaching to spread. The doctrine of these groups was a mixture of legalism, religious pretense, worldliness, and hypocrisy.

### **Peter’s Confession of Jesus Christ**

Matthew 16:13–20 (Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–20)

**16:13** *“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”* Jesus makes a contrast between who He truly is, and what men say. The very fact that most identified Him as a prophet from the past revealed their refusal to admit that He was the promised Savior or Messiah.

**16:16** *“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”* Peter acknowledges that Jesus is both man and God, the human Messiah, and the divine Son of God. This goes back to His virgin birth and the name *“Immanuel”* (Matt. 1:23).

**16:18** *“On this rock I will build My church.”* The *“rock”* is an Old Testament title for the Messiah (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:8; Deut. 32:4; Psalm 18:2; 1 Cor. 10:4). The Church will be built on the confession of Jesus as Savior (Rom. 9:33; 10:9–13; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6–8). Jesus speaks of the Church as a future company that is distinct and separate from Israel. *“The gates of Hades [Hell] shall not prevail against it.”* This refers to the power of Satan over men through death (Heb. 2:14–15). Jesus would conquer death and Hell (1 Cor. 15:54–57; Rom. 8:37).

**16:19** *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”* Peter would open the door to the kingdom for the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2), and to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). The verb tenses show that Peter will carry out what has been decided in Heaven—not the other way around. He would be guided from Heaven.

**16:20** *“He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one.”* This restriction was only until the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection was accomplished. Then they were to tell the world (Matt. 28:18–20).

### **Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection**

Matthew 16:21–23 (Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:21–22)

**16:21** *“He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer ... and be killed, and be raised the third day.”* Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were necessary to fulfill prophecy and to provide eternal life to all who believe (Isaiah 53; Acts 2:22–35; 1 Cor. 15:3–4). It was in Jerusalem that Jesus was finally and formally rejected by Israel (Matt. 26:65–68; 27:25).

**16:23** *“Get behind Me, Satan!”* The word *“Satan”* means “opponent or adversary.” Peter, in trying to protect Jesus, was acting in opposition to the plan of God. Here, Peter was doing the devil’s bidding.

## Disciples Must Take up Their Cross

Matthew 16:24–28 (Mark 8:34–38; Luke 9:23–27)

**16:24** *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself.”* Jesus sets three conditions for discipleship: First, self-denial—the surrender of our life to His cause. Second, to take up the cross of sacrifice and service. Third, the continual following of Jesus’ plan and purpose. These are not conditions for salvation, which is faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:16, 36). Discipleship comes after we are saved by grace. While salvation is free, discipleship is costly.

**16:27** *“Then He will reward each according to his works.”* Where eternal life is a free gift (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8–9), eternal rewards are for faithful service to the Lord (Matt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18–20; Mark 10:29–31; Heb. 10:35; 11:26; Rev. 22:12).

**16:28** *“Assuredly I say to you, There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”* Jesus is referring to the coming transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:27). Only Peter, James, and John witnessed this preview of Jesus’ glory in His kingdom.

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 17

The transfiguration of Jesus; the disciples’ lack of faith; Jesus again predicts His death and resurrection.

### Jesus’ Kingdom Glory Revealed

Matthew 17:1–13 (Mark 9:1–13; Luke 9:27–36; 2 Peter 1:16–18)

**17:1–2** *“After six days Jesus ... was transfigured before them.”* The transfiguration of Jesus fulfilled His words in Matthew 16:28. His transfiguration was a confirmation of:

1. His coming kingdom, in which Old Testament saints and New Testament believers would be together with Him,
2. His identity as the Son of God,
3. Israel’s rejection of Jesus and His resulting rejection of the nation,
4. The fulfillment by John the Baptist of Malachi 4:5–6. Since John was unable to “*turn the hearts*” of Israel back to God, the kingdom would be postponed, and both Moses and Elijah would come at a later time (Rev. 11:3–12),
5. Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah). See Malachi 4:4–5 and Matthew 5:17,
6. John, as the forerunner of Jesus, whose birth, ministry, and death were a preview of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection (Luke 1:17), and
7. Israel’s rejection that would bring a curse and judgment upon the land (Mal. 4:6, the Tribulation Period). See Revelation chapters 6–19.

**17:5** *“This is My beloved Son.”* These words come from Psalm 2:7. The words, *“in whom I am well pleased,”* relate to Isaiah 42:1, and *“Hear Him!”* to Deuteronomy 18:15. All these are Messianic prophecies.

**17:9** *“Tell ... no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.”* See Matthew 16:20–21.

**17:12** *“Elijah has come already.”* The coming of John the Baptist was in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). If Israel had accepted Jesus, this would have fulfilled the prophecy (Mal. 4:5–6). Since they rejected Him, Elijah will come in the future (Rev. 11:3–10).

### **The Infinite Power of Faith**

Matthew 17:14–21 (Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43)

**17:15–16** *“Lord, have mercy ... Your disciples ... could not cure him.”* Jesus had given power to the disciples to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1; Luke 10:17).

**17:17** *“O faithless and perverse generation.”* Here, Jesus rebukes not only unbelieving Israel, but also His disciples for their lack of faith.

**17:20** *“Because of your unbelief.”* When believers doubt God’s power, they are no more effective than unbelievers. *“As a mustard seed.”* The power of faith is not in its own greatness, but rather in the object of that faith—the Lord Jesus Christ. If we doubt Him, we are powerless.

**17:21** *“Except by prayer and fasting.”* If we neglect daily spiritual disciplines in our lives, the result will always be a lack of power and effectiveness in our service to Him. James 2:14–24 describes not an unbeliever, but rather a believer who, due to lack of faith, is ineffective in good works (Titus 3:14).

### **Jesus Predicts His Betrayal**

Matthew 17:22–23 (Mark 9:30–32; Luke 9:43–45)

**17:22** *“The Son of Man is about to be betrayed.”* Jesus again predicts His death, burial, and resurrection. The sorrow of the disciples shows that they believed He would be killed but they did not grasp the promise of His resurrection. See Mark 9:30–32 and Luke 9:44–45.

### **If Our Lives Offend, We Hinder our Ministry**

Matthew 17:24–27

**17:24** *“Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?”* This was a voluntary tax to support the Temple. However, the Temple was only a shadow of the true temple in Jesus’ body (John 2:19; Heb. 4:14–16; 10:19–22).

**17:27** *“Nevertheless, lest we offend them.”* Even though Jesus was the King as well as the fulfillment of the Temple, and Peter was a son of the King, Jesus works a miracle to pay the tax to remove any cause for offense from His ministry. See 2 Corinthians 6:3–10. However, sometimes offense is necessary (Matt. 11:6; 15:12).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 18**

The power of child-like humility/faith—and forgiveness.

### **Become as Little Children**

Matthew 18:1–14 (Mark 9:33–50; Luke 9:46–50)

**18:1** *“Who then is greatest ...?”* This was one of the disciples’ favorite topics for discussion. They argued over this as they entered the Upper Room (Luke 22:24).

**18:3** *“Unless you are converted and become as little children.”* The word *“converted”* means “to turn around” or “to change direction.” It effectively defines what “repent” means—to turn from pride and self-sufficiency to humble dependence. This was the meaning of John’s call to repentance.

**18:4** *“Whoever humbles himself ... is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* Verses 3 and 4 make it clear that child-like humility is essential both to enter the kingdom, and to become great in it. The first refers to new birth, the second to spiritual growth and service. This humility is seen in Matthew 5:3. See also 1 Peter 5:5–6 and Luke 17:10.

**18:7** *“Woe to the world because of offenses.”* Three kinds of offense or stumbling are noted: of one believer against another (v. 6), of the world against believers (v. 7), and of the believer against himself (vv. 8–9). All are caused because of the lack of humility.

**18:8** *“If your hand ... causes you to sin, cut it off.”* Jesus is using strong figurative language. If we cut off each member when it causes us to sin, we would soon be dead. In practical terms, we “cut off” those members by considering them to be dead—crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:1–14; Eph. 4:17, 20–32).

**18:11** *“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”* Jesus Christ came to save, not to judge (John 3:16–17; Luke 9:56; 19:10). Simple faith in Him is the way of salvation (John 1:12; 3:36; 6:40; 20:31).

**18:14** *“It is not the will of your Father ... that one of these little ones should perish.”* “*These little ones*” refers to all who come to Him in simple, humble faith. Jesus Christ desires the eternal salvation of all men (Rom. 3:21–24; 1 Tim. 2:4–6; 4:10; 2 Peter 3:9).

### Offending and Forgiving

Matthew 18:15–35

**18:15** *“If your brother sins against you.”* Jesus turns from warning us not to offend, to teaching us how to deal with those who offend or sin against us. *“Go and tell him ... between you and him alone.”* Sin should always be dealt with privately, if possible. The more sin is publicized, the more sins it creates in response.

**18:17** *“If He refuses ... tell it to the church.”* Three steps for addressing sin are given here: first, it is private; then, with faithful witnesses, and finally, before the church. The offender is given the opportunity to correct himself privately before it is made public (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1–2). *“Let him be to you like a heathen.”* Rebellious believers who will not submit to church discipline are to be shunned by the church, so as to bring them to correction (1 Cor. 5:1–13; 6:1–8; 2 Thess. 3:11–15).

**18:18–20** *“Whatever you bind on earth ... where two or three are gathered.”* This refers to the witnesses in vv. 15–16, or the decisions of the Church Body. *“In My name”* means according to His Word and the guidance of His Spirit (Matt. 16:19; John 20:21–23; 1 Cor. 5:4).

**18:21** *“How often shall ... I forgive him?”* The Jewish rabbis taught that sin should only be forgiven three times (see Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). Peter is going far beyond what he had been taught. But Jesus teaches us to forgive always, as He does.

**18:23–34** *“The kingdom of heaven is like ...”* Jesus tells a parable to illustrate how God has forgiven us an impossible amount, and we, out of gratitude, should also forgive others (Matt. 7:1–5; Luke 7:40–50).

**18:35** *“So My heavenly Father also will do.”* God holds us accountable for both the grace we have received and the truth we have learned (Matt. 12:36; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–10).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 19

Jesus corrects Jewish misconception about various topics.

### **Teaching on Marriage and Divorce**

Matthew 19:1–12 (Mark 10:1–12)

**19:3** *“The Pharisees also came ... testing Him.”* As in Matthew 16:1, their question is not genuine. Perhaps they hoped he would side with John the Baptist, who was killed for this question (Matt. 14:3–10). *“For just any reason.”* Hillel, one of Israel’s famous rabbis, taught that a man could divorce his wife for any displeasure he found in her.

**19:4** *“Have you not read?”* This was an insult to the Pharisees, who considered themselves experts in all the Scripture. Jesus refers to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, based on God’s original order in creation.

**19:6** *“They are no longer two.”* The union of marriage is not only physical, but spiritual (1 Cor. 6:16; 7:2; Eph. 5:25–32).

**19:8** *“Moses ... permitted you to divorce.”* Here, Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 24:1–4. See Matthew 5:31–32 and Luke 16:18. *“The hardness of your hearts.”* See Malachi 2:14–16 and Hebrews 3:15.

**19:10** *“It is better not to marry.”* See Proverbs 21:19, but also 1 Corinthians 7:1–6. Marriage is designed to be a life-long commitment between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:5; Gen. 2:24). It is better not to marry than to make a mockery of marriage.

**19:12** *“There are eunuchs ... born ... made ... made themselves.”* Jesus describes those born sexually incapable, those who are castrated, and those who remain single or celibate for the sake of serving God’s kingdom. Paul was such a person (1 Cor. 7:7–8, 32–35). *“He who is able ... let him accept it.”* The decision to remain celibate must be personal and not imposed on anyone.

### **Jesus’ Love for Little Children**

Matthew 19:13–15 (Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17)

**19:13** *“The disciples rebuked them.”* They rebuked the parents for bringing their children, probably assuming Jesus was weary, or that they were unimportant.

**19:14** *“Of such is the kingdom.”* As in Matthew 18:1–4, Jesus declares that child-like faith and humility is the only way to enter His kingdom.

### **Jesus Teaches that No One Can Enter Eternal Life through Works**

Matthew 19:16–26 (Mark 10:17–27; Luke 18:18–27)

**19:16** *“What good thing shall I do?”* This ruler believed he could work his way into Heaven. This was the common belief in Jesus’ time.

**19:17** *“Why do you call Me good?”* In essence, Jesus is asking the ruler if he believed in His true identity as God. *“Keep the commandments.”* If anyone could keep all the Law of Moses, they would enter into the kingdom, because they would be perfect. Only Jesus kept the whole Law (Matt. 5:17). The Law was not given to save us, but to point us to faith in Christ (Gal. 3:10–14, 19–25).

**19:20** *“What do I still lack?”* This man knew that in all his goodness, he still lacked something. As a young man, Paul was just like this, yet he left it all for Christ’s sake (Phil. 3:1–11).

**19:21** *“If you want to be perfect.”* Jesus is not teaching salvation by a work. Rather, He is touching on the one thing keeping the young ruler from trusting and following Him. See Romans 3:21–24 and Ephesians 2:8–9. If he truly fulfilled *“love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matt. 19:19; Lev. 19:18), he would gladly give his wealth to the poor. *“You will have treasure in heaven.”* See Matthew 6:19–21.

**19:25** *“Who then can be saved?”* The disciples realize that no one could possibly earn eternal life. Jesus confirms this conclusion (v. 26), by saying that salvation is impossible for men, as only God can give eternal life to those who believe (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8–9). See Job 38–39 and Jeremiah 32:17–22.

### **Jesus Assures the Disciples of Their Eternal Reward**

Matthew 19:27–30 (Mark 10:28–31; Luke 18:28–30)

**19:27** *“We have left all ... what shall we have?”* Peter’s question is natural, as they had done what Jesus commanded (Matt. 4:18–22; 16:24–27).

**19:28** *“In the regeneration.”* Jesus is referring to His coming kingdom reign on the New Earth (Isa. 11:6–9; Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 21:1–5).

**19:29** *“Shall receive a hundredfold ... and inherit everlasting life.”* You must be a son (heir) before you can inherit. Inheritance and salvation are not the same thing. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who believe (John 3:16; 10:28; Rom. 6:23). Inheritance is the reward the sons of God receive for their faithful service to Christ (Psa. 19:11; 58:11; Matt. 5:11–12; Luke 14:12–14; Gal. 3:26; 4:1–7; Heb. 10:35; Rev. 22:12).

**19:30** *“Many who are first will be last.”* In His kingdom, Jesus will rule righteously (Psa. 89:14; 97:2). Many who promote themselves in this life will be demoted (1 Corinthians 3:8–15). Many who are cast aside in this world will be first in the kingdom.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 20**

Jesus illustrates *“the first shall be last”* and again predicts His coming death and resurrection.

### **The Parable of the Landowner and the Workers**

Matthew 20:1–16

**20:1** *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner.”* Parables use examples from daily life to teach a spiritual lesson.

**20:2** *“He ... agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day.”* This was the typical daily wage in Jesus’ time. The workers agreed to this payment.

**20:4** *“Whatever is right I will give you.”* Here, the workers trust the landowner’s fairness. There is faith involved in this agreement.

**20:6** *“And about the eleventh hour.”* Since the typical workday was twelve hours, this is one hour before quitting time. Again, the promise is that they will receive *“whatever is right.”*

**20:8** *“Beginning with the last to the first.”* Here, Jesus may be referring to Israel as those who had borne the heat of the day. The last workers could illustrate the Gentiles, who were now flocking into the kingdom.

**20:9** *“They each received a denarius.”* What the early workers had agreed to (v. 2) was also given to the late workers. The salvation God promised to Israel throughout the ages, is equally given to believing Gentiles (Rom. 2:28–3:2; 9:4–5; Eph. 2:11–13).

**20:10–11** *“They supposed ... they complained [murmured].”* Human judgment can never understand the greatness of God’s grace. We can never assume that God “owes” us anything. His grace will always surpass human reason. See 1 Corinthians 2:11–16.

**20:15** *“Is your eye evil because I am good?”* The self-righteous are always offended by the grace God shows to sinners (Mark 2:14–17; Luke 7:36–50; 19:1–10).

**20:16** *“So the last will be first, and the first last.”* The Church, which came last, will receive its rewards first (1 Cor. 3:10–15) following the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18), and also be given a greater position in the kingdom than Israel, reigning with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:9–10; 20:6).

### **Jesus Warns Again of His Coming Death and Resurrection**

Matthew 20:17–19 (Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–34)

**20:18–19** *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem ... to scourge and to crucify ... and ... rise again.”* This is the third time Jesus tells the disciples He will be crucified (Matt. 16:21; 17: 22–23).

### **Greatness in the Kingdom Comes from Suffering and Serving**

Matthew 20:21–28 (Mark 10:35–45)

**20:21** *“One on Your right hand and the other on the left.”* In the gospel of Mark, it is James and John who ask this question. Here, their mother is asking. This is a request for the two highest positions in the kingdom. See Luke 22:24.

**20:22** *“Are you able to drink the cup ... be baptized?”* Jesus is referring to His crucifixion, where He will be identified with sinners and “become sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21; Luke 12:50 and notes on Matthew 3:6 regarding baptism). All of the disciples, except John, were martyred for their faith.

**20:26** *“Whoever desires to become great ... let him be your servant.”* This is another way of explaining, *“the first shall be last.”* Greatness in God’s kingdom means being the best servant (Matt. 18:1–4; Phil. 2:5–11). King Rehoboam was given this counsel but rejected it (1 Kings 12:6–8).

**20:28** *“The Son of Man ... to give His life a ransom.”* Jesus not only foretold His death but explained its purpose. His death was to pay the debt of our sin, and to purchase eternal life for us (Isaiah 53; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:3–6). The word “ransom” was used for purchasing a slave in order to set them free (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Peter 2:1).

### **Healing of the Blind**

Matthew 20:29–34 (Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)

**20:30** *“Behold, two blind men.”* While Matthew mentions two blind men, in Mark and Luke, only one blind man is mentioned (Bartimaeus). *“O Lord, Son of David.”* They believed in Him as the promised Savior and Messiah (2 Sam. 7:12–17; Isa. 11:1–5, 10–11; 12:1–6).

**20:34** *“Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes.”* Jesus’ power to heal revealed both His love for men, and His identity as the Savior (Isa. 61:1–3).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 21

The King comes to Jerusalem; purifies the Temple; is rejected by the leaders; and warns of coming judgment.

### **The King Presents Himself**

Matthew 21:1–11 (Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–44; John 12:12–19)

**21:2–3** *“The Lord has need of them.”* The owner was a follower of Jesus. It is possible Jesus had arranged to have the animals ready.

**21:4–9** *“That it might be fulfilled.”* One of Matthew’s goals is to show how Jesus fulfilled prophecy (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35).

**21:5** *“Your King is coming ... sitting on a donkey.”* This prophecy is in Zechariah 9:9. Still, overall, the people rejected Him.

**21:9** *“Hosanna to the Son of David!”* The word *“Hosanna”* means, “Lord, save now.” See Psalm 118:25–28. In this Psalm, the Messiah is identified as God. Until this time, Jesus avoided public attention (Matt. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 17:9).

**21:11** *“Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth.”* This multitude still does not recognize Him as the Messiah.

### **Jesus Purifies the Temple**

Matthew 21:12–17 (Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–22)

**21:13** *“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”* Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. The Temple leaders would reject the animals of the poor for sacrifice, then sell others to them at twice the normal price.

**21:15–16** *“The chief priests and scribes ... were indignant.”* The leaders of the nation officially reject Jesus as the Messiah. *“Out of the mouth of babes.”* See Psalm 8:2 and Luke 19:39–40.

### **The Cursing of the Fig Tree**

Matthew 21:18–22 (Mark 11:12–14, 20–24)

**21:19** *“He came ... and found nothing ... but leaves.”* The fig tree is symbolic of Israel. Both the vine and the fig represent either God’s blessing or cursing on Israel based on their obedience or disobedience (1 Kings 4:25; Psalm 105:33; Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 5:17; Micah 4:4). Jesus came to His people expecting fruit but found only empty promises (John 1:10–11; see note on Matt. 24:32).

**21:21** *“If you have faith.”* The fig tree illustrates two great truths: First, Israel will suffer the curse of their unbelief, beginning in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Second, the disciples are to learn the power of faith for effective prayer (Matt. 7:7–11; 17:19–20; Luke 17:6).

### **Jesus’ Authority Challenged Again**

Matthew 21:23–27 (Mark 11:27–33; Luke 19:47–48; 20:1–8)

**21:23** *“The chief priests and the elders ... confronted Him ... who gave You this authority?”* Jesus refuses to answer their challenge. They have no right to question Him. Rather, He puts them on the spot with another question. Their inability to answer shows them to be unfit as spiritual leaders. John the Baptist told these very leaders that Jesus was greater than he (Matt. 3:11–15).

## Two Parables Showing Israel's Rebellion

Matthew 21:28–46 (Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19)

**21:28–31** *“A man had two sons ... Which of the two did the will of his father?”* As v. 31 shows, this parable illustrates the difference between the religious leaders and the people they considered to be sinners. The sinners repented when John came, but the leaders did not (Luke 3:1–14; 7:29–30, 37–50).

**21:32** *“You did not believe ... tax collectors and harlots believed.”* Jesus makes clear that it is faith that God accepts. Believing sinners are acceptable to God; unbelieving religious leaders are not!

**21:33** *“A certain landowner ... planted a vineyard.”* The landowner represents God, and the vineyard is Israel. (Psalm 80:8–16; Isaiah 5:1–7). The servants of the owner represent the prophets, and the vinedressers represent the religious leaders of Israel (1 Thess. 2:14–15).

**21:37** *“Last of all he sent his son.”* This represents the coming of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 3:16; Heb. 1:1–3).

**21:41** *“He will destroy those wicked men.”* Jesus trapped the religious leaders into passing sentence upon themselves (Matt. 12:37).

**21:42** *“Have you never read ... the stone which the builders rejected.”* Once again, Jesus insults their lack of biblical knowledge. The “stone” is the same as the “rock” in Matthew 16:18. Jesus Christ is the “cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22–23), and He is also the “foundation” (1 Cor. 3:10–11) of all spiritual life.

**21:43** *“The kingdom of God will be taken from you.”* During the Church Age, from Pentecost to the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18), possession of the kingdom would belong to the Church (Rom. 11:25; 1 Peter 2:4–10).

**21:44** *“Whoever falls on this stone.”* To fall on Christ in faith breaks our pride, but to be “fallen on” by Him in judgment is to be destroyed (Isa. 8:14–15; Dan. 2:44–45).

**21:45** *“The chief priests and Pharisees ... perceived that He was speaking of them.”* They realized that they were the wicked vinedressers in the parable. For this, they wanted to kill Him but feared the multitudes.

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 22

The parable of the Wedding Feast brings increased opposition.

### The Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1–14 (Luke 14:15–24)

**22:2** *“A certain king ... arranged a marriage for his son.”* God the Father is the king, and Jesus Christ is His son. The Jews rightly believed that the kingdom would begin with a wedding feast (Matt. 8:11–12; Luke 13:28–29).

**22:3** *“Sent out his servants.”* These represent the prophets sent to Israel (Matt. 23:34–35). *“Those who were invited.”* All Israel was invited to join the wedding feast in the kingdom (John 3:29). *“They were not willing to come.”* This reveals the hardness of heart of most Jews at that time. See Matthew 23:37.

**22:4** *“I have prepared my dinner.”* The word used here means the “early meal,” for those who arrived before the main feast. Israel could have been feasting with Christ before the coming of the kingdom. This was the purpose of the ministry of John the Baptist.

**22:7** *“The king ... was furious.”* Here, Jesus describes the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:1–2; Luke 21:20–24).

**22:8** *“Those who were invited were not worthy.”* By their unbelief, they (unbelieving Israel) disqualified themselves from attending (Acts 13:38–41, 46).

**22:10** *“Those servants went out into the highways.”* This verse anticipates the ministry of the apostles, who were to *“Go ... and make disciples of all the nations”* (Matt. 28:19). *“Both bad and good.”* This refers to both Gentiles and Jews. Most Jews did not believe Gentiles could enter the kingdom.

**22:11** *“A man ... who did not have on a wedding garment.”* The wedding garment was provided by the king for his guests. Here, it represents our robes of the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13–14).

**22:12–13** *“Cast him into outer darkness.”* This is the fate of all who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ (Matt. 8:12; 25:30). The Jewish rabbis used *“outer darkness”* to refer to Hell (Matt. 24:51; 25:30, 41, 46). It is most interesting that before Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples, he sent Judas away, *“and it was night”* (John 13:26–30).

**22:14** *“For many are called ... few are chosen.”* The invitation to enter eternal life is given to all, but only *“few”* receive it by faith.

### **The Increasing Opposition of the Religious Leaders**

Matthew 22:15–40 (Mark 12:13–34; Luke 20:20–40)

**22:15–16** *“Then the Pharisees ... the Herodians.”* These two groups were enemies. The Pharisees were devoted to the Law of Moses; the Herodians were supporters of Roman domination over Israel.

**22:17** *“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?”* They hoped to trap Jesus (v. 15). If He said *“Yes,”* He would side with the Herodians. If He said *“No,”* He would side with the Pharisees. Either way, the other side could attack Him.

**22:21** *“Render to Caesar ... and to God.”* The tax money bore the image of Caesar (vv. 19–21). Humans bear the image of God (Gen. 1:26; James 3:9). God has claim to our souls, but the government only to taxes.

**22:23** *“The same day the Sadducees.”* All the religious groups are now out to attack Jesus. This group denied the existence of angels and the resurrection of the body (Acts 23:8; 1 Cor. 15:12–58).

**22:24** *“Moses said ... if a man dies.”* This law, called levirate marriage, was based on Deuteronomy 25:5–10, but was not compulsory. This was the basis for the marriage of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 3–4). It was designed to provide a home and protection for the widow.

**22:29** *“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”* This was a powerful rebuke by Jesus. Because they were ignorant of the Word of God, they were ignorant of His power to raise the dead.

**22:32** *“I am the God of Abraham.”* The sacred Name of God given to Moses was *Yahweh/Jehovah*, translated, *“I AM”* (Exod. 3:14). This reveals not only God’s power, but also that He is self-existent. As the *“God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,”* He is saying that they were very much alive, therefore, proving the resurrection. Those who trust in Jesus Christ will never die (John 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 47).

**22:33** *“The multitudes ... were astonished.”* No one had ever taught that the patriarchs of Israel were still very much alive.

**22:36** *“Which is the great commandment?”* The Jews believed that there was one good work that could save them, but that it was hidden from them. See Matthew 19:16. Jesus showed them that only love, which comes from faith, can fulfill the law (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:6).

**22:37–40** *“You shall love the Lord your God ... and ... your neighbor.”* Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18. In the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1–17), the first five relate to love of God, the last five to love of our neighbor. No one can fulfill these commands except through faith and new birth.

### **Jesus Asks His Own Question**

Matthew 22:41–46 (Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44)

**22:42** *“Christ? ... whose Son is He?”* After answering three of their questions, Jesus asks them His own. There were many false views about the Christ/Messiah at this time. *“The Son of David.”* This statement was certainly true (Matt. 1:1; 21:9). However, they believed He would be merely a man. Jesus wants to prove that He is God in the flesh.

**22:44** *“The Lord said to my Lord.”* David wrote this in Psalm 110:1. It looks forward to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 7:56; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 10:11–14).

**22:45** *“If David ... calls Him ‘Lord.’”* Apart from recognizing the deity of Jesus Christ, they could not answer this question. He is both “Son of God” and “Son of David.”

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 23**

Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees and predicts the fall of Jerusalem

### **Jesus Warns Against Religious Hypocrisy**

Matthew 23:1–12 (Mark 12:38–40; Luke 20:45–47)

**23:2** *“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.”* Jesus recognizes their official position as teachers of the Law. This would change with the tearing of the veil in the Temple (Matt. 27:50–51) and Pentecost (Acts 2).

**23:3** *“They say, and do not do.”* Instead of using the Law to bring people to faith (Gal. 3:21–25), they used it to dominate the people.

**23:5** *“They do to be seen by men.”* This goes back to what Jesus warned about in Matthew 6:1–8, 16–18. They sought for recognition (v. 5), honor (v. 6), and titles (v. 7). Too many church leaders today are just like them!

**23:8** *“One is your Teacher, the Christ.”* Here, Jesus identifies Himself as the Christ or Messiah. He alone is worthy of all honor and praise (Eph. 3:21; Phil. 2:10–11; 2 Tim. 4:18; James 2:1).

**23:11–12** *“He who humbles himself will be exalted.”* As Jesus taught the disciples in Matthew 18:1–4, greatness in His kingdom will be the reward of those who humble themselves as servants (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 9:23; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12).

### **Jesus Declares Seven Woes on the Scribes and Pharisees**

Matthew 23:13–39

**23:13** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”* The word “woe” is a warning of severe judgment to come. See Isaiah 5:8–23 and Habakkuk 2:5–20. In Jesus’ mind, “hypocrite” describes the evil of religious unbelievers

(Job 13:16; Isa. 9:17; Matt. 7:5; 15:7–9; 22:18–20). ***“You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.”*** These religious leaders encouraged hypocrisy in their followers, and persecuted true believers.

**23:14** ***“Devour widows’ houses.”*** As many do today, they would use the grief of widows to promise prayers for the dead in return for offerings.

**23:15** ***“To win one proselyte.”*** Religious leaders made great efforts to convert Gentiles to Judaism, but instead of teaching them the truth of God’s Word, they loaded them down with religious duties.

**23:16–22** ***“Whoever swears by the temple.”*** This section reveals how twisted the values of the scribes and Pharisees were. They valued gold and gifts more than the Temple, which was a picture of Jesus Christ (John 2:19; Heb. 10:19–20). See also Matthew 5:33–37 and James 5:12.

**23:23** ***“Justice and mercy and faith.”*** These hypocrites were incredibly careful about outward shows of piety, but not concerned with true inward transformation. See Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 10:12, and Micah 6:8.

**23:24** ***“Strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.”*** Both of these animals were declared unclean for eating in the Law (Lev. 11:4, 20, 41–47; Deut. 14:7, 19). His point is that they focus on small things and ignore the big issues of spiritual life.

**23:26** ***“First cleanse the inside of the cup.”*** Jesus is saying that regeneration, or new birth, must come before good works (Eph. 2:8–10; 2 Tim. 2:19–22; Titus 2:11–15).

**23:27** ***“Whitewashed tombs.”*** Again, the leaders’ concern was for outward beauty, not their inward corruption. Note that from vv. 25 to 28, Jesus contrasts the inner versus the outer four times.

**23:31** ***“You are sons of those who murdered the prophets.”*** Jesus is saying that they share the same attitude, actions, and guilt of their forefathers (Acts 7:51–53; 1 Thess. 2:14–16).

**23:34** ***“I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes.”*** Jesus is identifying Himself as the God of the Old Testament.

**23:35** ***“The blood of righteous Abel to ... Zechariah.”*** Cain’s death is recorded in Genesis 4:8; he was the first martyr. The murder of Zechariah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20–22, which is the last book of the Hebrew Bible. Jesus is citing the first to the last who died for their faith. See Luke 11:51, Acts 7:51–53, and 2 Timothy 3:12.

**23:36** ***“Upon this generation.”*** He is predicting the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the destruction of the nation. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25) will give further detail.

**23:37** ***“How often I wanted to gather your children.”*** Throughout the entire history of Israel in the Old Testament, this was God’s desire.

**23:38** ***“Your house is left to you desolate.”*** The *“house”* can refer to the Temple, or the entire nation. Both will be utterly destroyed.

**23:39** ***“Blessed is He who comes.”*** This is from Psalm 118:26, which anticipates Jesus’ Second Coming. These same words were spoken by the multitude at Jesus’ triumphal entry (John 12:13). It is interesting that the verse in the middle of whole Bible is Psalm 118:8, *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”* This is the central theme of the Word of God.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 24**

The Olivet Discourse (chapters 24–25) predicts the destruction of Israel in 70 A.D. and the coming Tribulation Period. The Church is not in view here, as the mystery of the Church Age was not yet revealed (Rom. 16:25–27; Eph. 3:1–13).

### **The Coming Judgment on Israel**

Matthew 24:1–31 (Mark 13:1–27; Luke 21:5–28)

**24:1** *“Then Jesus ... departed from the temple.”* Jesus leaves the Temple for the last time, fulfilling the vision of Ezekiel about the glory of God departing (Ezek. 10:18–19; 11:22–23).

**24:3** *“Tell us, when ... and what.”* Jesus does not specify the time of the destruction of the Temple but, rather, expounds on the coming Tribulation—the *“time of Jacob’s trouble”* (Jer. 30:7).

**24:4–7** *“Take heed that no one deceives you.”* The two great dangers facing believers in the End Times are deception from *“false christs”* (Matt. 24:24) and fear from the increasing judgments (Rev. 6:1–8).

**24:8** *“The beginning of sorrows.”* The word *“sorrows”* means “birth pangs.” While these conditions mean judgment for the unbelieving world, they are evidence to believers of Jesus’ soon return (Titus 2:12–13; 2 Peter 3:8–13).

**24:9–31** *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation.”* Here, Jesus gives an outline of the Tribulation Period. This seven-year period will begin with *“tribulation”* (v. 9). At the 3 ½ year mark—halfway through—Antichrist will enter the Temple (v. 15). This will usher in the *“great tribulation”* (v. 21), which will end with the Second Coming of Christ (vv. 29–31).

**24:13** *“He who endures to the end.”* The *“end”* here and in v. 14 refers to *“the end of the age”* (v. 3). This is not teaching perseverance in the faith for salvation, but the final deliverance of believers when Jesus Christ returns (Matt. 10:22).

**24:14** *“This gospel ... to all the nations.”* The Tribulation will be a time of great evangelistic success (Rev. 6:9–17; 11:3–12; 14:6–7). The *“gospel of the kingdom”* will go back to John the Baptist’s message (Matt. 3:2), declaring that the King is coming.

**24:15** *“The abomination of desolation.”* This refers to Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 9:27) where the Antichrist will enter the Temple and proclaim himself to be God (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; 2 Thess. 2:3–4; Rev. 13:1–10).

**24:16** *“Let those who are in Judea flee.”* Here, Jesus is warning that when they see the abomination of desolation in the Temple, they should flee to the *“mountains,”* as the Antichrist will seek to wipe out the Jewish nation (see vv. 17–20).

**24:21** *“Great tribulation.”* This refers to the last half of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

**24:22** *“Those days will be shortened.”* The return of Christ will bring deliverance for His people, and judgment to His enemies (Matt. 3:12; 13:30; 25:31–33; Rev. 19:11–21). *“For the elect’s sake.”* The term *“elect”* refers to those who believe in Jesus Christ, *“the Elect One”* (Isa. 42:1). Just as we share His Sonship, so also, we share His election (Eph. 1:4–6).

**24:24** *“False christs and false prophets.”* The Tribulation will be a time of great deception for those who do not know God’s Word.

**24:27** *“As the lightning comes.”* Jesus’ Second Coming will not be hidden, but instead, *“every eye will see Him”* (Zech. 9:14; Matt. 24:30–31; Luke 17:24; Rev. 1:7; 6:12–17).

**24:28** “*Wherever the carcass is.*” The whole world will look like a battlefield covered with bodies when Christ comes.

**24:29** “*The sun will be darkened.*” The Tribulation will end with great natural disturbances (Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:30–31; Rev. 6:12–14).

**24:30** “*The sign of the Son of Man.*” The heavens will part, and Jesus will come in all His glory (Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 6:14–17; 19:11–16).

**24:31** “*He will send His angels.*” The angels will gather all who believe in Him together to enter into His kingdom (Isa. 43:5–7).

### **The Parables of the Fig Tree, the Days of Noah, and the Wise Servant**

Matthew 24:32–51 (Mark 13:28–37; Luke 21:29–36)

**24:32** “*The fig tree.*” Jesus refers to a specific fig tree—the one He cursed (Matt. 21:18–19). The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. When Israel began to blossom again as a nation (in 1948), the time of His coming would be near.

**24:34** “*This generation.*” This refers to the generation that sees the return of Israel onto the world stage. God would only recover Israel out of the nations two times (Isa. 11:10–11). “*All these things.*” These are the events of Matthew 24–25.

**24:37** “*As the days of Noah.*” This indicates a generation ripe for judgment (Gen. 6:5–6).

**24:38** “*Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.*” They were living with no thought of the coming judgment of the world.

**24:39–41** “*The flood came and took them ... one will be taken.*” This is not describing the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18). This refers to events in the Tribulation. The “taking” here is in judgment, as those taken by the flood.

**24:42–44** “*Watch therefore ... be ready.*” Like Noah and his family, those living during the Tribulation are to always be ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

**24:45–51** “*A faithful and wise servant.*” This refers to a believer who, like the wise builder (Matt. 7:24–25) builds his life on faith in Christ. The “*evil servant*” rejects Him and will suffer eternal judgment. “*Hypocrites.*” This is a term Jesus used for unbelievers. See also Matthew 23:13–29.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 25**

Three parables continue Jesus’ teaching on End-Time events.

### **The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

Matthew 25:1–13

**25:1** “*Ten virgins ... went out to meet the bridegroom.*” These virgins do not represent the Church. The Church is the “*bride*” (John 3:29; Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:7–8; 21:2, 9). These are believing Jews at the Second Coming of Christ. The term “virgin” was used in the Old Testament for all of Israel (Jer. 14:17; 31:4).

**25:2** “*Five ... were wise ... five were foolish.*” As in Matthew 7:24–27, “*wise*” refers to a believer, “*foolish*,” to an unbeliever.

**25:4** *“The wise took oil.”* Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit, as in the practice of anointing (1 Sam. 10:1, 6; 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

**25:6** *“Behold, the bridegroom is coming.”* This is a picture of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. At that time, the Church will come with Him (Rev. 19:11–16), having already been raptured (1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 4:1).

**25:9** *“No, lest there should not be enough.”* This is not selfishness but is stated to teach that spiritual preparation is personal and cannot be shared.

**25:10** *“Went in with him.”* This is a picture of entrance into the kingdom following His return (Matt. 22:1–14; Rev. 19:7–8).

**25:12** *“I do not know you.”* “You” refers to those who have never believed in Him.

### **The Parable of the Talents (Faithful and Unfaithful Servants)**

Matthew 25:14–30 (Luke 19:11–27)

**25:14** *“Called His own servants.”* All Israel was called to be God’s servants (Isa. 41:8; 43:10; 44:1).

**25:15** *“To one he gave five talents.”* A denarius (Matt. 20:2) was one day’s wage. A talent was about six thousand denarii. Israel’s “talents” are recorded in Romans 9:4–5. “Each according to his ability.” God never asks more of any of us than we are capable of, yet He desires obedience (see Rom. 12:6–8).

**25:20–23** *“Enter into the joy of your lord [master].”* Because both servants were faithful with what they were given, both received the same reward.

**25:24** *“I knew you to be a hard man.”* Those who do not understand God’s grace, always consider Him to be hard.

**25:26** *“You wicked ... lazy servant.”* This represents those Jews who, though given great gifts from God, never come to Him in faith.

**25:28** *“Take the talent from him.”* Failure to receive God’s gifts by faith is to lose them forever. This very thing happened to Judas (Acts 1:16–26).

**25:30** *“Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.”* This unbeliever will not share in the eternal kingdom promised to Israel (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 49–50; 22:13).

### **The Judgment of Gentile Nations**

Matthew 25:31–46

**25:31** *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory.”* This is a reference to the Second Coming (Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 19:11–21; 20:4–6).

**25:32** *“All the nations.”* “Nations” always refer to Gentiles. *“Sheep.”* These are believers from the nations. *“Goats.”* These are unbelievers from the nations.

**25:34** *“Inherit the kingdom.”* As in Matthew 5:5, this inheritance (reward) is for their works as believers. Entrance into the kingdom is by faith alone. Inheritance is in proportion to faithful works.

**25:37** *“Then the righteous will answer.”* Righteousness can be received only by faith in Christ (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–26; 4:3–5).

**25:40** *“The least of these My brethren.”* This refers to believing Jews who will be severely persecuted during the Tribulation Period. As in World War II, many believing Gentiles will hide, feed, and care for Jewish people.

**25:41** *“Depart from Me, you cursed ones.”* These are unbelieving Gentiles who refused to act on behalf of the persecuted Jewish believers.

**25:46** *“Everlasting [eternal] punishment ... eternal life.”* The life for those who believe and the punishment for those who reject is everlasting or eternal (John 3:18, 36).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 26**

Preparations for the Passover; the Lamb of God taken.

### **Religious Leaders Plot His Death; the Woman Prepares for His Burial**

Matthew 26:1–16 (Mark 14:1–11; Luke 22:1–6; John 11:45–57)

**26:2** *“After two days is the Passover.”* This feast celebrates Israel’s exodus from Egypt (read Exodus 12). It began the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matt. 26:17). See Leviticus 23 for the feasts of Israel. *“The Son of Man will ... be crucified.”* The sacrifice of the Passover lamb pointed forward to the crucifixion of Jesus, the *“Lamb of God”* (John 1:29, 36).

**26:3** *“Then the chief priests ... plotted to take Jesus.”* Jesus defeated them in argument/theological discussion (Matt. 22:46), and they feared the people (Matt. 21:26, 46), so their only course of action was to use deception.

**26:7** *“A woman came to Him.”* From John 12:3, we know this was Mary, sister of Martha, who was the same woman who anointed Him at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 7:37–39; John 11:2). *“Very costly oil.”* It was worth one year’s wages for a worker (Mark 14:3–5; John 12:5).

**26:8** *“His disciples ... were indignant.”* This was primarily Judas (John 12:4–6).

**26:12** *“She did it for My burial.”* Mary seems to be the only one who understood Jesus’ warnings of His coming crucifixion (Matt. 16:21; 17:22; 20:18).

**26:13** *“Wherever this gospel is preached ... as a memorial to her.”* What we do for Christ will never be forgotten (Matt. 10:42; 1 John 2:17).

**26:15** *“Thirty pieces of silver.”* This fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah 11:12–13. This was the common price for a slave (Exod. 21:32). Mary’s devotion was costly (Matt. 26:7); Judas’ betrayal was cheap. See Mark 14:10–11 and Luke 22:3–6.

### **Jesus Keeps the Passover**

Matthew 26:17–35 (Mark 14:12–31; Luke 22:7–34; John 13:1–38)

**26:18** *“I will keep the Passover”* (Exod. 12:3–14). This was one of three mandatory feasts in Israel (Deut. 16:1–3, 16).

**26:21** *“One of you will betray Me.”* Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas never believed in Him and would betray Him (John 6:64, 70–71).

**26:25** *“Lord [Rabbi], is it I?”* While the other disciples asked first (see Mark 14:19), Jesus affirms that it is Judas. The departure of Judas from the Upper Room illustrates the parable in Matthew 22:11–14.

**26:26, 28** *“This is My body ... this is My blood of the new covenant.”* After Judas leaves the room (John 13:30), Jesus reveals that His death will bring into being the *“new covenant”* (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–27). This was the *“new wine”* that would replace the old covenant (Matt. 9:17; Heb. 8:7–13).

**26:31** *“I will strike the Shepherd.”* Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7 to predict the disciples’ falling away.

**26:33** *“I will never ... stumble.”* Peter’s boast (vv. 33, 35) illustrates the truth of Proverbs 11:2; 16:18.

### **Jesus’ Prayer and Arrest in Gethsemane**

Matthew 26:36–56 (Mark 14:32–52; Luke 22:40–53; John 18:1–11)

**26:36** *“Jesus came ... to ... Gethsemane.”* Gethsemane is a garden about half a mile from Jerusalem. Its name means “oil press.” It is where olives were crushed to make olive oil. Here, Jesus, the Son of Man, was crushed in spirit before His crucifixion.

**26:37** *“He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee.”* Three times, Jesus singled out Peter, James, and John for special attention (Matt. 17:1; Luke 8:51). He was training them for leadership.

**26:38** *“Stay here and watch with Me.”* Jesus asks these three to pray with and for Him (vv. 40–41).

**26:39** *“Let this cup pass from Me.”* The “cup” is used in the Old Testament for God’s wrath poured out (Psalm 75:8; Isa. 51:17). He is speaking of the judgment of God for sin about to be poured out upon Him (Rom. 3:24–26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 2:9; 12:2; 1 Peter 2:24).

**26:42** *“Your will be done.”* Jesus shows us that the way to victory is by submission to the will of the Father (Matthew 6:10; John 6:38).

**26:49–50** *“Rabbi ... friend.”* Only in Matthew does Judas call Jesus “Rabbi,” which means “Teacher” or “my great One.” Jesus calls Judas “friend,” just as the king in Matthew 22:12 called the intruder to the wedding feast. This shows that Jesus maintained love for Judas, even after his betrayal of Him (Mark 14:43–50; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:1–11).

**26:51** *“One of those ... drew his sword.”* We know from John 18:10 that this was Peter.

**26:53** *“Twelve legions of angels.”* In the Roman army, a legion was between 3,000 and 6,000 men. Jesus could have escaped the cross if He chose, but for our sakes, He endured the cross (Heb. 12:1–3).

**26:54, 56** *“The Scriptures be fulfilled.”* This is one of Matthew’s favorite phrases (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14–15, 35; 21:4; 24:33–34).

### **Jesus Before the High Priest**

Matthew 26:57–75 (Mark 14:53–72; Luke 22:54–71; John 18:12–27)

**26:57** *“Caiaphas the high priest.”* This man was son-in-law to Annas, who continued to corruptly act as high priest (Luke 3:2; John 18:13; Acts 4:6).

**26:59** *“All the council sought false testimony.”* They knew already that they could not convict Him of sin (John 8:46; see note on Matt. 26:3).

**26:61** *“This fellow said.”* This is a lie. The council twisted His words from John 2:19–21. To the Jews, to speak against the Temple was blasphemy and cause for death (Acts 6:13–14).

**26:63** *“Jesus kept silent.”* Here, He was fulfilling Isaiah 53:7.

**26:63–64** *“I put You under oath ... It is as you said.”* Jesus boldly declares that He is the promised Messiah/Christ, knowing it will result in His death. He also refers to prophecies in Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13–14, to prove His claim.

**26:65** *“He has spoken blasphemy!”* The high priest realized that Jesus had claimed to be God by His quotes (Luke 22:69–70). The charge against Him in verses 63 and 64 was that He claimed to be the Christ (see 27:17, 22 where Pilate confirms His title).

**26:68** *“Who ... struck You?”* Jesus was blindfolded (Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64).

**26:69–75** *“Now Peter ... denied.”* The three denials by Peter fulfilled Jesus’ prophecy. There is comfort in this, for it shows that Jesus knows our failures before we commit them and still forgives us. See John 13:36–14:3.

**26:75** *“He went out and wept bitterly.”* Though Judas regretted his betrayal (Matt. 27:3–5), he was still an unbeliever and did not turn to Jesus in faith. Peter, on the other hand, had grief from his temporary lack of faith that led to true repentance (2 Cor. 7:9–11).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 27**

Jesus is condemned, crucified, and buried.

### **Jesus Led to Pilate; Judas Hangs Himself**

Matthew 27:1–10

**27:1** *“All the chief priests and elders ... plotted ... to put Him to death.”* This is why they took Him to Pilate, because Rome prohibited the Jewish council from giving the death sentence (John 18:31).

**27:3** *“Then Judas ... was remorseful.”* The feeling of remorse is not the same as repentance. Both Judas and Peter betrayed Jesus. Peter repented; Judas did not.

**27:4** *“What is that to us?”* Israel’s religious leaders knew Jesus was innocent, but wanted Him to be put to death. *“You see to it!”* See the same response by Pilate in v. 24.

**27:5** *“He [Judas] ... went and hanged himself.”* See Acts 1:16–20 for a more complete account.

**27:7–10** *“They consulted together and bought ... the potter’s field.”* This quote is recorded in Zechariah 11:12–13. Jeremiah possibly spoke this prophecy in connection with Jeremiah 19:1–6, and it was recorded by Zechariah.

### **Jesus Condemned**

Matthew 27:11–26 (Mark 15:1–15; Luke 23:1–25; John 18:28–40; 19:5–16)

**27:11** *“Are you the King of the Jews?”* Jesus was charged with claiming to be the *“Christ”* (see v. 22), therefore, also “the King of the Jews.” See 2 Samuel 7:12–13, Psalm 2:6, and Matthew 2:2. Jesus confirms that He is Israel’s promised King (Dan. 7:13–14; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3). It was for this that He was crucified (Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19).

**27:17** *“Barabbas or Jesus?”* Given the choice between Jesus, who had only done good, and Barabbas, a murderer, the religious leaders chose to set free the murderer (vv. 20–21; Mark 15:11; Luke 23:18–19; John 18:40; Acts 3:14).

**27:18** *“Because of envy.”* Pilate knew the religious leaders were envious of Jesus. Envy or jealousy is the hatred of someone who has or does something you are unable to have or do (Mark 15:10; Acts 7:9; 13:45; 17:5; Gal. 5:26; Titus 3:3). It often leads to murder.

**27:22** *“Jesus who is called Christ?”* In this chapter, Jesus is identified as *“King of the Jews [Israel]”* (vv. 11, 29, 37, 42), *“Christ”* (vv. 17, 22), and *“Son of God”* (vv. 40, 54).

**27:24 “This just Person.”** Both Pilate and Herod declared Jesus to be innocent (Luke 23:13–15). Even Pilate’s wife knew that Jesus was a “just” man. See v. 19. **“You see to it!”** (v. 4) Pilate declared himself to be free of the responsibility of shedding innocent blood by washing his hands.

**27:25 “His blood be on us and on our children.”** With these words, they not only condemned Jesus to die, but also assured the later judgment in 70 A.D. by which the nation was destroyed. *“For by your words ... you will be condemned”* (Matt. 12:37).

### **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

Matthew 27:27–56 (Mark 15:16–41; Luke 23:26–49; John 19:1–4, 16–37)

**27:29 “A crown of thorns.”** The curse of sin was thorns, suffering, and death (Gen. 3:17–19). Jesus bore our debt and paid the penalty of our sins in full (John 19:30).

**27:32 “A man of Cyrene, Simon by name.”** This man had come all the way from North Africa to celebrate the Passover. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Rufus may be the same one mentioned in Romans 16:13 by Paul.

**27:34 “Sour wine mingled with gall.”** This was a drug given to victims of crucifixion to dull the pain. Jesus rejected it so He could pay the penalty of sin while fully aware. This also fulfilled Psalm 69:21.

**27:35 “Casting lots.”** Here, Psalm 22:18 is fulfilled.

**27:36 “They kept watch over Him.”** This fulfilled Psalm 22:16–17.

**27:37 “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”** Pilate’s words were intentional, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19–22). This was the charge for which He was crucified.

**27:38 “Two robbers were crucified with Him.”** This fulfilled Isaiah 53:9 and 12. One believed in Him and was saved; the other rejected Him. These two men show the division of all mankind into those saved by faith, and those lost by unbelief (Luke 23:39–43).

**27:39–44 “Hurling abuse at Him.”** These insults were predicted in passages such as Psalms 22:7–8 and 109:25. **“You who destroy the temple.”** They are referring to His prophecy of His crucifixion and resurrection in John 2:19, which they distorted into an attack on the Temple. See note on Matthew 26:61.

**27:42 “Let Him now come down.”** Jesus had the power to avoid the cross—see note on Matthew 26:53, but because of His obedience to the Father (Matt. 26:39, 42) and His love for us, He bore our sins (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**27:45 “From the sixth hour until the ninth hour.”** According to the common Jewish method of counting hours, the sixth hour is 12 noon, and the ninth hour is 3 p.m. Jesus was crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25), which was 9 a.m. In the Old Testament, the “morning and evening offering” of the lamb was at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. (Exod. 29:38–39; Num. 28:2–4). The very hours of the crucifixion fulfilled Scripture.

**27:46 “My God, My God.”** Psalm 22 begins with these words. The whole Psalm is about the crucifixion and anticipates the victory of the resurrection.

**27:48 “Sour wine.”** This was the cheap wine used by the soldiers and poor people. Jesus drank it, possibly to gain strength and moisture for His final cry of victory. See John 19:28–30.

**27:50 “Jesus cried out ... with a loud voice.”** Here was the victory cry, *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30). The work of redemption was complete. He yielded up His spirit; the cross did not kill Him (John 10:17–18).

**27:51** *“The veil of the temple ... was torn in two.”* This showed that the way to God was now open to everyone who came in faith (Heb. 4:16; 6:19; 10:19–22; 11:6). The fact that it was torn from top to bottom showed that this was the work of God, not man.

**27:52** *“The graves were opened.”* Only Matthew records this. These people, like Lazarus, were raised for a time but eventually died again. It was evidence of Jesus’ power over death (1 Cor. 15:20–22; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5).

**27:54** *“Truly this was the Son of God!”* Everything he witnessed convinced this Roman centurion that Jesus was indeed *“the Son of God”* (Matt. 14:33; Mark 15:39).

**27:55–56** *“Many women ... were there.”* The women who followed and served Jesus were some of His greatest and most faithful disciples (Mark 15:40–41; 16:1; Luke 8:2–3; 24:1, 10).

### **The Burial of Jesus**

Matthew 27:57–61 (Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42)

**27:57** *“A rich man from Arimathea ... Joseph.”* Joseph was a member of the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) who, like Nicodemus, had become a believer (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50). That he is described here as rich fulfills Isaiah 53:9.

### **The Tomb Guarded by Soldiers**

Matthew 27:62–66 (only Matthew records this fact)

**27:62** *“Chief priests and Pharisees.”* These two groups were usually hostile to each other, but they united in hatred of Jesus.

**27:63** *“After three days I will rise.”* They knew Jesus’ prophecy of His own resurrection, but could not believe in the power of God. The chief priests, or Sadducees, denied that resurrection was possible (Matt. 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27).

**27:66** *“They went and made the grave secure.”* A group of Roman soldiers was sent to guard the tomb. *“Sealing the stone.”* This seal meant that anyone who tried to move the stone would be defying Rome and would be punished severely.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 28**

The resurrection, the conspiracy to hide it, and the Great Commission.

### **The Resurrection of Jesus**

Matthew 28:1–10 (Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

**28:1** *“After the Sabbath.”* The Sabbath was Saturday, so this would be early Sunday morning.

**28:2** *“An angel ... rolled backed the stone.”* Jesus was already gone from the tomb when the angel rolled away the stone. He did it so the disciples could see that Jesus’ body was gone (Mark 16:5–6; Luke 24:3–6; John 20:3–9).

**28:3** *“His countenance [appearance] was like lightning.”* Angels reflect the glory of the Lord (Dan. 7:9; Matt. 17:2; Luke 2:9).

**28:6** *“He is risen, as He said.”* Jesus had repeatedly spoken of His resurrection (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:9; 20:19).

**28:7** *“Go quickly and tell.”* The only right response to Jesus’ victory is first to believe it, then to tell others of it (vv. 9–10; Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8).

**28:9 “Rejoice!”** To all who believe, the resurrection of Jesus is a continual source of both joy and the basis for telling others (2 Cor. 5:14–21).

### **The Plot to Deny the Resurrection**

Matthew 28:11–15

**28:11 “The guard ... reported to the chief priests.”** These Roman soldiers told the religious leaders “*all ... that had happened.*” See v. 4. Yet they continued to deny both the truth about Jesus and the power of God.

**28:13 “While we slept.”** Roman soldiers who slept while on guard duty were put to death. But they had no other excuse to offer. The priests promised to protect them from the penalty and paid them much money to lie about the circumstances of the empty tomb.

**28:15 “Until this day.”** This refers to the time of Matthew’s writing, but many still believe this lie today.

### **The Great Commission Given**

Matthew 28:16–20 (Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8)

**28:18 “All authority has been given to Me.”** Following His resurrection, Jesus is invested with all power to bring about His final world rule (Psalms 2:6–9, 8:5b–8, 110:1–7; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 2:7–9). This fulfills the prophecy of Daniel 7:9–14.

**28:19–20 “Go ... make disciples ... teaching them.”** The command is “*make disciples.*” Going, baptizing, and teaching is how disciples are made. The use of baptism here confirms that these are new believers in Christ. No one is saved by baptism (Acts 8:36–37; 1 Cor. 1:17).

**28:19 “In the name.”** The Jews often referred to God as “the Name,” which spoke of Jehovah, the “*I AM*” (Exod. 3:14). Here, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all identified as one God. We call this the Trinity.

**28:20 “Observe all things.”** The mark of true discipleship is obedience. All who believe in Jesus are saved forever, but not all who believe become true disciples. In Matthew 11:28–30, we see that coming to Jesus in faith is the first step. Taking up His “*yoke*” (see also Luke 9:23, “*take up his cross*”) is the step of discipleship.