

Matthew

AUTHOR

Though the author of this gospel is unnamed, the early church consistently considered it to be the work of the apostle Matthew (also known as Levi). Though a Jew by birth, his duties as a Roman tax collector would have made fluency in Greek necessary as a complement to his Aramaic. Recent literary critics have argued that the writer of Matthew used Mark as his source. However, the early church, together with many evangelical scholars through the generations, has argued for the priority of Matthew.

DATE

The evidence for the date of Matthew is inconclusive. Because the book was written primarily to the Jews, many scholars feel it was written before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

BACKGROUND

Setting

A city along the coast of Phoenicia or Syria, such as Antioch, is generally accepted as the place where Matthew wrote his book (see Mt 17:24,27). Though a Greek-speaking city, Antioch had a large Jewish population. The book does not state specifically where it was written; yet it is probable that it originated somewhere in Rome's Syrian province.

Purpose

The author sought to show that the Messiah, whom the prophets predicted in the Old Testament, had come in the person of Jesus.

Audience

The Gospel of Matthew, though one of four accounts covering the life and ministry of Jesus, was written especially for the Jews, who knew the Old Testament prophecies. The promised kingdom was first offered to them, and they were foremost among those responsible for spreading the Good News.



Literary Characteristics

Matthew is the bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament. It contains more than fifty direct quotations from the Old Testament—more than the other three gospels combined—as well as many other affirming statements such as "you have heard," "it is written," and "that which was spoken." The book is chronologically arranged, yet with a topical structure. Many of Jesus' teachings, as well as his healings, other miracles and the parables concerning the kingdom, are grouped together.

THEMES

The major theme is that what the Old Testament foretold about the Messiah has been fulfilled in Jesus, and thus the book pays detailed attention to the lineage of Christ (Mt 1). Because the lineage of royalty was important to the Jews, Matthew traced Jesus not only to Abraham, the father of the Jews, but also to the kingly lineage of David.

The book also delineates what a disciple's life should be. The Sermon on the Mount and related teachings give not only the code of conduct God requires but, more importantly, the quality of the relationship Jesus desired with his disciples. Related to the discipleship theme is the key phrase, "the kingdom of heaven." This theme encompasses both the daily life of each disciple and the future coming of Christ.

OUTLINE

- I. The Messiah's Coming (1:1—2:23)
 - A. His genealogy (1:1-17)
 - B. His birth (1:18-25)
 - C. His admirers (2:1-12)
 - D. His escape to Egypt and return to Nazareth (2:13-23)
- II. The Messiah's Unveiling (3:1-4:11)
 - A. His introduction by John the Baptist (3:1-12)
 - B. His baptism (3:13-17)
 - C. His temptation (4:1-11)
- III. The Messiah's Manifesto (4:12—20:34)
 - A. His first disciples (4:12-22)
 - B. The beginning of his teaching (4:23—7:29)
 - C. His credentials in the form of miracles (8:1—11:19)
 - D. The beginning of opposition (11:20—12:50)
 - E. His parables about the kingdom (13:1-58)
 - F. The death of John the Baptist (14:1–12)
 - G. Miracles over nature (14:13-36)
 - H. The growth of opposition (15:1—16:12)
 - I. Peter's confession (16:13-28)



- J. The transfiguration (17:1-13)
- K. Additional healing and teaching in Galilee (17:14-27)
- L. Lifestyles in the kingdom (18:1–35)
- M. The teaching of Jesus in Judea (19:1—20:34)
- IV. The Messiah's Passion (21:1—28:20)
 - A. His triumphal entry (21:1-11)
 - B. A sampling of his judgment (21:12—23:39)
 - C. A description of his return (24:1—25:46)
 - D. His last Passover and the Last Supper (26:1–35)
 - E. His agony in Gethsemane (26:36-46)
 - F. His betrayal, arrest and trials (26:47—27:31)
 - G. His death and burial (27:32-66)
 - H. His resurrection (28:1-20)

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

- This is the genealogy a of Jesus the Messiah b the son of David, the son of Abraham:
 - ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
 - Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
 Perez the father of Hezron,
 Hezron the father of Ram,
 - ⁴Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon.
 - ⁵Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
 - Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
 - Obed the father of Jesse,
 - ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife.

- ⁷Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa,
- ⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
- ⁹Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.
- ¹⁰Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah,
- ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah^c and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.
- ¹² After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

- ¹³Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,
- Azor the father of Zadok,
 Zadok the father of Akim,
 Akim the father of Elihud,
- ¹⁵Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,
- ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about ^d: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet ^e did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, ^f because he will save his people from their sins."

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord

 a 1 Or is an account of the origin b 1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One; also in verse 18. c 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12 d 18 Or The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this e 19 Or was a righteous man and f 21 Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the Lord saves.

- 1:1 In the lineage of the Messiah, Matthew highlighted the calling of one man (Abraham) to father the Jewish nation and the calling of one man from that nation (David) to father the line of the kings. If there had been any doubts about Jesus being a son of David, his claim to kingship would have been invalid.
- 1:2—6 Although the ancestral list does not include everyone, five women are mentioned: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Uriah's wife (Bathsheba) and Mary. Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba were connected with sexual sins; Rahab and Ruth were not Jewish, and Ruth belonged to the nation of Moab, which had its origin innest (see Ge 19:30—37; Dt 23:3); Mary was a humble Jewish maiden. The fact that Gentile women were included showed in a dramatic
- way the inclusion of the Gentiles in the blessings of God's redemptive plan. These women were part of God's unique providence in preparing for and bringing the Messiah to his people.
- 1:19 The engagement period was legally binding, requiring a divorce to break it. The engagement period lasted as long as a year, perhaps to provide assurance that the woman was not pregnant by another man (see Engagement). Matthew, as Luke, affirms the virgin conception (vv. 18–25; Lk 1:26–38) and attibutes that conception to the Holy Spirit (see Isa 7, The Virgin Birth). Only through the virgin conception could Jesus be both God and man and thus make atonement for sin.
- 1:21 Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua (Heb., lit. Yahweh



A STEP IN COMMITMENT

Engagement or betrothal, in Jewish culture, was a formal bond between a man and a woman, almost as binding as marriage itself, yet without physical intimacy. According to the Law of Moses, the penalty for carelessly breaking this commitment through fornication, adultery, incest or rape was death by stoning (Dt 22:23–30). Under some circumstances, the engagement could be broken by a bill of divorcement.

The time period for an engagement was usually about a year. Mary and Joseph were betrothed or engaged but did not live together during that engagement period. Joseph is called Mary's "husband" (Mt 1:19), although the relationship was still physically celibate.

In modern culture, engagement is considered a couple's promise of intent for uniting in marriage, although it is not binding. In fact, engagement is seen as the time of deepening intimacy in which a couple has the freedom to make sure that marriage is the step they ought to take. Becoming engaged is the first step toward the joining of two lives, the blending of two personalities and families, replete with the potential of many generations to come.

See also Ge 24:1–67; 29:15—30:43; notes on Commitment (Mt 16); Dating (1Ti 4); Dowry (1Ki 9); Marriage (Ge 2; 2Sa 6; Pr 5; Hos 2; Am 3; 2Co 13; Heb 12); Romance (SS 2); Weddings (Jn 2); portrait of Rebekah (Ge 24)

had said through the prophet: ²³"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^a (which means "God with us").

²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod,

Magi^b from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

^a 23 Isaiah 7:14 ^b 1 Traditionally wise men

saves); Christ (Gk. christos) or Messiah (Heb. mashiach) is his title, meaning "anointed one." The royal lineage of Jesus is through Mary, the mother who gave him birth, and her husband Joseph, who was Jesus' legal father (v. 20). Most important, Jesus was God's eternal Son (see Mt 2:15).

1:23 The process of naming in Biblical times was important in expressing the character and work of the person named (see Isa 45, Naming of Children).

2:1 The account of the Magi is found only in Matthew, the book that presents Jesus as the Jewish King. The "magi" (Gk. magoi) were magicians or astrologers. They probably came from Persia or Babylon (where wise men were part of the priestly order). Historians had predicted a world ruler from Judea at this time. The belief that a phenomenon of stars announced special births was widely held. The names of the magi are not given, but three gifts are mentioned: gold, associated with royalty; frankincense, a costly incense; and myrrh, a prized perfume (v. 11). These men viewed the phenomenon of stars at the time of Jesus' birth in a distant land, and they could have taken up to two years to reach

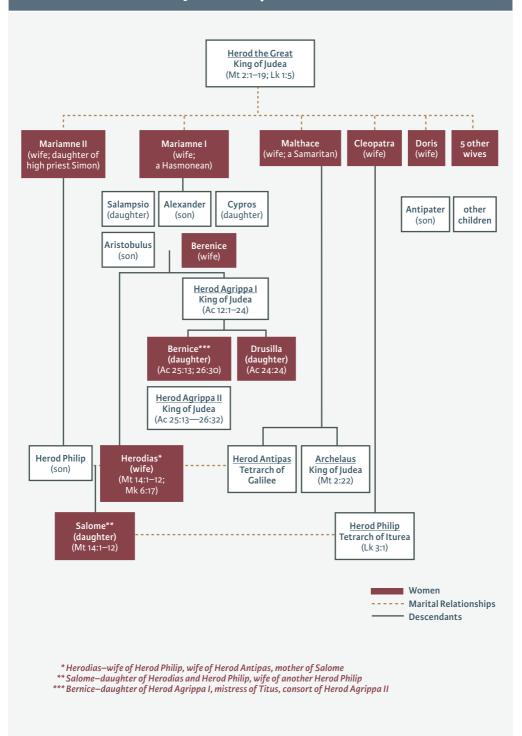
Judea. The wise men came to the house, not the stable (v. 11), and saw the Child, not the baby (vv. 9,11).

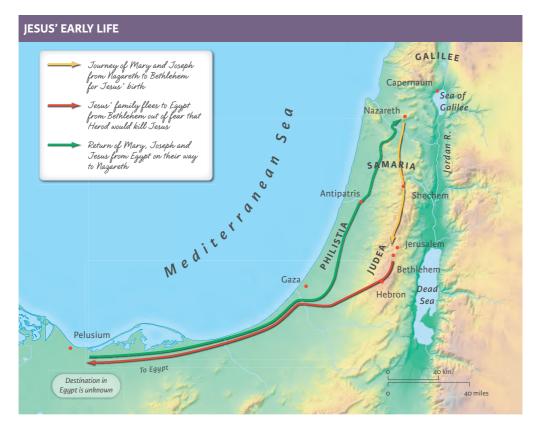
2:3—4 The chief priests and teachers of the law were the ones who had supposedly been watching for this event for hundreds of years. Teachers of the law practiced the highly prized skill of writing and specialized in copying official records, Scripture, and commentaries on Scripture. They had developed additional laws and traditions first to explain Scripture and ultimately to be obeyed as Scripture. For them, Jesus did not qualify as the Messiah because he did not fit these new laws and traditions. They were numbered among the chief opponents to the One about whom Scripture spoke (see Mt 23:1–39; 26:57; 27:17–26,39–43).

2:5—6 Bethlehem is the place where Ruth (the great grand-mother of David) met Boaz (Ru 1:22—2:6) and where David was born and reared (1Sa 16:1,12—13; see also 2Sa 5:2; Mic 5:2). This small hamlet is within walking distance of Jerusalem, less than ten miles away.

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The Family Tree of Herod the Great





6" 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'a"

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold,

frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." ^b

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem

^a 6 Micah 5:2,4 ^b 15 Hosea 11:1

2:16 Herod the Great built the temple in Jerusalem and also completed various palaces and numerous public works projects. His love for power and heavy taxation pleased Rome but alienated the Jews. A man of terrible paranoia, he did not

hesitate to eliminate anyone who might threaten his position (see chart, The Family Tree of Herod the Great). Slaughtering a group of Jewish toddlers in a small town would have been typical of Herod.

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and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." a

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

⁴John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist.

His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹"I baptize you with^c water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^c the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was

^a 18 Jer. 31:15 ^b 3 Isaiah 40:3 ^c 11 Or in

- **2:23** Mary received the announcement of Jesus' birth in Nazareth, where she and Joseph had been reared (Lk 1:26–27; 2:39; see also Mt 13:53–58).
- **3:1** John was born to the priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, a relative of Jesus' mother Mary, in their old age. John is similar to Elijah in that he was sent by God, he did not hesitate to point out evil, he offended many, his message called the people back to God's righteous ways, and he pointed beyond himself to the Messiah (see Mal 4:3–6; Mt 17:1–3).
- **3:6** Baptism (Gk. *baptisma*, lit. "immersion," "dipping," "submerging") was a well-known ceremony used both for proselytes coming into Judaism and for a sign of repentance (Lev 15:13; Nu 19; Isa 1:16; 44:3; Jer 4:14; Eze 36:25; Zec 13:1). In Judaism, self-immersion was the practice. For John, baptism called for an administrator. For Christians, baptism is a testimony that pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
- 3:7 The Pharisees were an influential religious group (see chart, Jewish Sects).
- 3:9 The Jews felt that being descendants of Abraham insured their standing with God. John informed them that no one had special privileges with God, and no one was indispensable (Mt 21:43).
- **3:10–12** The severity and immediacy of judgment is indicated by two metaphors: the ax at the root of the trees and the winnowing or separating the grain from the chaff. When tossed in the air, the grain would fall to the ground while the empty shells or chaff blew away. This separation process is also pictured as the division of the sons of the kingdom from the sons of the wicked one (Mt 13:38), the wise from the foolish (Mt 7:24–27) and the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:31–46).
- 3:16 Through Jesus' baptism he proclaimed publicly his sonship, identified himself with the people he came to save, and

opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

⁴Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^b"

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"'He will command his angels concerning you,

and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'c"

⁷Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'^d"

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'e"

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹²When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— ¹⁴to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—

the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴News about him spread all over Syria, and people

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<sup>a</sup> 1 The Greek for tempted can also mean tested.
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set forth his redemptive mission. The triune God is presented: Jesus is the Son in the flesh; the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove; the Father makes his voice heard from heaven (see Mk 1:10–11, note).

- **4:1–2** The Spirit was responsible for both the encounter and the 40-day fast. The Biblical concept of "tempting" is a testing to demonstrate genuineness, faithfulness, and character (see Heb 2, Temptation). Jesus did not pretend to be tempted; his temptation was real. These temptations affirmed his qualification to be God's Messiah and our Redeemer.
- **4:3** All references to the tempter are personal, establishing beyond doubt that Satan is not just an evil influence but a person (see chart, A Portrait of the Adversary).

4:3-10 Jesus' defense consisted of two things:

- Scripture—The first words of Jesus as he entered his public ministry were, "It is written" (v. 4).
- · Immediate obedience.

These same weapons are available to believers. Satan did not attempt to argue with Scripture. Jesus eventually received from the Father all Satan had offered to him: the provision of bread (Mt 14:13–21), angels to minister to him (Mt 4:11) and rule over both earth and heaven (Mt 28:18).

4:11 Though Satan finally departed, this occasion was not the sum of Jesus' earthly temptations. Jesus was tempted many other times (Mt 26:38; Mk 8:33; Lk 22:28; Jn 6:15; 7:1–9; Heb 2:18; 4:15–16).

^b 4 Deut. 8:3 ^c 6 Psalm 91:11,12 ^d 7 Deut. 6:16

^e 10 Deut. 6:13 ^f 16 Isaiah 9:1,2

brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. ²⁵Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, ^a Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said:

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

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek,

for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful,

for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heav-

en, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

¹³"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

WORRY . . . COMPROMISES YOUR JOY,
CRAMPS YOUR PEACE, AND CONFINES
YOUR FREEDOM.

- June Hunt -

The Fulfillment of the Law

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices

 a 25 That is, the Ten Cities

5:1—7:29 The Sermon on the Mount is the first in a series of five discourses about the Christian life, both present and future. Its basic premise is that the Christian life has no neutral zones free from God. The Lord is sovereign, all-powerful, and omnipresent (see Job 23; 42; Jer 23, Attributes of God). Believers do not make him the Sovereign or Lord of their lives; he already is. Whether or not they are living as his subjects does not affect his sovereignty; their obedience or lack of it simply determines what kind of kingdom subjects they are.

5:3–12 Beatitudes are found elsewhere in Scripture, most often in the Psalms, though there are usually no more than two or three together (see chart, Beatitudes in the Book of Revelation). The distinctiveness of these Beatitudes is that they are directly related to the kingdom of heaven, and the blessings

promised are due to the presence and activity of Jesus (see chart, Beatitudes for Women).

5:13–16 Both salt and light are forces that change an alien environment permanently. Salt enhances flavor and preserves or slows decay only if the salt itself stays pure. Sodium chloride, a stable compound, cannot lose its saltiness, but it can lose its effectiveness by being diluted. This point is the application for Christians. Light symbolizes purity and divine revelation. If Christians were only slowing the decay, their mission would seem rather bleak, but they are also to be beacons of light to those who will respond.

5:17 The Law and the Prophets refers to the OT. Jesus is the subject and the goal of the OT and the fulfillment of its prophecies (Mt 1:22; 2:6,15,17–18,23; 3:3; 4:14–16).

Beatitudes for Women

BLESSED ARE	CHARACTER QUALITY	DESCRIPTION	REFERENCES
the poor in spirit (Mt 5:3)	Humility	Stripped of pride and sensitive to God's ministry on their behalf	Isa 61:1; Lk 4:16–21; 7:22
those who mourn (Mt 5:4)	Sensitivity	Responsive to personal sinfulness and tenderhearted toward one another	Isa 61:2; Ecc 3:1–8; Lk 19:41; Jn 11:33,35
the meek (Mt 5:5)	Meekness	Demonstration of self-control and submission	Mt 6:33; 1Pe 3:1–7
those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Mt 5:6)	Obedience	Desire to hear and do the will of God	Lk 1:53
the merciful (Mt 5:7)	Compassion	Outworking of faith to meet the needs of others	Lk 1:58
the pure in heart (Mt 5:8)	Holiness	Lifestyle of set-apartness, including thoughts and actions	Ps 24:4-6
the peacemakers (Mt 5:9)	Reconciliation	Forbearance instead of retaliation; forgiveness of wrongs; restoration of fellowship	Ro 3:25; 12:18; Eph 4:32; Php 1:3-5; Titus 3:2; 1Jn 1:7
those who are persecuted because of righteousness (Mt 5:10)	Commitment	Steadfast loyalty that cannot be broken	Lk 13:35; 2Th 2:15-17; 2Ti 2:3
those who are insulted and persecuted (Mt 5:11)	Patience	Willingness to endure suffering	1Pe 2:19-21; 3:14; Rev 12:11

and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

²¹"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, ^a and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{b,c} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to

a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ "Settle matters quickly with your

^a 21 Exodus 20:13 ^b 22 The Greek word for *brother or sister (adelphos)* refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23. ^c 22 Some manuscripts *brother or sister without cause* ^d 22 An Aramaic term of contempt

5:21–43 Jesus repudiated wrong thoughts and attitudes with astounding severity. "Raca" (Aram., lit. "empty headed") was a term of dehumanization (v. 22). "Fool" (Gk. *moros*) may also be understood as "rebel." Jesus identified wrong attitudes

as triggering other sins (vv. 21–22). A woman's personal relationships directly affect her relationship (though not her position) with God (see Mt 6:14–15).



AN AWESOME CHALLENGE

The question of remarriage is closely related to the matter of divorce. The Scripture lifts up permanent, monogamous union as the plan of the Creator (Mt 19:4–6). To understand the strong language of Scripture concerning this matter, look at the whole of Scripture to see how God regards marriage. The marriage bond between husband and wife is the same kinship bond that exists between parents and children and between God and his creation (Ge 2:24; Mt 19:6).

Some argue that remarriage is never permissible (Mk 10:11–12). Others note that the divorce teaching of Jesus includes an "exception" (Mt 5:32; 19:9) and conclude that this implies permission to remarry. Still others suggest that the understood meaning of "divorce" in ancient law included freedom to remarry, suggesting that remarriage is forbidden only after an invalid divorce. Finally, there are those who deny that Jesus gives a justification for divorce in the modern sense, although they allow that remarriage is permissible if reconciliation with a divorced spouse is rendered impossible because of death or remarriage of the divorced spouse to another partner (1Co 7:10–11), or if the divorced spouse is a nonbeliever opposed to reconciliation (1Co 7:15).

 $Despite \ these \ differences \ of \ Biblical \ interpretation, \ some \ important \ conclusions \ can \ be \ drawn:$

- Once remarriage follows divorce, there is no turning back (Dt 24:1–4), and the tearing apart of a marriage is painful, leaving its scars on all who are touched by the tragedy.
- God sees the one-flesh relationship as permanent and binding because it is the picture he has chosen to portray his relationship to his children, and thus he guards the home with great zeal (Mal 2:16).
- Jesus gives no divine directive or even acceptable excuses for breaking this holy covenant but rather
 observes that the hardness of the human heart makes such tragedy a reality in this sinful world (Mt 19:8).
- The role of the church and of believers must always be redemptive. With God, forgiveness is as if it never happened. No sin or tragedy is beyond God's forgiveness.

After seeking and receiving God's forgiveness, a woman who remarries has a new understanding of God's incredible grace. She must then seek anew an understanding of God's plan for marriage (Ge 2:24), commit herself wholeheartedly to pursuing his plan, and consider her vows of marriage binding before the Lord (Mt 19:5–6).

See also Lk 16:18; Ro 7:2–3; 1Co 7:10–16,27–28; notes on Commitment (Mt 16); Divorce (Mt 19); Marriage (Ge 2; 2Sa 6; Pr 5; Hos 2; Am 3; 2Co 13; Heb 12); Stepparenthood (Ge 35)

adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' ^{a 28}But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her

in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

³¹"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of

^a 27 Exodus 20:14

5:31–32 The OT allowed a man to give his wife a "certificate of divorce" if she found no favor because she was "displeasing

to him" (Dt 24:1). This permission was abused, and men divorced their wives for many different reasons. Jesus rejected

divorce.' ^{a 32}But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

PEOPLE BEFORE THINGS; PEOPLE BEFORE
PROJECTS; FAMILY BEFORE FRIENDS; HUSBAND
BEFORE CHILDREN; HUSBAND BEFORE
PARENTS; TITHE BEFORE WANTS; BIBLE
BEFORE OPINIONS; JESUS BEFORE ALL.

Jo Ann Leavell -

Oaths

³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.' ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. ^b

Eye for Eye

³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ^c ³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor^d and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for

those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

6 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

^{5"}And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray:

"'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

^a 31 Deut. 24:1 ^b 37 Or from evil ^c 38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21 ^d 43 Lev. 19:18

this practice because of the sanctity of marriage (see Mt 19, $\mathsf{Divorce}$).

6:9–13 The model prayer illustrates how to pray rather than prescribing necessary words to use (see chart, Lessons from the Model Prayer). The Jews did not address God directly as

Father but used this personal title to describe God's relationship to Israel or to refer to him as Creator. "Our Father" was a new title used by Jesus, who chose the term "Abba" (carrying the more intimate sense of "daddy") and invited all who belong to him to do the same (see Gal 4:6).

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Lessons From the Model Prayer

Prepare

- Pure heart and motive (Mt 6:5-8).
- Private conversation intent on invoking His presence (Mt 6:6).
- Meaningful communication (Mt 6:7-8; Lk 18:1-8).
- Presentation of specific requests (Mt 6:9-13; see 1Sa 12:23-24).

Pray

PHRASE	MEANING	REFERENCES
"Our Father in heaven" (Mt 6:9).	Recognize who he is—the PERSON.	Ro 8:15; see Isa 64:8
"Hallowed be your name" (Mt 6:9).	Adore Him because of who he is—PRAISE.	Ps 18:3; 96:8
"Your kingdom come/ your will be done" (Mt 6:10)	Seek and do God's will. His Word is the path to finding his will—PURPOSE.	1Jn 5:14
"Give us today our daily bread" (Mt 6:11).	Ask God to meet even your most mundane needs to accomplish your spiritual duties—PETITION.	Php 4:9
"And forgive us our debts" (Mt 6:12).	Ask God to forgive your debts or your failures to give obedience due him—PARDON.	Ps 66:18; Hos 14:2
"And lead us not into temptation" (Mt 6:13).	Seek a way of escape from the evil of temptation— PROTECTION, not removal from any trials but from judgment that comes when you are overcome by trials.	1Co 10:13; Jas 1:2-3

This model teaches the manner and method of prayer and shares matters for which to pray.

¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

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

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, ^a but deliver us from the evil one. ^b'

¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

¹⁶"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their

 a 13 The Greek for temptation can also mean testing.

 b 13 Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, /for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

6:16–18 Fasting (v. 18), together with prayer (v. 6) and good deeds (v. 2), are outworkings of the Christian life that are exclusively between the believer and God. Fasting (Heb. tsum, lit. "to cover over"—as the mouth; Gk. nesteia, lit. "to abstain from food") could be observed completely for a short time or from certain foods for a longer period (Da 10:3). The ancient Israelites practiced fasting on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–31; 23:27–32, in which "deny yourselves" is a reference to fasting). At various other times fasting was practiced as a sign of mourning (1Sa 31:13; Est 4:1–3), as an act of per-

sonal or corporate repentance (1Sa 7:6; Da 9:3–19), as a means of gaining God's attention on behalf of suffering or sickness (2Sa 12:16–23), in a critical time of decision making (2Ch 20:1–18; Est 4:16; 1Co 7:5) or as the natural result of urgent prayer (2Co 6:5; 11:27). Jesus assumed that his disciples would fast. He himself fasted for 40 days to prepare for his ministry and to fortify his soul for his confrontation with Satan (Mt 4:1–2). He affirmed fasting as an accompaniment to times of intense prayer (Mt 17:21). Early Christians fasted in preparation for major events (Ac 13:2–3; 14:23). The purpose of a spiritual fast is

faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, ^a your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, ^b your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do Not Worry

²⁵"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^c?

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Judging Others

7 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

⁶"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may

 a 22 The Greek for healthy here implies generous. b 23 The Greek for unhealthy here implies stingy. c 27 Or single cubit to your height

always the same: to draw the believer closer to God (Joel 2:12–15). From the most humble circumstances, one reaches out to God. The Lord is not moved by fasting itself but rather by the turning of the hearts of his people toward righteousness (Ac 10:30–33). The Bible repeatedly cautions that true fasting is not merely abstinence from food (Mt 9:14–15). Fasting must be accompanied by sincere repentance and good works (Isa 58:3–7) and must never be done to impress others, as mere ritualism or as a source of spiritual pride (Lk 18:10–14; see also Da 2:23, note; Lk 24:47, note; Jer 33; Heb 4; 1Jn 5; 3 John, Prayer; Eph 6, Spiritual Warfare; Est 2, Esther).

6:24 One must choose between two options: a relationship with God or with possessions (see vv. 19–21).

6:25 Worry has the connotation of dividing, separating and distracting. A woman cannot worry and trust God at the same

time because worry destroys the single-hearted devotion Jesus described (v. 33).

7:1—6 Judge (Gk. krinō) here has the sense of "condemn" or "avenge." The reference is not to a legal judgment but to a critical spirit. The foolishness of a judgmental attitude is illustrated in the hyperbole of the speck and the plank (vv. 3–5). Jesus also used the term "hypocrite" (Gk., lit. "to judge under") to describe the insincerity of the Pharisees and scribes (see chart, Jewish Sects). Though a critical spirit is condemned, discernment enables the believer to confront and restore fellow believers who have erred. Dogs were wild animals, and pigs were the ultimate example of sacrilege for the Jews. They picture all that is vicious, unclean and abominable; they describe committed God-haters, of whom we are to be aware and from whom we are to separate ourselves (vv. 15–20).



PLANNING YOUR DAYS

Often women are overwhelmed by too many things to do (see Lk 10:40) because there are many good choices concerning how to apportion their time (Ecc 3:1-8). To set priorities is to determine what is important to you and how your time is to be apportioned—that is, who and what will take precedence over other parts of life.

Scripture contains guidelines for God's order (Ps 119:105,130):

- Your personal relationship to Jesus Christ (Mt 6:33; Php 3:8);
- Your commitment to home and family—especially spouse and children (Ge 2:24; Ps 127:3; Eph 5:22,25; 6:4; 1Ti 3:2-5; 5:8; 1Pe 3:7) and even to the extended family, as so beautifully portrayed in the relationship between Ruth and Naomi (Ru 1:16-17);
- Your responsibility to employer and tasks assigned (see 1Th 4:11-12); and
- Your service to God through ministries in the church and involvement in the community (see Col 3:17).

Once you have these divinely appointed criteria in mind, you are ready to sort out the opportunities that come (Ps 32:8) and move forward in the most effective and productive management of time and resources. A very practical way of accomplishing this is to list all the tasks before you, consider each prayerfully as to merit and timeliness (see Col 2:5), arrange them in order of importance and then proceed to do the most important things first (see 1Co 14:40).

To be consistent in your priorities, consider these admonitions: assign God first place (Mt 6:33), consult with the Father regularly in your quiet time (Ps 55:17; Lk 5:15-16), examine your own heart (Ecc 3:1) and keep yourself spiritually fit (Isa 30:15). Jesus met with the Father in intensive prayer and meditation to determine his priorities and to prepare himself for each day (see Lk 5:15-16).

Note also these cautions: Put people before things (see 2Co 8:5). Do not limit your investment in those you love, and others who cross your path, to money and gifts. Look for ways to invest yourself, your time and your energies. Family must be more important than occupation since Scripture clearly states that there is no success if the family is lost (1Ti 3:5; 5:8; Titus 2:4-5). Sometimes you must say "no," as did even Jesus when some seemingly good requests for his time did not fit the overall plan for his ministry (Lk 4:42-43). The underlying principle in determining priorities is always that spiritual values must overshadow worldly pursuits (2Co 4:18).

See also Pr 16:3; Lk 12:31; Eph 5:15–16; notes on Goal Setting (Isa 58); Organization (In 9); Time Management (Ps 31)

trample them under their feet, and turn and ceives; the one who seeks finds; and to the tear you to pieces.

Ask. Seek. Knock

⁷"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8For everyone who asks reone who knocks, the door will be opened.

9"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will

7:7 Continual prayer is the secret to accomplishment: asking, seeking and knocking. The goal is not a fixed time of prayer but rather a lifestyle in which prayer becomes like the air we breathe. The promise is absolute. Even if the instructions previously given seem impossible to follow, God will give believers the ability to follow them when they abide in him (Jn 15:4-7). Answered prayer is guaranteed because these prayers are based upon the relationship of the disciples of Jesus with God, who responds to them as Father. Their prayers may not be answered as specifically requested because they do not have the Father's perspective on what is ultimately best.

your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

True and False Prophets

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

True and False Disciples

²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on

the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ²A man with leprosy^a came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

The Faith of the Centurion

⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶"Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly."

⁷Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?"

⁸The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be

 $^a\,2\,$ The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

- 7:12 Jesus framed this principle, known as "the Golden Rule," positively, rather than negatively. By doing so, he included omissions (what should not be done) as well as commissions (what should be done). This epigram expresses the heart of the Christian life.
- **7:15–20** The criteria for judging or the means for discerning what is truth and what is not is set forth here. These verses might seem in conflict with the admonition to avoid a judgmental spirit (vv. 1–5), but the intervening passage concerning prayer serves as a bridge. Through prayer, believers determine their own faults. Once they deal with themselves, they have access to a clear view of problems in others. Only God is the ultimate Judge (vv. 21–22).
- **8:2–3** Whether the leprosy of that time is the same as the modern disease is uncertain. The disease was destructive, debilitating and highly infectious. To the Jews, leprosy also was a sign of being cursed (Nu 12:10–12) and resulted in ceremonial defilement (Lev 13:3; 22:4; see Lev 10, Clean vs. Unclean). Jesus again demonstrated his uniqueness by making the unclean clean.
- **8:5** Centurions were Roman military officers, typically in charge of 100 soldiers, representing the emperor's authority (see Mk 15:39; Ac 10; 27:3). Usually they pursued military service as a career.

Peter's Mother-in-Law

Each of the synoptic gospels includes the account of Jesus' healing the mother of Peter's wife. The significance of the story is twofold: first, the immediate restoration to health, and second, its symbolic nature. Matthew uses the incident to stress Christ's sovereignty; Mark, to illustrate his servanthood; Luke, to demonstrate his compassionate humanity.

In a home in Capernaum, described by Mark as that of Peter and Andrew, the woman lay ill. Luke, the physician, informs us that her fever was high, and the accounts together tell us that the family requested Jesus to heal her. She was important to them as well as to Jesus. He took her by the hand, her strength returned immediately, and she got up and began serving the guests.

Jesus' miracle in raising this woman to life not only showed love for her and her family, but also reinforced his valuation of women in a society where many considered them to be inferior.

The healing also calls attention to Jesus' pity for his own race. He displayed his power to a Jewish mother, a symbol of his deep desire that his own nation return to their covenant-keeping God. It is one more touch of God's indescribable love. The woman responded by serving him, a stellar example to every woman who feels his touch.

See also Mk 1:29–31; Lk 4:38–39; charts on In-Law or In-Love; Women and Jesus

healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

Jesus Heals Many

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

¹⁶When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed

all the sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." ^a

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

²⁰Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

²¹Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

²²But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Jesus Calms the Storm

²³Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"

^a 17 Isaiah 53:4 (see Septuagint)

8:11-12 Instead of limiting the kingdom to the physical descendants of Abraham (as the Jews did), Jesus taught that

it was open to all. Faith alone would determine a position in God's family (see Mt 3:9, note).

Women Healed by Jesus

WOMAN	HER FAITH	JESUS' RESPONSE	HER RESPONSE	
Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14–15; Mk 1:30–31; Lk 4:38–39).	None stated, although her family's faith was demonstrated.	He saw, touched and healed her fever.	She arose and served those present.	
All who were sick (Mt 8:16–17; Mk 1:32–34).	The people came in faith.	He cast out the spirits and healed all who were sick.	None stated.	
The hemorrhaging woman (Mt 9:20–22; Mk 5:25–34; Lk 8:43–48).	Her faith caught the attention of Jesus.	He felt her touch, saw her and healed her.	She must have rejoiced in the healing she sought.	
The Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt 15:21–28; Mk 7:24–30).	The mother expressed her faith by her persistence. She worshiped Jesus.	He heard and answered her request and healed her daughter.	None stated.	
The infirm woman (Lk 13:11–13).	Her faith was not stated.	He saw, called and healed her.	She responded to his healing, being made straight and glorifying God.	

²⁶He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Jesus Restores Two Demon-Possessed Men

²⁸When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, ^a two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. ²⁹"What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

³⁰Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. ³¹The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

³²He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd

rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. ³³Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

9 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. ²Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

³At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!"

⁴Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said,

 a 28 Some manuscripts Gergesenes; other manuscripts Gergesenes

8:28–34 The region of the Gadarenes lay in the Gentile territory of the Decapolis. This fact explains the presence of pigs, which would have been repulsive to the Jews. Jesus was seeking rest, not ministry. Two men are mentioned here, while only one is cited in the record of the same incident in Mark and Luke. Perhaps Matthew had personal knowledge of a second

man, or one man may have been more prominent and thus the only one of two mentioned. Demon possession is to be distinguished from mental or emotional illness. It involves evil spirits who, though unseen, indwell and control individuals and their actions. The demons in these verses spoke and were spoken to, but they were no match for Jesus.

MATTHEW 9:5 1384

Women and the Parables of Jesus

PARABLE	AUDIENCE	APPLICATION
The lamp under a basket (Mt 5:14–16; Mk 4:21–22; Lk 8:16–17).	To the disciples.	Life and words should give personal testimony to God's redemptive and transforming grace.
The marriage (Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19–20; Lk 5:34–35).	To the Pharisees and the disciples of John.	Joy will be found in Christ's companionship.
The patched garment (Mt 9:16; Mk 2:21; Lk 5:36).	To the Pharisees and the disciples of John.	Jesus did not come to adapt to the old order of legalism but to make all things new.
The children in the marketplace (Mt 11:16–17; Lk 7:31–32).	To the multitudes concerning John the Baptist.	Those who rejected Jesus and John could not be pleased. Beware of focusing on personal whims.
The leaven (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20–21).	To the multitude on the seashore.	Beware of sin that makes its way into life to corrupt and draw away from the good and true.
The pearl of great price (Mt 13:45–46).	To the disciples.	The relative value of the gospel exceeded all else.
The wedding garment (Mt 22:10–14).	To the chief priests and the Pharisees.	Keep your life pure and holy.
The wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1–13).	To the disciples on the Mount of Olives.	Always be prepared and watchful.
The wedding feast (Mt 22:2–9; Lk 14:16–23).	To the chief priests and the Pharisees.	Do not reject God's invitation to salvation.
The lost coin** (Lk 15:8–10).	To the Pharisees and scribes.	Remember Christ's love for sinners and his determination to draw them to himself.
The persistent widow (Lk 18:1–8).	To the disciples.	Persevere in prayer.

^{**}Biblical women often wore a frontlet (Heb. semedi) on their foreheads. This adornment was made of coins (perhaps part of the woman's dowry) and signified betrothal or marriage. The monetary value of the coins was not as important as the sentimental value and symbolism of commitment.

A parable is a lesson from daily life that teaches a spiritual truth. Jesus often told parables to provide an understanding of life, especially life in God's kingdom. Thirty-five percent of all gospel teaching is written in parables.

"Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ⁶But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your mat and go home." ⁷Then the man got up and went home. ⁸When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

The Calling of Matthew

⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax col-

lector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' ^a For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

a 13 Hosea 6:6

The Hemorrhaging Woman Who Was Healed

For 12 years this woman had suffered with chronic hemorrhaging. Visiting physicians had only given her more pain, depleted her funds and left her worse than when she began. She had tried everything. She could have become a legitimate cynic. Then she heard about Jesus.

Her approach to Jesus was different from most. She came from behind and touched the edge of his outer garment, hoping no one, including Jesus, would notice. We are not told whether she felt unworthy to talk to him, fearful because of her uncleanness (see Lev 15:25–33) or concerned that there would be no chance of an audience with him in such a crowd. We are told that she had enough faith in the person of Christ to believe that just touching his clothes would prove lifechanging, and she was right. Though the passage makes clear that her body was healed at the time she reached out to him, that was not enough for Jesus. He wanted to give her more.

Jesus came to an abrupt halt and demanded, "Who touched Me?" The disciples were incredulous. "What was he talking about?" They saw the many, but he saw the one. Power had gone out of him, but his power had not been depleted. The healing had not been completed. She was more than a hemorrhaging body; she was a needy woman. When this woman contacted God—he knew and she knew, though no other was aware. Jesus would not move until she approached him.

Her approach was three-faceted: she came forward trembling with fear, fell down at his feet and told the whole truth. He gave her a fourfold response: he called her "daughter" (an intimate and endearing term), assured her that her body was healed (by her faith, not his clothes), sent her away free from all anxiety (go in peace), and healed (Gk. sozo, "saved," Mk 5:34) her soul.

Between the healing of a demon-possessed man and the raising of a dead girl, this woman's situation could be considered a lesser concern by human measurements, but not by Christ. He stops for everyone.

See also Mk 5:25–34; Lk 8:43–48; notes on Healing (Jas 5)

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

¹⁴Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁵Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

¹⁶"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. ¹⁷Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

¹⁸While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." ¹⁹Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

²⁰ Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind

9:14 Eating in Biblical times had ramifications beyond physical nourishment or social enjoyment. It could have religious significance when accompanying worship, festivals, and covenant-making. Fasting (or "afflicting" the soul) could also have religious significance such as repentance (Lev 16:29–31), obedience (Joel 2:12), responding to a loss (2Sa 1:12), preparation for a great event (1Sa 7:6) and prepa-

ration for communication with God (Dt 9:9; see Mt 6:16-18, note)

9:20-22 The woman had several things against her:

- 1) She was a woman (see The Hemorrhaging Woman);
- She approached Jesus at one of the busiest times of his ministry; and

him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

²²Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶News of this spread through all that region.

Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

²⁸When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

²⁹Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you"; ³⁰and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." ³¹But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

³²While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. ³³And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

³⁴But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

The Workers Are Few

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, pro-

claiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

A CHILD'S SECURITY IS BASED NOT ON HOW MUCH HIS PARENTS LOVE HIM,
BUT ON HOW MUCH HIS PARENTS
LOVE EACH OTHER.

Susan Alexander Yates

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

10 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, ^a drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

 a 8 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

 Her bleeding was considered unclean, and rabbis were not to touch or to be touched by someone bleeding (Lev 15:25-33).

The other gospels give more details (Mk 5:25–34; Lk 8:43–48). Though the woman was healed when she touched Jesus, she needed an encounter with him. She is the only person Jesus addressed as daughter.

9:25 Peter, James and John were the only ones invited to be at the transfiguration and at the intimate prayer time in Gethsemane. Perhaps this occasion was considered as important because it was the first time Jesus raised someone from the

dead. Jesus had shown his power over diseases, physical infirmities, supernatural beings and nature. Here he showed his power over death (see Mk 5, Jairus's Resurrected Daughter).

9:35 Jesus healed every kind of sickness, not necessarily every case of sickness.

10:1 Jesus' disciples first learned about him; then he sent them out. In each list of the Twelve, Peter is first and Judas Iscariot is last (see Mk 3:16–19; Lk 6:14–16). These men with such diverse personalities, backgrounds, education and vocations were not the usual choices for a religious movement.

9"Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts — ¹⁰no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. ¹²As you enter the home, give it your greeting. ¹³If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. ¹⁷Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. ¹⁸On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ²² You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴"The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ "So do not be afraid of them, for there is

nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ^a ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³²"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to turn

"'a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-inlaw—

a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'b

³⁷"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

⁴⁰ "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a

^a 29 Or will; or knowledge ^b 36 Micah 7:6

10:9–19 Their mission was to be shared by others who would offer them hospitality and support. The worthiness of a person was determined by his response to Jesus (see vv. 37–38). To turn the disciples away meant they were turning away the Messiah, which meant the Messiah would turn away from them (see v. 33). Sodom and Gomorrah pictured the certainty and completeness of God's judgment.

10:37 God is in a category separate from all else. He does not ask any woman to love her family less. However, even the closest human relationship must not stand between or supersede an individual's primary loyalty to the Lord (Mt 16:24).

10:39 Sacrifice indicates a deliberate act of bringing a possession to the altar—abdicating all rights, stepping away and leaving it there. Jesus asked his followers to sacrifice financial security (vv. 9–10), personal defense (vv. 19–21), physical safety (vv. 22–31), earthly status (vv. 32–33), family relationships (v. 37), personal agendas (v. 38) and even life itself (v. 39). The rewards promised are great: the meeting of personal needs (Mt 6:30–31); the ability to deliver God's words (Mt 10:19–20); the Lord's eternal protection (v. 28); value in the eyes of the Father (v. 31); membership in God's family (Mt 12:49–50); a role in his agenda (Mt 10:24–26); and genuine life (v. 39).

prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴²And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

Jesus and John the Baptist

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.^a

²When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

⁴Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^b are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

⁷As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. ⁹Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written:

"'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'c

¹¹Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, ^d and violent people have been raiding it. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵Whoever has ears, let them hear.

¹⁶"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:

17" 'We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

Woe on Unrepentant Towns

²⁰Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. 21"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. ^e For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

The Father Revealed in the Son

²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except

 a 1 Greek in their towns b 5 The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin. c 10 Mal. 3:1 d 12 Or been forcefully advancing e 23 That is, the realm of the dead

11:10-11 Although John's mission was to announce the coming of the Messiah, his understanding was veiled. The disciples who witnessed the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and the glorification of Jesus had an even greater message to share.

11:25 The kingdom Jesus offered is available and under-

standable to anyone who is interested. The "wise and learned" were those who were self-sufficient and prided themselves on their great understanding of spiritual things (see Mt 9:12).

11:27 Jesus claimed to have an exclusive relationship with the Father and to be the exclusive Way to the Father (see In 10:15: 14:6).

the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. ²When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

³He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread — which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. ⁵Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? ⁶I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' ^a you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

⁹Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, ¹⁰ and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

¹¹He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

¹³Then he said to the man, "Stretch out

your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

PROPER PARENTING GOD'S WAY

IS TO PONDER AND PRAY.

- Joyce Rogers

God's Chosen Servant

¹⁵Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. ¹⁶He warned them not to tell others about him. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸ "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight;

I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

19 He will not quarrel or cry out;

no one will hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,

till he has brought justice through to victory.

In his name the nations will put their hope."

Jesus and Beelzebul

²²Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

²⁴But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince

^a 7 Hosea 6:6 ^b 21 Isaiah 42:1-4

11:28–29 Jesus is the touchstone for everything. Individuals are to "come" and "take" his yoke, and he does the rest. A person who is weary is struggling, and one who is burdened is overloaded. The yoke was a double harness in which two animals pulled together. Often, one harness was larger and meant for the stronger, more experienced animal, while the smaller was used for the animal being trained. The yoke of Jesus clearly implies that even though individuals are free from the law, they are not to make their own rules. Rather, they are to be harnessed to him, living life his way.

12:1–8 The yoke the religious leaders had put on the people is illustrated. The rules God gave concerning the Sabbath were few and to the point. By contrast, the Jewish additions were numerous and detailed. At the heart of this system was an effort to manipulate God. The idea was that if one could keep and enforce all the added rules, God would have no choice but to bless Israel. This religious system was given precedence over everything, including God's glory and the welfare of his people.

of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

²⁵Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

²⁹"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

³⁰"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

³³"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

The Sign of Jonah

³⁸Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you."

³⁹He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. 42The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

⁴³"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

priority to doing the Father's will.

⁴⁶While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

⁴⁸He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹Pointing to his

12:31 The unpardonable sin is defined as continually attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan in full knowledge that the work is God's. All sin can and will be forgiven when there is genuine repentance. Even blasphemy, or profaning God's name in some way, can be forgiven when God's forgiveness is sought. However, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit ascribes to Satan what is done by God, and that cannot be forgiven. To be against Jesus in this way requires that the perpetrator know precisely what he is doing and knowingly and willingly credit Satan rather than the Holy Spirit with the work of God. Why would someone do this? Because to admit these miracles were from God would require acknowledging and following Jesus as Messiah, resulting in abandoning his own way (see Isa 53:6).

12:38-40 In the face of miracles, healings and deliverances

from demon possession, the Pharisees and scribes wanted yet another "sign." They were not seeking the truth but were seeking to entrap. As he often did, Jesus gave new meaning to a simple historical event with which his hearers were familiar (Jnh 1:17—2:10). The remarkable deliverance of Jonah from the fish after three days was presented as a precursor of Jesus' death, burial, and his resurrection on the third day (Mt 12:40). 12:46—50 Jesus was not diminishing the importance of family ties, nor was he anything other than caring and courteous in relating to his mother and other family members (see Mt 10:37, note). Rather, he introduced an entirely new category of spiritual commitment. Jesus knew that he must give

disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ²Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹Whoever has ears, let them hear."

¹⁰The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

¹¹He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹²Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables:

"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

¹⁴In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

"'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'^a

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

¹⁸"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

13:3 Parables (Gk. *parabole*, lit. "a placing beside") are simple, short stories in the form of a "type," "figure," or "illustration" with two levels of meaning. They present a comparison or contrast in order to stimulate thought, decision and action. Parables are the most difficult yet powerful form of literature to create (see chart, Women and the Parables of Jesus). Their power comes both in the simplicity and brevity of their teaching as well as in the memory tool they provide. Approximately one-third of Jesus' teaching was done in parables that revealed the nature of the kingdom of God. Here, the first four were given to the general public, and the last four were given to the disciples.

13:3–9 The foundational parable is set apart from the others since it is the key to the rest. The kingdom of God that Jesus offered to the Jews involved their receiving this message. The parable of the soils is a parable of hearing. This parable warned that unless the mind and the heart would hear and accept the Word of God, the teaching of parables would be meaningless.

13:10–15 Jesus' parables were a teaching method designed to reveal spiritual truths in such a way that those who wanted to respond would understand and receive more (vv. 9,12,43). Those who chose not to respond would not completely understand,

and what little understanding they did have would disappear.

^a 15 Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)

²⁶When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸"'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹"'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

³¹He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

³³He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds^a of flour until it worked all through the dough."

³⁴Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom ev-

erything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴²They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

44"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

⁴⁷"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.

"Yes," they replied.

⁵²He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

A Prophet Without Honor

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. ⁵⁴Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. ⁵⁵"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not

^a 33 Or about 27 kilograms ^b 35 Psalm 78:2

without honor except in his own town and in his own home."

⁵⁸And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

John the Baptist Beheaded

14 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, ² and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

³Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

⁶On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much ⁷that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." ⁹The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. ¹²John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the

crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.

¹⁸"Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

IF YOU CAN'T FEED A HUNDRED, FEED ONE.

- Mother Teresa

Jesus Walks on the Water

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹"Come," he said.

14:1 Herod the tetrarch or Antipas was the ruler responsible for the death of John the Baptist (see chart, The Family Tree of Herod the Great). "Herod" was a dynastic title used to describe many different rulers. This family was ruthless with each other as well as with outsiders. No one was safe. Herod the Great, the father of Antipas, had numerous members of his own family put to death, including his favorite wife Mariamne. To have ascended to power in such a family revealed the ruthlessness and ingenuity of Herod Antipas. He helped depose his brother Archelaus, stole his brother Philip's wife Herodias, and was devoted to whomever had the most power in Rome at the time (see Herodias and Salome).

14:13 Solitude was an important part of Jesus' life (see Mt 4:1–11; 14:23; Mk 1:35; Lk 4:42; 5:16; Jn 17).

14:21 The size of a crowd was often numbered only by counting the men (in this case, 5,000). The number could possibly have been three times as great when women and children were included. The feeding of the 5,000, one of three miracles through which food or drink was provided (Mt 15:32–38; Jn 2:1–10), is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (Mk 6:35–44; Lk 9:12–17; Jn 6:5–13).

Herodias and Salome: A MANIPULATIVE MOTHER AND SEDUCTIVE DAUGHTER

Herodias, who lived in Tiberias, the capital city built by her husband on the southwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, was a woman out of control. Crafty, ambitious, greedy and politically astute, Herodias would stop at nothing to attain what she wanted.

Herodias and her first husband, her uncle Philip, had a daughter named Salome. When Herod Antipas, the brother of Philip and the stepbrother of Herodias's father Aristobulus, visited Philip, he and Herodias were immediately attracted to one another. Herod Antipas was a far more powerful man than Philip. Herodias saw her chance for more power, a better position and an increase in wealth. She insisted Herod divorce his wife; she divorced her husband, and they married. This incestuous marriage was very offensive to the Jews.

Herodias definitely brought out the worst in Herod as is apparent in the account of the beheading of the fearless preacher John the Baptist, the only one who dared to stand up and reprove this unscrupulous couple. Herodias hated John the Baptist because he did not hesitate publicly to call her alliance with Herod "sin." She wanted to sentence John to death (Mk 6:19), but Herod was awed and fascinated by John. He liked to hear him speak, even though John confronted him with the truth, and he feared the reaction of the people if this popular preacher were harmed.

Herodias's resentment and anger festered like a sore. Her opportunity for revenge finally came on Herod's birthday. The military and political leaders came to help him celebrate at a great feast in his palace at Machaerus. Herodias's sensuous teenaged daughter, Salome, danced so alluringly that Herod loudly offered the girl anything she wanted up to half his kingdom. Her mother was ready with what she wanted, and it was not half a kingdom. Herodias knew that her husband was an unprincipled, cruel man. He was also boisterous and proud, and the embarrassment of backing down on his offer to Salome in front of all these people would be a humiliation he could not tolerate, even at the expense of an innocent man's life. Sometimes simple manipulation can outdo any political maneuvering and power.

Obviously, Herodias had entangled her daughter Salome in her obsession since the daughter added to her mother's request. Not only did Salome ask for John's head, but she also demanded it "immediately" and "on a platter." Obsessions of hate not only take over a person's life but usually infect others as well. By example, influence and manipulation, Herodias led her young daughter into sin—as an accomplice in the murder of a godly preacher. Her husband and daughter were merely tools in the hand of Herodias, who had planned and orchestrated the tragic crime.

See also Mk 6:14–29; Lk 3:19–20; notes on Dancing (Ex 15); Family (1Sa 3); Motherhood (Eze 16)

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³²And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

³⁴When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

That Which Defiles

15 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ²"Why do your disciples break the

15:1–7 The Pharisees' chief concern was to keep their own traditions, while Jesus' concern was to do God's will. The food regulations were a prominent part of the Pharisees' traditions

(see Lev 10, Clean vs. Unclean). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for putting their traditions before God's commandments and the people's good. He referred to a practice called "Corban" in tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

³Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' ^b ⁵But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,' ⁶they are not to 'honor their father or mother' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

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

⁹They worship me in vain;

their teachings are merely human rules.'c"

¹⁰Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. ¹¹What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

¹²Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

¹³He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ¹⁴Leave them; they are blind guides.^d If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

¹⁵Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

¹⁶"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. ¹⁷"Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? ¹⁸But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts — murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them."

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

²³Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

²⁵The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

²⁶He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁷"Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

²⁸Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

²⁹Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. ³⁰Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. ³¹The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

³²Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send

^a 4 Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16
 ^b 4 Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9
 ^c 9 Isaiah 29:13
 ^d 14 Some manuscripts blind guides of the blind

which a person dedicated selected possessions to God, while still having the use of them (see Mk 7:8–13). If someone (even parents) had a need, the individual would claim the injunction instructing him not to break vows (Nu 30:2). Such action elevated the law of "Corban" above God's law to "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex 20:12).

15:7 The Pharisees were described as "hypocrites" by Jesus. This theatrical term described an actor who played a part "underneath the mask." Jesus accused the Pharisees of putting on a mask of holiness.

15:21-28 See Canaanite Woman.

15:22 The Canaanites were Israel's ancient enemies. They were a perverse people who were in the land when Abraham arrived. Because of the atrocities they practiced in their religion, such as temple prostitution and child sacrifice, and because of their refusal to repent and turn to him, God had ordered their destruction (see Nu 33:50–55; Dt 7:1–11). The Jews reserved "Son of David" for the legitimate king of Israel. A Canaanite would not want to recognize such a title.

15:32-39 The feeding of the 4,000 had many similarities to the feeding described in Matthew 14:13-21. The people had been listening to his teaching; they were in a rural area; the

Canaanite Woman

A mother's heart is one of the most potent motivators known. A Canaanite woman exhibited this during one of Jesus' teaching tours. We do not know her name, but we do know this mother had insight, courage, persistence and initiative.

Obviously, Jesus' reputation had reached beyond Palestine. Most likely his healing ministry had made the news in Tyre and Sidon, but few would cross cultural and religious lines to approach him. This woman was one of the few. What motivated her to take such initiative on her own? Her mother's heart.

There were at least three barriers that could have discouraged her from accomplishing her task: She was a Gentile (Mt 15:24); she was a Canaanite (see v. 22, note); and she was a woman (Jn 4:27). But the magnitude of a mother's love pulled her as irresistibly as the moon pulls the tides

This mother used a threefold approach: She acknowledged Jesus as the rightful King by calling him "Son of David" (see Mt 15:22, note); she acknowledged him as her King and Master by calling him Lord; and she prayed the simple prayer, "Have mercy on me" (v. 22), "help me" (v. 25). These expressions are irresistible to God.

Her persistence during this brief encounter with Jesus revealed not only a mother's determination but also her growing faith. Notice: It was not her love for her daughter that impressed him the most (though that surely pleased him) but her great faith (v. 28).

There is an uncanny parallel between this woman and Rahab in the Old Testament (Jos 2). Both women came from the hopelessly perverted Canaanites; both showed a strong love for family; both showed courage, persistence and boldness by stepping away from their religious backgrounds on their own; both evaluated Israel's God and found him superior to their gods (in fact, they gave *Yahweh* more credit than the Israelites did); both made a commitment to Israel's God; and both received what they were seeking.

God has a special understanding for the mother's heart (Isa 49:15; 66:12–13; Lk 13:34). More than anything else we remember this woman's persistent, even obstinate, faith. She would not give up.

See also Mk 7:24–30; notes on Motherhood (Isa 49); Perseverance (Rev 14); Prayer (Jer 33)

them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."

³³His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

³⁴"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."

³⁵He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. ³⁷They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken

pieces that were left over. ³⁸The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

The Demand for a Sign

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

²He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' ³and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the

times. ^{a 4}A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

⁵When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶"Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

⁷They discussed this among themselves and said, "It is because we didn't bring any bread."

⁸Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ¹²Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

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

¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, ^b and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^c will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be^d bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^d loosed in heaven." ²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus Predicts His Death

²¹From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²²Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

²³Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

²⁴Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny

 a 2,3 Some early manuscripts do not have When evening comes . . . of the times. b 18 The Greek word for Peter means rock. c 18 That is, the realm of the dead d 19 Or will have been

16:5–12 Leaven or yeast was a small substance that permeated the entire product (see Lk 12:1, note).

16:16 Peter declared that Jesus was not one among many—he was someone set apart from all others. The Jews had been waiting for the promised Messiah. "Son of the living God" was a new title. In the OT, divine sonship referred to angels (as special messengers of God), to Israel (as a nation elected to perform the service of God) or to a king (one who had been given authority by God over Israel and other nations). Peter not only affirmed Jesus to be the Messiah; he identified the Messiah as the Son of God. Though the disciples had heard the Father call Jesus his beloved Son (Mt 3:17) and had heard Jesus address God as Father numerous times (Mt 11:27), this confession went beyond that to express the understanding of their hearts.

16:18 Simon was Peter's given name; he was the son (Aram. *bar*) of Jonah (v. 17). The two words for "rock" differ: "You are Peter" (Gk. *petros*, lit. "a small stone") and "on this rock" (Gk. *petra*, lit. "a massive rock"). There are three possible interpretations:

 If Jesus were speaking in Aramaic and both references were Cephas, Peter is identified as the "rock";

- Peter is the "small rock" (Gk. petros), and Jesus is the "massive boulder" (Gk. petra) upon whom the church is built (see 1Co 3:11); or
- 3) Peter is addressed, and his confession is the petra or "rock" on which the church would be built.

Hades (Gk., lit. "the place of the dead") was often used as an idiom for the powers of death. Jesus' point is that death itself cannot destroy the church or keep it from going forward.

16:19 The binding and loosing is a reference to the distribution of the gospel. Peter and all believers were given the gospel ("the keys of the kingdom") to introduce women and men to Christ and his salvation and thereby build the church (see Mt 28:19–20).

16:22–23 Peter was unwittingly doing the same thing Satan tried to do in the wilderness temptation—urging Jesus to act on his own apart from the Father. Jesus' words did not fit Peter's agenda, just as his words and deeds did not fit the agenda of the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees. Jesus had only one purpose—to do the Father's will (Php 2:8; Heb 10:7).



FOLLOWING JESUS

"Following Jesus" is the definition of "commitment." Commitment demands a choice. Jesus wasted no time getting to the heart of commitment: Either the disciples would be committed to him and deny their own desires, or they would be determined to go their own ways and deny him (Mt 10:32–37). The choice to commit is the same for all believers—either we deny ourselves or deny him; either we go his way or we pursue our way.

Talk about Christ would be meaningless without the walk with him. The disciples were to take up their crosses. Carrying the cross beam was a public declaration of Rome's authority. Jesus challenged them to put themselves voluntarily under God's authority, doing his will his way. Commitment demands action; it cannot be divorced from responsibility. It extends beyond our relationship to the heavenly Father to other areas of life. Ruth's words of commitment to Naomi did not speak as loudly as did her actions. She left her family and homeland to return with Naomi to Bethlehem (Ru 1:16–17).

Commitment definitely limits choices because it is exclusive. For example, in a commitment to marriage, God's plan is for one woman and one man to commit to each other exclusively and permanently (Mt 19:5–6).

Jesus demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane that the Father's will always takes precedence over his. The next day, he picked up his cross, demonstrating that he would do the Father's will the Father's way.

Commitment builds up faith and develops character. It is a spiritual discipline (Pr 16:3). It is a lifetime venture, requiring time, work and determination (Mt 16:24).

See also Ecc 5:4–5; Mt 5:33,37; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:62; 14:27; notes on Decision Making (1Co 8); Integrity (Ps 27); Marriage (Ge 2; 2Sa 6; Pr 5; Hos 2; Am 3; 2Co 13; Heb 12); Salvation (Eph 2); Vows (Nu 30); portrait of Ruth (Ru 2)

themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save their life a will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

²⁸ Truly I tell you, some who are standing

here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

The Transfiguration

17 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and

 a 25 The Greek word means either *life* or *soul*; also in verse 26.

16:28 Three major interpretations are suggested:

- the coming of Christ in judgment to destroy the temple in AD 70;
- a reference to Jesus' resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers;
- a pointing to the transfiguration in which three of these men would see Jesus in his glorified state.

The latter seems most likely because of the proximity of the transfiguration account (Mt 17:1–5).

17:1 The transfiguration took place within a week of Christ's prediction that he would die. The three disciples included were the ones he allowed to witness the raising of Jairus's daughter

(Mk 5:37); they later would accompany him to the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:33). Though tradition long held this "high mountain" to be Mount Tabor, there is no record that Jesus was near Mount Tabor at this time. In addition, archaeological excavations discovered here a fortified city dating to this time, which would have made it difficult for them to have been in seclusion. Mount Hermon seems a more likely place. Three events took place: Jesus' body was transfigured (v. 2); Moses, the giver of the Law and deliverer from bondage in Egypt, and Elijah, the forerunner of John the Baptist and representative of the prophets in the OT, appeared (v. 3); and God spoke from a cloud (v. 5).

his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." ⁸When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

¹⁰The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

¹¹Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

¹⁴When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵"Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. ¹⁶I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

¹⁷"You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." ¹⁸Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?"

 20 He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." $^{[21]a}$

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

²²When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. ²³They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

The Temple Tax

²⁴After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

²⁵"Yes, he does," he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?"

²⁶"From others." Peter answered.

"Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him. ²⁷"But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

²He called a little child to him, and placed

 $^{\it a}$ 21 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 9:29.

17:5 At Jesus' baptism the disciples heard God saying the same thing (Mt 3:17). The message is repeated near the end of his ministry: God is still pleased with his Son. This time the admonition "Listen to him" was added, but they still were not listening.

17:9 The message must have been confusing. The transfiguration was not for the masses but for his followers. The timing of this event was important. The disciples were at the crucial

point of commitment to Jesus. Everything hinged on who he was to them. In fact, he had recently challenged them with this question (Mt 16:15). They needed to be prepared for what would seem to be defeat—the cross.

17:24–27 The tax in question was not a Roman tax but a Jewish temple tax that paid for the care of the temple (see Ex 30:12–14; 38:26; 2Ch 24:6).

the child among them. ³And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Causing to Stumble

6"If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! 8If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

The Parable of the Wandering Sheep

¹⁰"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [11]a

¹²"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on

the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ¹³And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. ¹⁴In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵"If your brother or sister ^b sins, ^c go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ^d ¹⁷If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

¹⁸"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be^e bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^e loosed in heaven.

¹⁹"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my

 a 11 Some manuscripts include here the words of Luke 19:10. b 15 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verses 21 and 35. c 15 Some manuscripts sins against you d 16 Deut. 19:15 e 18 Or will have been

18:3 The evangelism of children must be a priority for home and church. Jesus used children as illustrations of the faith (trust in and loyalty to) and humility (putting oneself under God's authority) required to become part of his kingdom. Though God has gifted some with special abilities to teach children, all believers have the assignment to live a godly life before them, tell them about the Lord and love them (Dt 6; Mt 19:14; Eph 6:4; Titus 2:4). The gospel is to be given to all, and a response is required by all who are old enough to know the difference between right and wrong (Mt 28:19–20). Nowhere in Scripture is there the suggestion that children are incapable of responding to God or of engaging in praise, worship, prayer and thanksgiving. In fact, Jesus emphasized that, in coming to the Father, children are not required to become like adults, but rather, adults are to become as children.

18:8–9 Jesus was not advocating physical mutilation; the body is not responsible for sin. Lust begins in the heart as does pride (see Mt 5:29–30). Believers are to cut out of their lives anything that causes them or others to sin.

18:10 Guardian angels are not promised for each child, although Scripture does teach that angels are concerned about believers and minister to them (see Ps 91:11; Heb 1:14).

18:21 Rabbinical tradition taught a repeated sin should be forgiven three times, but on the fourth, there was to be no forgiveness. Peter probably thought he was being generous to forgive "seven times." Jesus' answer suggested forgiving an unlimited number of times. He amplified that answer in a parable. The comparison of the debt owed the king and the debt owed the servant is almost ridiculous. The picture is clear: God has forgiven believers an immense debt; they dare not refuse to forgive others for small offenses. The lack of forgiveness is another subtle form of playing god and puts believers in direct opposition to God. Those who are forgiven must forgive if they are to receive forgiveness (see Ps 51; Lk 17, Forgiveness; chart, Your Path to Freedom).



RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

Conflict is inevitable in personal relationships. It is humanly impossible to live in total harmony with others at all times. Jesus told his disciples how to settle disputes between believers (Mt 18:15–20). Paul resolved his conflict with John Mark, which had developed between the first and second missionary journeys (Ac 15:36–41). John warned Christians not to hate each other (1Jn 4:20–21).

The Bible offers several steps to resolving conflict and settling disagreements among people:

- Scripture admonishes the believer to face the conflict—acknowledge its existence and accept its impact. Christ advised his disciples to go immediately and directly to the person and discuss the grievance (Mt 18:15). Others should be enlisted to mediate the conflict only if the conflict cannot be resolved one to one (Mt 18:16–17).
- Scripture instructs the believer to forgive the conflict—to put the disagreement behind and move ahead in harmony once it has been resolved. Euodia and Syntyche were encouraged to replace their bitterness with gentleness and to live in peaceful harmony, rejoicing in the Lord (Php 4:2—7).
- Scripture encourages the believer to move beyond the conflict. Paul resolved his grudge against Mark and sought opportunities to minister with him (compare Ac 15:36–41 with 2Ti 4:9–11; see Ecc 1, Healing).

Jesus reminded the Pharisees of the greatest commandments—to love the Lord and love your neighbor (Mt 22:37–40). The desire of God is for his children to live in harmony. Christians are to resolve conflict with others by replacing discord with love. The emphasis is not punitive but redemptive (see 2Co 2:5–11; 2Th 3:14–15).

See also 1Jn 3:10–18; notes on Communication (Pr 15); Conflict (SS 5); Forgiveness (Ps 51; Lk 17); Marriage (Ge 2; 2Sa 6; Pr 5; Hos 2; Am 3; 2Co 13; Heb 12)

brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold ^b was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶"At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins." He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and

begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³²"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

 a 22 Or seventy times seven b 24 Greek ten thousand talents; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wages. c 28 Greek a hundred denarii; a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see 20:2).

Divorce

19 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

4"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' a 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' b? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

7"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

¹¹Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others — and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

The Little Children and Jesus

¹³Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

¹⁴Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ¹⁵When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

¹⁶Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

¹⁷"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."

¹⁸"Which ones?" he inquired.

Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹honor your father and mother,' ^c and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' ^d"

²⁰ "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

²¹Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

²²When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell

 a4 Gen. 1:27 b5 Gen. 2:24 c19 Exodus 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20 d19 Lev. 19:18

19:9 Sexual immorality (Gk. porneia) is a broad term, referring to a wide range of illicit sexual practices. The presupposition here is that immorality breaks the one-flesh union, which God declared to be part of the marriage relationship. For some, such a violation is a legitimate reason for divorce. However, lesus was not requiring divorce, even in this case; he was simply noting that Moses gave this permission clause (Dt 24:1–4) because their "hearts were hard" (Mt 19:8).

19:10—11 Jesus was not condemning either marriage or single life but rather pointing out that both had advantages. Singleness may mean more time for kingdom work, but not everyone can handle single life (see Ps 62; Jn 2; 1Co 7; 12, Singleness)
19:12 The reference is not to physical castration, but to Goddirected, self-imposed celibacy (see 1Co 7, Celibacy).

19:13 Customarily children were brought to rabbis and elders for blessing. The disciples appeared to be rude and

thoughtless, especially in the light of Jesus' recent teaching (Mt 18:2–6). They may have been annoyed that their private discussion with the Lord was interrupted by the seeming triviality of blessing children.

19:16–22 Luke identified this man as a ruler (Lk 18:18). The ruler's question revealed his problem. He wanted to know what to do to earn eternal life. Jesus' emphasis was always on the attitude of the heart, not on deeds. Jesus showed the young man that he had failed, even in the areas in which he thought he had done well. His wealth was not his problem; his divided heart was (see Mt 6:24). The vital message Jesus gave the man was not "Go, sell your possessions," but "Come, follow Me" (see Mt 5:29–30; 16:15; 17:9; 18:8–9).

19:23–26 Jesus was not condemning wealthy people. For example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon and Joseph of Arimathea were wealthy. But the Jews often interpreted



BREAKING ASUNDER

In interpreting the decree of Moses on divorce (Dt 24:1), the followers of the Rabbi Shammai believed that divorce should be granted only because of infidelity, while the followers of Rabbi Hillel argued that Mosaic Law permitted divorce for virtually any reason. Jesus shocked his disciples by rejecting both sides of the rabbinic debate (Mt 19:10). Rather than going immediately to the contested text (Dt 24:1), Jesus referred back to the beginning of marriage (Mt 19:4–6). Ultimately the answer to this problematic issue does not lie in legal codes, traditional practices, or human solutions but in God's creative design (Ge 2:24). God never accommodates or compromises his principles, but he does redeem and restore any who seek his forgiveness.

Jesus' view of divorce (Gk. apostasion, from apoluy, "to send away," meaning "to remove from the center of a relationship" or "to break fellowship") can be understood only against the background of his view of permanent monogamy, one man and one woman together for a lifetime. The plan for permanence is clear in the "one-flesh" metaphor used by the Lord. Moses allowed divorce as a human device to protect ill-treated Hebrew women from unscrupulous men who sought to manipulate the betrothal process. The Pharisees took the "permission" of the law and turned it into a "command" that made human frailty a justification for circumventing God's divine plan and purpose.

Jesus did not teach that the innocent party must divorce the unfaithful one. The purpose of the "exception" clause in the Mosaic Law, which is repeated again in Jesus' explanation, is not to encourage divorce. The binding commitment of marriage does not depend upon human wills or upon what any individual does or does not do but rather upon God's original design and purpose for marriage (Hos 3:1–3).

God rejects divorce for these reasons:

- Marriage is a divine institution the Lord used to teach his children about their relationship to him (Ge 1:27; Mt 19:4).
- Marriage is by express command of the Creator and carries his imprimatur (Mt 19:4–5).
- Marriage brings two people together as one flesh, testifying to the permanence God planned for this most intimate union (Mt 19:6).
- Jesus points to the example of the first couple (Mt 19:8).
- Evil consequences are inevitable when separation comes (Mt 19:9).

Divorce is never God's choice. Indeed, God hates divorce (Mal 2:16). However, whenever divorce occurs for whatever reason, God desires to work redemptively when the person who has experienced this tragedy is repentant and desires reconciliation to God.

See also Ex 21:7–11; Est 1:10–22; Jer 3:1; Mal 2:14–16; Lk 16:18; 1Co 7:10–17; notes on Adultery (Hos 3); Commitment (Mt 16); Husbands (Job 31; 2Co 6); Marriage (Ge 2; 2Sa 6; Pr 5; Hos 2; Am 3; 2Co 13; Heb 12); Remarriage (Mt 5); Vows (Nu 30); Wives (Pr 31)

you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁶Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

²⁷Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

wealth as a sign of God's blessing in the sense of a sure ticket to heaven. Instead, Jesus saw the dangers inherent in wealth and taught that only a few, with God's help (v. 26), could handle wealth properly. The camel was the largest animal commonly seen, and the eye of a needle was the smallest opening. Jesus used a figure of speech that demonstrated the dangers of wealth.

²⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^a or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

IN RAISING CHILDREN, ALL YOU CAN DO

IS YOUR BEST . . . WE TAKE CARE

OF THE POSSIBLE AND LEAVE

THE IMPOSSIBLE TO GOD.

Ruth Bell Graham

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius ^b for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³"About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' ⁵So they went.

"He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

7" 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered.

"He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

8"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'

9"The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

¹³"But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

¹⁶"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

¹⁷Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, ¹⁸"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

A Mother's Request

²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹"What is it you want?" he asked.

^a 29 Some manuscripts do not have *or wife.* ^b 2 A denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer.

19:28–29 Whether or not the 12 disciples would have a special assignment of judging Israel because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah is not clear. Jesus elsewhere said all his followers would have a part in judging (Lk 22:30; 1Co 6:2). Clearly, all who have responded to his call to follow him will receive not only eternal life but also a hundred times as much as what they left.

20:1 The parable of the laborers is found only in Matthew. Jesus illustrated why and how the last can become the first. Everything God has done for humanity is grace; individuals do not earn his favor, and he is never in their debt. God is

sovereign—he is in charge. Rank, position and reward are his to give to whomever He chooses. This parable illustrates two other points: God's concern with far more than the amount of work done; the people's anger with God because he is viewed as generous with others while only being fair with them.

20:20–24 A few days before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Zebedee's wife made a request for her sons James and John. Though her request suggested dangerous ambition on her part, the angry response of the other ten disciples was also unwise and reflected similar self-interest. "The cup" was a com-

Zebedee's Ambitious Wife

When Jesus taught his disciples, the mother of James and John listened with pride in her two sons. Naturally talented and dedicated to the Lord, they were included in Jesus' inner circle. James was a born leader (see Ac 12:17; 15:13). John was commonly called the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (see In 13:23).

This mother's pride also included human (as opposed to godly) ambition, and she knelt before Jesus, requesting special favors (Mt 20:21). Three times Jesus had foretold that he would be condemned to death, then rise the third day; yet at the crucifixion, most of his disciples deserted him, proving that they had heard him selectively. They heard only the promise that his followers would sit on thrones (Mt 19:28).

James and John may have urged their mother to speak, but neither they nor their mother understood the basic requirements for spiritual responsibility. Jesus listened to her request, but he posed his question to her sons (see also Mk 10:36). "You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" (Mt 20:22). They assured him that they could, and Jesus proceeded to teach them and their mother elementary truths about servant leadership. Jesus did not reject this mother's request for her sons, but rather he corrected it in an unexpected way (vv. 23,26).

This woman, who undoubtedly loved the Lord passionately, having joined the women who attended him, is thought to be Salome (not to be confused with Salome, the daughter of Herodias; see Mk 15:40). She followed Jesus to the cross and to the grave. Her highest fulfillment was to give her two sons to Christ, and the influence of a godly mother is certainly evident in these sons. But like many believers, she failed to grasp the essence of greatness—true humility. To follow him is to take up one's own cross (see Lk 9:23–24). Salome teaches us the importance of imitating Christ who "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10:45).

See also Mt 27:56; Mk 10:35-45; 15:40; 16:1; notes on Favoritism (Pr 28); Motherhood (1Sa 1)

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

²²"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

²³Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

²⁴When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

mon expression for great suffering (v. 22; Mt 26:39; Jn 18:11; Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17). Just as his suffering and death must come before his rule, so also their suffering would come before their ruling with him. Even though they would suffer for Christ, the positions, ranks and rewards of the kingdom were a matter of God's sovereign choice (see Mt 20:1–16). Jesus wanted his disciples to approach him freely with their requests, but he was disappointed in their inflated view of their own importance and with their lack of spiritual sensitivity in understanding his mission. They were reaching for glory without a willingness to endure the prerequisite sufferings. The brothers were confident that they were willing to share Jesus' mission, and indeed

Jesus prophesied that they would endure great suffering for the gospel (Ac 12:2; Rev 1:9).

20:25 The Jews used the term "Gentiles" to refer to anyone who was not ethnically a Jew. In common usage this term also included the idea that they were pagans, since they usually did not worship the God of Israel.

20:26–27 Greatness in his kingdom is servanthood—the opposite of the world's view of greatness. Servanthood begins in the heart. Again, Jesus is concerned more about the attitudes in the hearts of his followers than with their works (see In 13:1–17).

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

²⁹As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³²Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³³"Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." ³⁴Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"^a

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna^b to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"^c

"Hosanna^b in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

¹¹The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Jesus at the Temple

¹²Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³"It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,'^d but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'^e"

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.

¹⁶"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read,

"'From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise'f?"

¹⁷And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree

¹⁸Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹Seeing

 a 5 Zech. 9:9 b 9 A Hebrew expression meaning "Save!" which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 15 c 9 Psalm 118:25,26 d 13 Isaiah 56:7 e 13 Jer. 7:11 f 16 Psalm 8:2 (see Septuagint)

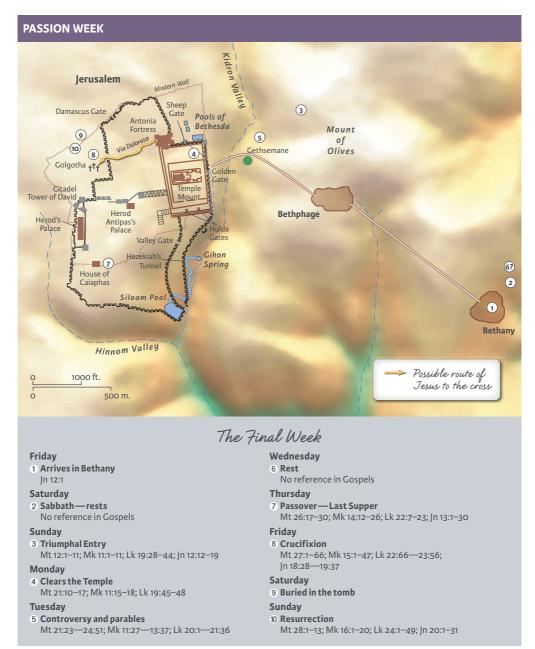
21:5 Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is the culmination of the offering of the kingdom by Jesus (see Mk 11:2–8, note).

21:9 See Mk 11:9, note.

21:12—13 When people came to worship at the temple, they needed animal sacrifices, wood, oil and other items. Stalls were set up at the temple to sell these necessities, but since these objects sold for temple currency, the people needed to exchange their money. The temple, designed as a house of prayer, had become a marketplace where money changing and bargaining took place.

21:18-19 The tree looked like it was bearing figs, but no

fruit was there. Just as in Jesus' cleansing of the temple, his striking of the tree indicated the imminence of judgment. This miracle of destruction could be understood as an illustrated parable or teaching device. In this case, the fig tree represented Israel (see Hos 9:10; Na 3:12; Zec 10:2). The tree with its leaves had the marks of fruitfulness, but it bore no fruit. Israel was likewise practicing hypocrisy (Mk 7:6), and for this reason the nation was in line for judgment. Jesus might also have been illustrating religious hypocrites like the ones he had just thrown out of the temple (Mt 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7–8; 22:18).



a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

²⁰When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked.

²¹Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you

can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. ²²If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

²³Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?"

they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

²⁴Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁵John's baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'Of human origin'—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vine-yard.'

²⁹"I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰ "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

³¹"Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

The Parable of the Tenants

³³"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and

built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

³⁵"The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

³⁸"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' ³⁹So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

⁴¹"He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time."

⁴²Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'a?

⁴³"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed." ^b

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. ⁴⁶They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

^a 42 Psalm 118:22,23 ^b 44 Some manuscripts do not have verse 44.

21:28–32 Jesus clearly applied this parable to the religious leaders confronting him. The tax collector's status was similar to that of a prostitute in society. Jesus taught that the outcasts of society could enter his kingdom if they would repent, while those who had lived a "religious" life but would not repent were the real outcasts.

21:33–41 The components of the parable are obvious: The landowner is God; the vineyard is Israel; the vinedressers are the religious leaders; the servants are the prophets (including

John the Baptist); and the son is Jesus. The vinedressers have attempted to usurp the authority of the owner and make the property their own—the essence of rebellion against God. To do so they must kill the son. Jesus had been telling his followers the leaders would kill him; here he confronted the leaders with the same message.

21:42–46 The line was clearly drawn and supported by the OT (Ps 118:22–23; Isa 28:16). To reject Jesus was and is to reject God (Ac 4:11–12).

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴"Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'

⁵"But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

8"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' 10So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless.

¹³"Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹⁴"For many are invited, but few are chosen."

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶They sent

their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax^a to Caesar or not?"

¹⁸But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, ²⁰and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

²¹"Caesar's," they replied.

Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

²²When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Marriage at the Resurrection

²³That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴"Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷Finally, the woman died. ²⁸Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"

²⁹Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they

 $^{\it a}$ 17 A special tax levied on subject peoples, not on Roman citizens

22:17–19 The trap seemed masterful—his answer would have to support either a rebellion against Rome or a rebellion against God. He effectively diffused their trap, while addressing an issue with which the conquered Jews wrestled—paying taxes to Rome (see Mk 12:14, note).

22:23–33 The Sadducees accepted only the Torah and thus rejected the resurrection, which is not mentioned in the Pentateuch (Ac 23:8; see chart, Jewish Sects). By appealing to levirate marriage (Mt 22:25–27; see Dt 25:5–6, note) in which a brother marries the childless widow of his deceased brother

in order to perpetuate the brother's lineage, the Sadducees created a hypothetical worst-case scenario to entrap Jesus. Jesus pointed to their misunderstanding of God's power and ignorance of Scripture and its teaching on the resurrection (Mt 22:29; see Isa 26:19). Though marriage as we know it will not exist in heaven, the lack of sexual relationships will in no way hinder the heavenly happiness and fulfillment God has planned for that blessed place. In fact, all relationships will surely surpass even the most joyous pleasure of intimacy on earth.

will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³²'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'^a? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ^b ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ^c ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

THE PLEASURE OF SEX, THE COMMUNICATION

OF LOVE, AND THE DESIRE FOR CHILDREN

ARE UNIQUELY LINKED.

Charlene Kaemmerling

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

⁴¹While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴²"What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

⁴³He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,

22:37–40 The scribes were experts in both theology and legal matters and thus the crafters of a hotly debated test question for Jesus. Jesus answered by linking the two commandments because the first is not possible without the second (see 1Jn 4:20), any more than the second could stand without the first. This wholehearted devotion to God is at the heart of the OT law and the teachings of Jesus. A right relationship to God is the beginning of everything and produces a right relationship to others.

22:41–46 Prior to this time Jesus had primarily talked about the religious leaders to his disciples and others. In these last confrontations and parables he had dealt with them directly. They have seen him and heard the truth and now must answer the most important question: "What do you think about the

44" 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." 'd

⁴⁵If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" ⁴⁶No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

A Warning Against Hypocrisy

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ²"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

5"Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

8"But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

^a 32 Exodus 3:6 ^b 37 Deut. 6:5 ^c 39 Lev. 19:18 ^d 44 Psalm 110:1 ^e 5 That is, boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on forehead and arm

Messiah? Whose son is he?" "The son of David" was not a sufficient answer (v. 42). This title was used for the Messiah in reference to descent from the line of David, but many had not understood (or believed) that the Messiah would also be God's Son.

23:5 Phylacteries were leather boxes containing Scripture. They were worn by Jewish men during prayer time on the arm or the forehead. Biblical commands were written on small scrolls and placed in the OT frontlets or NT phylacteries (Ex 13:9,16; Dt 6:8; 11:18). The Pharisees and scribes made their phylacteries showpieces, drawing attention to their supposed adherence to Scripture.

23:8–10 Only Jesus was qualified to sit in Moses' seat.

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

 13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. $^{[14]a}$

¹⁵"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

¹⁶"Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' 17 You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? 18 You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.' 19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. 22 And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

²³"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

²⁵"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

²⁷"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones

of the dead and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

²⁹"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' ³¹So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

³³"You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? ³⁴Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

³⁷"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' ^b"

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ²"Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

a 14 Some manuscripts include here words similar to
 Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.
 b 39 Psalm 118:26

23:13—36 Jesus pronounced seven woes, condemning the rejection of the kingdom, false teaching of Scripture, attempts at purification, and attitudes toward the prophets God had sent. Jesus' language had been strong and pointed. Never-

theless, his heart ached over the situation, and he yearned to forgive and heal (v. 37).

24:1–2 The destruction of the temple was literally fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.

³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

⁴Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. ⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.

9"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,'^a spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— ¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹How dreadful

it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

²² "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹"Immediately after the distress of those days

"'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be

³⁰"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^c will mourn when they see the Son

 a 15 Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11 $b 29 Isaiah 13:10; 34:4 c 30 Or the tribes of the land

24:3 The disciples knew that Jesus was the Messiah (Mt 16:16-20), the temple would be destroyed and the kingdom was coming (Mt 20:20-28). Since they did not understand other events must also occur—Jesus' crucifixion and death—they might have thought the events Jesus mentioned would all happen soon. Jesus told them they would see some of these things happen in a comparatively short time (persecution, abomination at the temple, destruction of Jerusalem and the temple), but he also made it clear that there would be a time lapse before it all came to pass. The events described obviously demanded a longer period to transpire: the coming of false prophets, wars and rumors of wars, kingdom rising against kingdom, famine, earthquakes, and the extension of the gospel to the entire world before the kingdom would come literally. The emphasis then would be upon the necessity of faith and obedience even in times of suffering and sorrow rather than on a timetable of events.

24:4–14 Jesus described the overall future of the world that would include natural disasters, persecution, false prophets, hatred of Christians, betrayal, defection, lawlessness and lack of love. The gospel would be spread despite all this.

24:15 The abomination of desolation prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Da 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) is a good example of a prophecy with more than one fulfillment. The term refers to the defilement of the temple, especially the altar of sacrifice. The altar was a picture of the sacrifice of Christ as the only atonement for sin. The "abomination" would cast aside what represented Christ and offer sacrifices to other gods. In 168 BC Antiochus Epiphanes sacked the temple, erected a statue to Zeus above the altar, and sacrificed swine (unclean animals). Jesus predicted that similar events would happen again.

24:16–28 Jesus described events that would occur in Jerusalem in the future. There would be a great tribulation before he would come to set up his physical kingdom (see Rev 6; chart, Millennial Views).

24:30 Jesus' incarnation was relatively quiet and uneventful. Only a few witnessed the unusual events: Mary and Joseph had angelic visits; a group of shepherds heard an angelic choir; wise men from another nation saw a phenomenal star. Jesus came as the Lamb of God to make peace between God and man. When he would come again to set up his kingdom, heaven and earth would dramatically announce him, and all would of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ^a ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it ^b is near, right at the door. ³⁴Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³⁶"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, ^c but only the Father. ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

⁴⁵"Who then is the faithful and wise ser-

vant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

7"Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

9"'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

¹⁰"But while they were on their way to buy

^a 30 See Daniel 7:13-14. ^b 33 Or *he* ^c 36 Some manuscripts do not have *nor the Son*.

see the display. He would come as King in power and glory and declare war against his enemies (see Rev 6).

24:34 Generation (Gk. *genea*) may refer to the nation Israel, suggesting her continued existence until the last days; it may mean "age" or "time period," referring to the dispensation of grace; or it may mean the time period of 30 years. If the latter is the case, then the text would indicate that these signs would begin to be fulfilled before that generation would end.

24:36–44 Jesus made it clear that while a general time may be determined for his return (when all these events occur), only the Father knows the day and hour. Christ's coming will surprise everyone. The believers' responsibility is not to attempt to guess the day but always to be ready.

24:45-51 The servant's assignment was to be faithful in caring for the household and distributing food. Similarly, the priests and teachers had been given the assignment of caring for the people of Israel. When they failed in their assignment and abused the members of God's household, their punishment was severe.

25:1–13 The parable of the ten virgins is found only in Matthew (see The Wise and Foolish Virgins). Jesus taught this parable a few days before the crucifixion. He had recently taught about the timing of the kingdom's appearance (see Mt 24). Here he used three parables to teach the importance of personal preparation for it.

The Wise and Foolish Virgins

As part of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus told several parables about the importance of being prepared for his return. For example, he pointed out that his coming would be unexpected (Mt 24:42–44) and that his followers would need to maintain a lifestyle of faithful obedience as they wait for him (vv. 45–51).

The backdrop for Jesus' next parable was a wedding custom of his day (Mt 25:1–13). Three events took place: the legal agreement made by the couple's parents; the procession to the bride's house by the bridegroom and his friends and the wedding party's return to the bridegroom's house; and the subsequent marriage feast. Jesus described the second phase in which the bridegroom and his party come to the bride's home, where the bride is awaiting him with the ten virgins who are her bridesmaids. Since the time of his arrival was uncertain, perhaps even after dark, each young woman needed to have both her lamp and an extra flask of oil for it. The five wise virgins were prepared with additional oil, but the foolish ones were not. When the bridegroom suddenly arrived at midnight, the foolish virgins' lack of preparation was exposed, and they were ultimately denied entrance to the wedding feast.

Jesus' message is clear: his coming, like that of the bridegroom in the parable, may be delayed, and the women and men who follow him need continually to be prepared (v. 13).

See also 1Th 5:1–3; notes on Commitment (Mt 16); Spiritual Discipline (2Pe 3); Weddings (Jn 2)

the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹"Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

¹²"But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

¹³"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

¹⁴"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, ^a each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

²¹"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²²"The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

²³"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

 a 15 Greek five talents . . . two talents . . . one talent; also throughout this parable; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wage.

25:14–30 The parable of the bags of gold is connected to the previous parable of the ten virgins, as it illustrates how to prepare for his coming. A bag of gold would be about the amount a day laborer would need 20 years to earn (see chart, Money and Measurements in the Bible). Each person according to his own ability was expected to use what he had been given.

The one given five bags and another given two bags both used their talents and received the same reward. The person given one bag did not even try to fulfill the responsibility the master gave him. His bag was taken away; he received no reward; the relationship between him and his master was destroyed.

²⁴"Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶"His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸"'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

The Plot Against Jesus

26 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ⁵"But not during the festival," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

25:31–46 The separation of the sheep and goats illustrates a truth. God knows who belongs to him (see Mt 13:24). God's children can be detected in how they treat "the least of these brothers and sisters of mine" (Mt 25:40). Reaching out to Jesus' brethren does not enable a person to attain salvation; that comes only through confession of Jesus (Mt 10:32). Reaching out is a result of salvation because it is a matter of responding to his love by obeying his commands.

26:1–2 The Passover was an annual celebration of the ceremony Moses instituted the night before the people left Egypt (Ex 12).

26:1–46 The Lord's Passion is described in this section. Jesus prepared his disciples for the trial, sentencing and crucifixion; his enemies prepared their plans for taking him; a woman prepared his body for burial; Judas prepared to betray him; and Jesus prepared himself in prayer. These events probably took place late Tuesday evening (actually Wednesday, as days ended at sunset) before his death (see chart, The Last Week in the Life of Jesus).

26:3 The chief priests and the elders of the people were the ones who tried to challenge Jesus. He had met their challenges and repeatedly defeated and unmasked them.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

⁶While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

⁸When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. ⁹"This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹The poor you will always have with you, ^a but you will not always have me. ¹²When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

¹⁴Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests ¹⁵and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Last Supper

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹⁸He replied, "Go into the city to a cer-

tain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

²³Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²⁵Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "You have said so."

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

²⁷Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the ^b covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

^a 11 See Deut. 15:11. ^b 28 Some manuscripts the new

26:6—13 Two anointings took place—this one in Bethany and an earlier one in Galilee (Lk 7:36). To honor a revered rabbi in this manner was not an uncommon event. The oil was costly (about 300 denarii), worth about a year's wages (see chart, Money and Measurements in the Bible). Mary of Bethany is identified as the woman (Jn 12:1–8). Though the text does not actually say Mary fully understood that Jesus was going to die, her actions may indicate she had a better grasp of what was taking place than did the disciples. Jesus understood her act as one of devout preparation and distinguished it as something set apart from mere good works.

26:14 Judas's motivation for betrayal is not indicated. Perhaps he was offended by Jesus' earlier rebuke or by the finality of Jesus' words, which indicated that he would not seek an earthly kingdom; even the money itself could have entered into consideration. In any case, Judas's decision to betray Jesus stands in sharp contrast to Mary's devotion.

26:15 Thirty pieces of silver was the value of a male or female slave gored to death accidentally by an ox (Ex 21:32).

26:17 The first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread was

the beginning of the Passover celebration. Jews were to rid the house of all leaven and use only unleavened bread during the celebration (Lev 23:6).

26:24 Though the betrayal by one of the disciples was foretold, Judas was still personally responsible for his actions.

26:26–29 Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper by using two symbols—bread and the fruit of the vine. The unleavened bread was a reminder of the hasty departure of God's people from Egypt (Ex 12). Jesus gave the bread new meaning by associating it with his body, which would be broken (Mt 26:26). This object lesson pointed to his death on the cross. The original Passover ceremony used several "cups" (Ex 6:6–7). Jesus gave new meaning to the cup as well (Mt 26:28–29). It would stand for his blood, which would be shed on the cross. After his resurrection, this celebration would look back to Jesus' death on the cross and forward to his return. The hymn would probably be from one of the Hallel psalms (see Ps 114–118; see chart, The Types of Psalms). Jesus reminded them there would be a kingdom, and he would be with them again.

³⁰When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

³¹Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

"'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'a

³²But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

³³Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

³⁴"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

³⁵But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

Gethsemane

³⁶Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴²He went away a second time and prayed,

"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

⁴³When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Jesus Arrested

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

52"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

⁵⁵In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching,

^a 31 Zech. 13:7 ^b 50 Or "Why have you come, friend?"

26:31 Jesus also referred to himself as the Shepherd who would give his life for his sheep (Jn 10:1–15; see also Zec 13:7).
26:36–44 Gethsemane (lit. "oil press"), the garden located across the Kidron on the Mount of Olives, was likely so named because of the abundance of olive trees. There, in prayer, Jesus fought his greatest battle. The intense sorrow was not primarily over the physical torture or dying, for he had been telling them for months he was willing to die (vv. 21–23). Rather, it was over needing to experience God's "cup" of wrath. In the OT God's cup of wrath was poured out on sinners, resulting in desolation, waste and becoming a curse (Jer 25:13–18;

49:12–13). He, the pure, sinless Son of God, would become sin, which would result in separation between himself and the Father (2Co 5:21). It was this separation that he dreaded (Mt 27:46). Because he was obedient, he experienced something no Christian would ever experience—separation from God (Ro 8:38–39).

26:47–56 A series of predictions were fulfilled: Judas betrayed him, the priests and elders seized him, and the disciples fled. The central character, of course, was Jesus. His amazing calmness and willingness to endure what faced him reflected the results of his prayer battle in the garden.

Women and Jesus in His Last Days

THE WOMAN	THE EVENT	HER MINISTRY TO JESUS	REFERENCE
Unnamed woman (See Jn 11, Mary of Bethany)	The anointing of Jesus at Bethany	She used expensive and fragrant oil to anoint Jesus' head.	Mt 26:6-13
Unnamed servant girl	The testing of Peter	She asked Peter about his association with Jesus.	Mt 26:69-70
Another girl	The testing of Peter	She asked Peter about his association with Jesus.	Mt 26:71-72
Pilate's wife	The trial of Jesus	She pleaded with her husband to release Jesus.	Mt 27:17-19
Unnamed women	The journey to the crucifixion site	They mourned for Jesus.	Lk 23:26-29
Mary (Jesus' mother); Mary (the wife of Clopas and the aunt of Jesus); Mary Magdalene	The crucifixion	They stood by the Cross, suffering with Jesus.	Jn 19:25–27
Women from Galilee: Mary Magdalene; Mary (the mother of James and Joses); Salome (the wife of Zebedee)	The crucifixion and burial	They ministered to Jesus in his last days, including preparing his body for burial.	Mt 27:55-56
Mary Magdalene; Mary (the mother of James); Joanna	The resurrection	They were the first to announce his resurrection.	Mt 28:1–10; Lk 24:1–12

and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

⁵⁷Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

⁵⁹The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward ⁶¹and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

⁶²Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" ⁶³But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

⁶⁴"You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." ^a

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes and

26:59–60 The chief priests, the elders and all the council would constitute the Jews' highest court, known as the Sanhedrin. Scholars have discussed at length what parts of Jesus' trials were illegal. For example, the proceedings took place at

the high priest's home rather than the courts; no one spoke for his defense; and the trial was at night. Whether or not these were illegal, the calling of false witnesses certainly was a travesty in legal proceedings.

a 64 See Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13.

Servant Girl

Just as a master craftsman knows how to put a small amount of pressure in the right place at the right time in order to reveal weaknesses, God often uses small things to reveal the weaknesses of an individual.

Peter was sure that he, of all the disciples, would never desert Jesus (Mt 26:35). He may not have had the sensitivity of John, the literary gifts of Matthew or the servant's heart of Andrew, but the one thing he did have was courage. He proved his courage when he swung his sword at the priest's servant in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, only a few hours later he met the servant girl and denied he ever knew Jesus. What the powerful temple rulers could not make Peter do one moment, a seemingly insignificant servant girl accomplished the

The girl's name or from where she came is unknown. She belonged to the household of the high priest (Mk 14:66), and one of her duties was to meet people at the door (Jn 18:17). God used her in one brief encounter to put the right amount of pressure at the right time on one of his children in order to bring his weakness to the forefront. Just as with David's small stone (see 1Sa 17:49), God often combines little things with his strength to overpower the weaknesses in the lives of his children.

See also Mk 14:66–68; Lk 22:56–57; In 18:17; notes on Girlhood (Pr 1); Testing (Ps 12); Vows (Nu 30)

said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?"

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Iesus of Galilee." she said.

⁷⁰But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

⁷¹Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷²He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

⁷³After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

⁷⁴Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Judas Hangs Himself

27 Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ²So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

³When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."

"What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility."

⁵So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

27:1–2 The Sanhedrin had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, a capital offense for the Jews, though not for the Romans. The Jews, however, were restricted in carrying out a death penal-

ty. The Romans would have to do executions. The Roman trial eventually centered on Jesus' kingship—something Rome did take seriously.

⁶The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." ⁷So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. ⁸That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, ¹⁰and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me." ^a

Jesus Before Pilate

¹¹Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

¹²When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" ¹⁴But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

¹⁵Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus ^b Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

²¹"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

²²"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked.

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

²³"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

²⁵All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"

²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

³²As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced

 a 10 See Zech. 11:12,13; Jer. 19:1-13; 32:6-9. $\,^b$ 16 Many manuscripts do not have <code>Jesus</code>; also in verse 17.

27:6–7 Blood money could not be used in the treasury (Dt 23:18), so they bought a field to be used for the burial of foreigners.

27:11 In the first step of a Roman trial, the magistrate listened to the charges and gave the accused opportunity for rebuttal. Pilate asked the first question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus' answer was the reason for the inscription later put on the cross.

27:15-20 Pilate obviously thought Jesus was innocent, and he offered his accusers a way out, while not backing down

himself. His offer for "Passover amnesty" was rejected. He underestimated their hatred.

27:32—38 The crucifixion of Jesus by Pilate is well documented not only in the Gospels, but also by non-Christian writers (Tacitus, Josephus, Mara bar Serapion and Thallus). Crucifixion was a cruel form of death since it did not damage any vital organs or cause excessive bleeding but caused a long, slow death, mostly from asphyxiation or shock. This cruel and humiliating execution was reserved for foreigners, not Roman citizens. It was always a public affair, becoming an especially

Pilate's Wife

Only one verse in the Bible refers to Pilate's wife (Mt 27:19), yet it tells much. She appeared at Jesus' trials when all Jerusalem was divided over his fate, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" (v. 22). Some were hiding, most were condemning, and a few—almost all women—were following at a distance (vv. 55–56).

Her husband was on precarious ground. He was not popular with the Jewish people he governed and had few, if any, diplomatic skills (brute force was his style). The danger of rebellion continually bubbled beneath the surface, and Pilate had learned to avoid offending the Jewish leaders unless personally threatened. Releasing Jesus would mean no political gain; in fact, the opposite was true. Yet he tried. Obviously, he was impressed by this man (v. 14) and considered him innocent (v. 18). Then his wife had a dream.

Whether her dream was divinely inspired or a result of her own feelings is unknown. She was disturbed enough to send a note in the middle of the trial procedures. She described Jesus as a "just man," giving a clue to her dream. Convinced of his innocence, she encouraged her husband to an action that was politically unsound.

Did she actually respond to Christ? No evidence is presented. But she had, at least one time in her life, faced the universal decision, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?" and responded with conviction and courage.

See also notes on Decision Making (1Co 8); Influence (Est 4)

him to carry the cross. ³³They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). ³⁴There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷Above his head they placed the written charge against him: This is Jesus, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁸Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him

come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli," lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). ^b

⁴⁷When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

^a 46 Some manuscripts *Eloi*, *Eloi* ^b 46 Psalm 22:1

useful deterrent to those who might be entertaining thoughts of insurrection. The Jews detested this inhumane act of execution, not only for its cruelty, but because the OT clearly stated that anyone who hangs on a tree is "under God's curse" (Dt 21:22–23). And Jesus, of course, was under God's curse for our sins (chart, Prophecies Fulfilled at the Cross).

27:40-43 Jesus stayed on the cross because he was the Son

of God obeying his Father. Had Jesus saved himself, he would not have been able to save others. The resurrection demonstrated God's powerful work in his Son.

27:45 The darkness that lasted from noon until 3:00 in the afternoon was a sign of judgment and a reminder that mankind does not know fully what transpired on the cross. Matthew only stated the reason for his suffering and death.

New Testament Political Rulers

NAME	POSITION	BIBLICAL EVENT	REFERENCE	KEY WOMEN	
Augustus Caesar (31 BC–AD 14)	Roman Emperor	Census that took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem; Birth of Jesus	Lk 2:1-7	Mary (Lk 2:5–7)	
Claudius (AD 41–54)	Roman Emperor	Expelling of residents from Rome (including Priscilla and Aquila)	Ac 11:28; 17:7; 18:2	Priscilla (Ac 18:2)	
Felix (AD 52–60)	Procurator of Judea	Trial of Paul	Ac 23:25— 24:27)	Drusilla (Ac 24:24)	
Festus (AD 60–62)	Procurator of Judea	Trial of Paul when he appealed to Caesar	Ac 24:27; 25:1–27	Bernice (Ac 25:13)	
Herod Agrippa I (AD 37–44)	King of Judea	Persecution of the early church; Murder of James, the brother of John; Imprisonment of Peter	Ac 12:1–24	Mary, the mother of John Mark Rhoda (Ac 12:12–13)	
Herod Agrippa II (AD 48–70)	Tetrarch of Chalcis and northern territory	Ministry of Paul; Interrogation of Paul in Caesarea	Ac 25:13—26:32	Bernice (Ac 25:13)	
Herod Antipas (4 BC–AD 39)	Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea	Murder of John the Baptist; Trial and torture of Jesus	Mt 14:1-11; Mk 6:14-29; Lk 3:1,19; 13:31-35; 23:7-12	Herodias (Mt 14:3) Salome (Mt 14:6–11)	
Herod Archelaus (4 BC–AD 6)	Ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea	Flight into Egypt of Mary and Joseph with Jesus	Mt 2:13-15,22	Mary (Mt 2:14)	
Herod the Great (37–4 BC)	King over all Palestine (Judea)	Birth of Jesus; Visit from the Magi; Massacre of innocents	Mt 2:1–21; Lk 1:5	Mary (Mt 2:11)	
Herod Philip II (4 BC–AD 34)	Tetrarch of Iturea, Trachonitus, Gaulanitis, Auranitis and Batahea	Ministry of John the Baptist	Lk 3:1-20	Herodias (Lk 3:19)	
Nero (AD 54-68)	Roman Emperor	Persecution of Christians in Rome; Martyrdom of Peter and Paul	Ac 25:1-12; 8:19; Php 4:22		
Pontius Pilate (AD 26–36)	Roman Procurator	Public ministry of Jesus; Trial and crucifixion of Jesus	Mt 27:11-26; Lk 3:1; 23:1-25	Pilate's wife (Mt 27:19)	
Tiberius Caesar (AD 14–37)	Roman Emperor	Public ministry of Jesus; Crucifixion of Jesus	Lk 3:1		

⁴⁹The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵²and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people

27:51 The veil of the temple was the heavily woven curtain that hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (see Lk 23:45, note; Heb 9:3). Its presence was a continual reminder of the separation between mankind and God. The au-

thor of Hebrews stated that the veil represented Jesus' body (Heb 10:19–20). The tearing signified the removal of the barrier between God and anyone who would accept Jesus' sacrifice (Heb 4:16; 6:19).

Mary: THE MOTHER OF JAMES

Jesus had many "behind the scenes" followers. All four gospels describe a group of women who were devoted to special ministries to the Savior. These women served, supported and even traveled in order to prepare the way for Jesus and the Twelve. Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joseph, was one of these women. In fact, she was one of the few followers (mostly women) who did not desert Jesus at the cross. She remained for the entire tragic ordeal. Imagine the wrenching of her heart as she helplessly watched the hideous torture, humiliation and crucifixion of the One she had found so understanding and gentle.

Staying behind when the crowds left the death scene, she and a few of this loyal group followed Joseph of Arimathea as he took Jesus' body to the tomb. Though they saw him die, they could not let him go—not yet. They needed to know where his body would rest.

After the Sabbath, these women spent hours gathering the spices used for burial—they still served him. With heavy hearts they got up early in the morning, packed the spices and trudged toward the tomb. When they arrived, there was an eerie silence, not the silence of death but rather of wonder—the tomb was open and empty.

God had honored these faithful women in a special way. At the lowest point of Christianity, Mary and her companions were the first to receive the news that revolutionized the world. Composers, writers and artists through the centuries have celebrated the message they, alone, heard that morning—"He is risen."

Mary is a prime example of the reward of faithfulness. Every act of service done for the Master counts.

See also Mk 15:40,47; 16:1; Lk 24:10; notes on Influence (Est 4); Motherhood (1Sa 1)

who had died were raised to life. ⁵³They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and ^a went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, ^b and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁷As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸Going to

Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶²The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he

27:55–56 The women faithfully stayed through the crucifixion and followed his body to the tomb (see chart, Women and Jesus in His Last Days).

27:57 Only a rich man could have owned ground so close to the city. Many think Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin

who had believed in Christ. He had to be a man of influence in order to approach Pilate.

27:61 Mourning for a victim of a Roman execution was not allowed. The women would have had to grieve silently.

^a 53 Or tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they

^b 56 Greek *Joses*, a variant of *Joseph*



WOMEN AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

When Christ gave the Great Commission, he did not consider gender, just as gender is not a consideration when the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts. God has chosen every believing woman to carry his message to her sphere of influence as she is filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit and anointed and equipped with his power (Ac 1:8). The mission of every believer in Jesus Christ is to communicate to the world who Jesus is and to extend to all his offer of salvation and spiritual refuge. Jesus has commissioned all believers to go to the most distant and remote points of the earth—as well as to their neighbors next door—to reach the lost with the gospel message of redemption and reconciliation. We are to make the Savior known:

- through the spoken word (Ro 10:14-15),
- through good works (Jas 2:14-17),
- through the example of a new character (Mt 5:16,20).

The single woman, the wife, the mother, the grandmother, the widow are called to "go into all the world."

"Going" does not necessarily mean leaving home and family, but it does mean making yourself totally available to serve wherever, whenever, and however he directs. The foremost manifestation of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is that she will be a witness of the Lord's life and commandments (Ac 1:8). She is to be ready at all times to speak his name, tell of his marvelous works, give a defense of the reason for our hope, and tell others about his sacrifice and the abundant life he provides now and for all eternity (1Pe 3:15).

The New Testament gives certain requirements for soul-winning. The first, of course, is a genuine experience of grace through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (1Jn 1:1–3). A love for Christ and for people is also essential (Ps 126:6), as is a willingness to be used by the Holy Spirit in sharing the gospel (Ac 8:29). An effective soul-winner will determine to live a separated life (2Co 6:17) since lifestyle testimony is also a key ingredient. Creativity in using every opportunity for saying a word about Christ is also helpful (1Pe 3:15), as is a diligence in the study of God's Word, which enables the believer to explain more effectively the way of salvation (Ps 51:13; 1Pe 2:2). All must be undergirded with specific and unceasing prayer (1Th 5:17). Any woman willing to commit herself to this high and holy responsibility will indeed be rewarded (Da 12:3).

When unbelievers see those in the church generously giving their time, resources and love to carry out the Great Commission, they are compelled to glorify the Father (Mt 5:16).

See also 1Pe 3:15; notes on Evangelism (Jn 6; Col 4; 1Pe 3); Salvation (Eph 2); Spiritual Gifts (Ro 12); Women's Ministries (Jn 4; Ac 2; 1Co 11; Eph 2; 1Ti 3; Titus 2); portrait of The Samaritan Woman (Jn 4)

has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Jesus Has Risen

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the

28:5–10 The women, not the guards, were addressed by the angel. His first words were to quiet their fears. When Jesus walked on the water and the disciples expressed fear, he told

them not to fear (Mt 14:27). Here the angel again used the person of Jesus as the reason for dismissing fear. The second thing the angel wanted to make clear was that resurrection

place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The Guards' Report

¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this

story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

I LIKE TO DEFINE FORGIVENESS

AS "GIVING UP THE RIGHT TO PUNISH

THE ONE WHO HAS HURT YOU." THAT'S

WHAT JESUS DID ON THE CROSS.

Jan Silvious

had taken place. No other explanation was possible. The grave was opened not to let Jesus out but to let his followers see that the tomb was empty. The angel declared Jesus would actually be seen in Galilee, just as he promised (Mt 26:32). The women who remained at the cross and followed to see where he was buried were the ones privileged to first share this earth-shattering news and the first to see and worship him. The Lord himself gave the message of the resurrection to the women to take to the disciples.

28:11–15 The guards who reported to the chief priests must have been temple police (v. 11).

28:18 The first man, Adam, was given rule over the earth in the Garden of Eden but abdicated that responsibility through his sin. In the wilderness, Satan offered Jesus that rulership,

but Jesus refused (Mt 4:1–11). Jesus not only regained that rule by obedience to the Father but also was given the rule over all the heavens (see Php 2:8–11).

28:19 Jesus called his disciples to himself first, where they would learn about him, and he then would send them out. "Baptizing" and "teaching" are specified as part of the process of discipleship.

28:20 The Master closed his time on earth with the disciples with the one promise required to make all his teaching effective—his presence. He had made this promise before when he invited his followers to join in his yoke (Mt 11:28–30). "Always" has the sense here of "the whole of every day." Jesus' commission did not end here at the end of the gospel; it was just beginning