

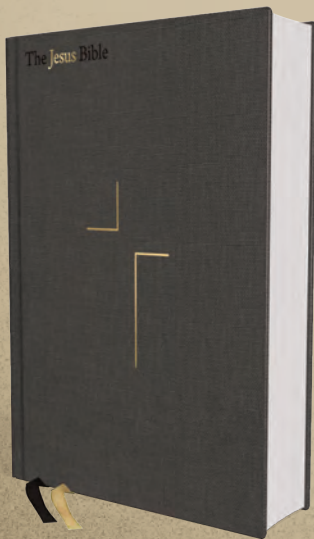
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JESUS: OUR PROMISED KING

MATTHEW

MATTHEW

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| BIRTH OF JESUS <i>c. 5 BC</i> | HEROD ANTIPAS RULES GALILEE AND PEREA <i>4 BC – AD 39</i> | JESUS' MINISTRY, DEATH, RESURRECTION <i>c. AD 27 – 30</i> |
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Kings came and went throughout the Old Testament. With each successive king, the hope of the people of God continued to fade. Israel longed for the promised king who would usher in God's peace and deliverance. With their own eyes, they witnessed the failure of even the best kings, the demise of the nation, and the exile of God's people. Though the prophets spoke of a coming day when God would prove faithful, the lengthy silence after Malachi's writing left the fate of God's people seemingly in question.

Matthew's Gospel proclaims Jesus to be the long-awaited King of kings — the one to whom the entire Old Testament points. Matthew, a Jewish believer, began his summary of Jesus' life and ministry with a lengthy genealogy that served to connect the Lord's coming to the promises God made to David so long ago. He was a king like David, but one who would succeed where David failed and accomplish what David had been incapable of doing in his life. At the conclusion of the book, the sign that hung above Jesus' head on the cross ironically makes the same claim: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (27:37). Between these two bookends, Matthew makes a clear and compelling argument for the divine origin of Jesus and his kingly role among his people.

Though many Jews in Jesus' day were blind to his identity, Matthew anchors Jesus' life and mission in the Old Testament promises of God. Using more than 70 quotations or allusions from the Old Testament, Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is the promised king who came to fulfill the hope of his people. Matthew invites his

readers to embrace the rightful king through faith and repentance and submit to life in “the kingdom of heaven” or “the kingdom of God.”

Those who come under the rule and reign of the King find this king to be a righteous and loving ruler who humbly serves his beloved kingdom citizens. This king invites his people to participate in his mission to the world and the establishment of his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (28:18 – 20). In his kingdom, Jews and Gentiles alike find forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and hope for this life and the next.

BUT SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD
AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND ALL THESE THINGS
WILL BE ADDED TO YOU.

Matthew 6:33

MATTHEW

MATTHEW 1:1–17

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

Part of Matthew's goal in writing his Gospel was to show Jesus as the true Messiah for whom the Jews had been waiting. Because the Messiah had to come from the line of David, it was important for Matthew to show Jesus' legitimacy by connecting him not only to David, but all the way back to Abraham (v. 2; Ge 12:3). Another interesting point in Matthew's genealogy is the mention of five women, especially Tamar (Mt 1:3), Rahab (v. 5), and Bathsheba (simply called "the wife of Uriah" in v. 6). Tamar had deceitfully posed as a prostitute to bear her children (Ge 38), Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jericho (Jos 2), and Bathsheba was the woman with whom David committed adultery (2Sa 11). Not only was it unusual for women to be mentioned in genealogies, but it was even stranger that Matthew decided to list three women of relatively low moral standing. The inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba shows that God is able to use anyone to accomplish his plan. God could have handpicked anyone to be in the genealogy of Jesus, but he included these and many other imperfect people to comprise the line that would eventually bring his Son into the world. These women are an incredible image of God's sovereign desire to take what is broken and make it new. Matthew begins his Gospel by showing the legitimacy of Jesus and the redemptive power of God.

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

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

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ⁸and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, ⁹and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, ³and Amos the father of Josiah, ¹¹and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

¹²And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, ⁴and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ⁵ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed⁶ to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

The Visit of the Wise Men

2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men⁷ from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose⁸ and have come

¹Greek *Aram*; also verse 4 ²*Asaph* is probably an alternate spelling of *Asa*; some manuscripts *Asa*; also verse 8 ³*Amos* is probably an alternate spelling of *Amon*; some manuscripts *Amon*; twice in this verse

⁴Greek *Salathiel*; twice in this verse ⁵Some manuscripts of the *Christ* ⁶That is, legally pledged to be married ⁷Greek *magi*; also verses 7, 16 ⁸Or *in the east*; also verse 9

to worship him.”³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;⁴and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

⁶ “‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.¹¹And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.¹²And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

The Flight to Egypt

¹³Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”¹⁴And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Herod Kills the Children

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.¹⁷Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah,
weeping and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,²⁰saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”²¹And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.²³And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”¹³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

¹Or the kingdom of heaven has come near

MATTHEW 3:1–2

JOHN’S BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

John the Baptist was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth and was a cousin of Jesus (Lk 1). His birth was a signal of the coming of the Messiah, and Jesus himself said that there was none “greater than John the Baptist” (Mt 11:11). John called his followers to repent from their wrongdoing because of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven. In order for people to repent, they had to recognize and acknowledge the fact that they were not living lives that glorified God. In Matthew 4:17, Jesus echoes John’s call as he preaches the same message of repentance. Believers are expected to live lives that honor and glorify God. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, he explained what it means to live according to the standard that God has set—in a way that mirrors the Father’s heart—and he also lived a life that believers are meant to imitate. Obviously it is impossible to be completely like Jesus; after all, he was perfect. But the first step for anyone to begin to live according to Scripture is to repent and turn away from that which is wrong or sinful.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
 ‘Prepare¹ the way of the Lord;
 make his paths straight.’”

⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

MATTHEW 4:1 – 11

THE TEMPTATION OF THE SON OF GOD

As a human, Jesus experienced everything that any other human has experienced, including temptation. Matthew 4 describes Jesus' experience of being tempted by the devil for 40 days and 40 nights. Jesus was tempted by the opportunity to use his power to meet his own needs rather than relying on God (v. 3), to put God to the test in order to win a large following (v. 5), and to compromise with Satan to win the kingdoms of the world, thereby avoiding the cross (v. 9). Jesus' experience was no less real than any sort of temptation that other people experience. However, the difference is that Jesus did not give in to the temptation he faced (Heb 4:15). Jesus boldly and convincingly refuted with Scripture each of the temptations he faced. Jesus defeated Satan by using a weapon that every believer has at their disposal: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17).

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him,² and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son,³ with whom I am well pleased.”

The Temptation of Jesus

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴But he answered, “It is written,

“‘Man shall not live by bread alone,
 but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,’

and

“‘On their hands they will bear you up,
 lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

⁷Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“‘You shall worship the Lord your God
 and him only shall you serve.’”

¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

¹Or crying: Prepare in the wilderness ²Some manuscripts omit to him ³Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved

MY BELOVED SON

The Father confirmed the identity of the Son at his baptism. Though Jesus had no sin, he willingly submitted to John's baptism. This action further identified him with those he came to save. As the author of Hebrews writes, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things" (Heb 2:14). His association with frail humans allowed him to understand their pain, sympathize with their weakness, and enter into their suffering.

It is fitting that God spoke from the heavens upon this significant event. Jesus knew his identity as the preexistent Son of God, who was the central agent of God's created handiwork at the dawn of creation (Col 1:15–20). Yet, God the Father publicly proclaimed that Jesus was his beloved Son before he fully inaugurated his earthly mission. This statement was certainly a source of encouragement to Jesus, but it was also a public testimony to all those who heard that Jesus was, in fact, God's Messiah — the One who was promised so long ago (Ge 3:15).

The same motive lies at the heart of the Gospel writers, who sought to demonstrate that Jesus was the Son of God. Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience, established that Jesus was the fulfillment of both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (Mt 1:17). Mark used Jesus' miracles and message to show that he was "the Son of God" (Mk 1:1). Luke compiled an orderly account of the life and ministry of Jesus — focused on his death, burial, and resurrection — in order to prove the validity of the message concerning Jesus the Christ (Lk 1:1–4). John focuses on Christ as the *logos*. Jesus reveals the Father to God's people in a way that is reminiscent of, but much clearer than, the Word of God that had revealed him throughout the Old Testament (Jn 1:1–14). Though the contextual realities differed, each Gospel story sought to affirm Jesus' identity and convince the original hearers, and all subsequent humanity, "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). The Father's pronouncement at Jesus' baptism is affirmed whenever a person repents of their sins and trusts in Christ.

MATTHEW 5:2

JESUS AND THE LAW

The Sermon on the Mount includes Jesus' explanation of how he is the fulfillment of the law. This discourse was not meant to replace Old Testament law, but rather it points to the ultimate fulfillment of the spiritual intention of the law. Jesus explained the true meaning and purpose of the Old Testament law. The law was designed not to confine people to their own futile efforts but rather to show complete dependence on God.

Here in the book of Matthew, Jesus created a standard that no human can fully achieve. He did not preach such a high standard of law in order to discourage his followers from obeying it, but rather he taught it in such a way as to show how necessary is human dependence on the Spirit of God. Jesus expects his followers to give their fullest effort to obey his commandments, yet he knows they will fall short. He gives them his Spirit to empower them whenever they ask.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

¹²Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the
Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned."

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."¹

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."² ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Great Crowds

²³And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. ²⁴So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. ²⁵And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

The Sermon on the Mount

5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

The Beatitudes

²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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

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

⁵"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

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

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

⁹"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons³ of God.

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

¹¹"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

¹Or *the kingdom of heaven has come near* ²The Greek word *anthropoi* refers here to both men and women

³Greek *huiioi*; see Preface

Salt and Light

¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that¹ they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Christ Came to Fulfill 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 say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Anger

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother² will be liable to judgment; whoever insults³ his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell⁴ of fire. ²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.⁵

Lust

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Divorce

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or

¹Or house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before others that ²Some manuscripts insert without cause ³Greek says *Raca* to (a term of abuse) ⁴Greek *Gehenna*; also verses 29, 30 ⁵Greek *kodrantēs*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/64 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer)

black. ³⁷Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.¹

Retaliation

³⁸"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,² let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Love Your Enemies

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers,³ what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

6 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 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. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The Lord's Prayer

⁵"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.⁴
¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,⁵
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,⁶
¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.⁷

¹Or the evil one ²Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin ³Or brothers and sisters. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") may refer either to brothers or to brothers and sisters ⁴Or Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence ⁵Or Let your kingdom come, let your will be done ⁶Or our bread for tomorrow ⁷Or the evil one; some manuscripts add For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Fasting

¹⁶“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust¹ destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.²

Do Not Be Anxious

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?³ ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Judging Others

7 “Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and It Will Be Given

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds,

¹Or worm; also verse 20 ²Greek *mammon*, a Semitic word for money or possessions ³Or *a single cubit to his stature*; a cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The Golden Rule

¹²“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy¹ that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

MATTHEW 7:13–14

THE WIDE AND THE NARROW GATES

Jesus explained that the roads to life and destruction are roads guarded by narrow and wide gates, respectively. In doing so, he taught that many people walk down the road that leads to destruction, while few people choose to walk down the road that leads to life. The road that leads to destruction is easy to find (Pr 14:12). Anyone who chases after the cares of the world without the mind of the Spirit (Php 2:1–11) walks along the broad road that leads to destruction, and they do so with many other people. In contrast, the narrow road is smaller, and fewer people travel upon it. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Jesus is the narrow gate, and by following him and living in his power, believers are able to walk upon the path of life.

A Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

I Never Knew You

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Build Your House on the Rock

²⁴“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

The Authority of Jesus

²⁸And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

8 When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ²And behold, a leper² came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” ³And Jesus³ stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴And Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”

The Faith of a Centurion

⁵When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, ⁶“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” ⁷And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” ⁸But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am

¹Some manuscripts *For the way is wide and easy* ²*Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13 ³Greek *he*

not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ¹‘Do this,’ and he does it.” ¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel ²have I found such faith. ¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹²while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Jesus Heals Many

¹⁴And when Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. ¹⁶That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. ¹⁹And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” ²⁰And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” ²¹Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” ²²And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

Jesus Calms a Storm

²³And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” ²⁶And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

Jesus Heals Two Men with Demons

²⁸And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, ³two demon-possessed ⁴men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” ³⁰Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.” ³²And he said to them, “Go.” So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. ³³The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

9 And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. ²And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”

¹Or *bondservant* ²Some manuscripts *not even in Israel* ³Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; some *Gerasenes*

⁴Greek *daimonizomai* (demonized); also verse 33; elsewhere rendered *oppressed by demons*

JESUS' POWER OVER DISEASE

Matthew 8 begins with three stories of Jesus' healing miracles. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus healed many people; in doing so, he fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 53:4: "He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Not only did Jesus heal physical infirmities while he was on earth, but he also healed all infirmities, physical and spiritual, through his death on the cross. The stories of Jesus' healing miracles are precursors to his ultimate healing miracle on the cross.

The key phrase worth noting in the story of the man with leprosy is "Lord, if you will" (Mt 8:2). As a leper, this man was a social outcast because leprosy was thought to be highly contagious. This man was incredibly bold even to approach Jesus in light of his disease, yet he did so confidently. He knew that having faith was no guarantee that Jesus *would* heal him, but he knew Jesus *could* heal him (Da 3:17 – 18).

The next story shows, for the first time in the Gospels, Jesus interacting with someone who was not Jewish. As a Gentile, the centurion had little reason to interact with, let alone believe in, Jesus. However, he showed faith similar to that of the leper in asking Jesus to heal his servant. The centurion, a man in charge of roughly 80 to 100 soldiers, rebuffed Jesus' offer to come into his home. He knew that if Jesus would only say the word, his servant would be healed, which even further showed his confidence in Jesus' power. Jesus was astonished at the faith of the centurion: "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt 8:10).

These two stories are remarkable in Scripture specifically because they tell stories of two individuals' great faith despite the supposed odds against Jesus acting on their behalf. The social outcast and the Gentile showed more faith in Jesus than he had seen before, and they reaped the rewards of their faith and trust.

³And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.”
⁴But Jesus, knowing¹ their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?
⁵For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? ⁶But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” ⁷And he rose and went home. ⁸When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Jesus Calls Matthew

⁹As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

¹⁰And as Jesus² reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

A Question About Fasting

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast,³ but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.”

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed

¹⁸While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” ²²Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly⁴ the woman was made well. ²³And when Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. ²⁵But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶And the report of this went through all that district.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

²⁷And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” ²⁸When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.” ³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it.” ³¹But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

Jesus Heals a Man Unable to Speak

³²As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man

¹Some manuscripts *perceiving* ²Greek *he* ³Some manuscripts add *much, or often* ⁴Greek *from that hour*

THE SON OF MAN HAS AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS

This story has been a favorite of children and adults over the centuries. The image of these concerned and loving friends breaking through every obstacle to get their friend to the Lord is endearing — a very physical, material story of faith and persistence. Yet in the midst of this story, Jesus redirects those who read this story as he redirected the men who believed that their friend would be healed. What must they have been thinking as they heard this great healer, who had performed many healing and other miracles in the region, declare that their friend's sins were forgiven?

Imagine their puzzlement. This is not what they were expecting. Yet Jesus decided to use this very public forum to demonstrate his power to forgive sins as well as his power to heal this man's body.

Jesus had performed other miracles before this one, yet this is the first instance in which he claimed to forgive someone's sins. Jesus wanted to prove that his ministry did not only involve healing people of their illnesses; his ministry was so much more than that, and in this instance he gave further notice of what he truly came to earth to accomplish. How easy would it have been to merely *say* that the man who was paralyzed was forgiven of his sins, yet Jesus showed that he was able to back up everything he claimed: that not only could he provide physical healing, but that he could provide spiritual healing as well. His words and this miracle point to the ultimate purpose of Jesus' ministry on earth: "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). Through Jesus' ministry in his life, death, and resurrection, we are completely and gloriously healed.

spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.” ³⁴But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”

The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Few

³⁵And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

The Twelve Apostles

10 And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. ²The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;¹ ⁴Simon the Zealot,² and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Apostles

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’³ ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers,⁴ cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. ⁹Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics⁵ or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. ¹¹And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Persecution Will Come

¹⁶“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²²and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant⁶ above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign⁷ those of his household.

¹Some manuscripts *Lebbaeus*, or *Lebbaeus called Thaddaeus* ²Greek *kananaios*, meaning *zealot* ³Or *The kingdom of heaven has come near* ⁴*Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13 ⁵Greek *chiton*, a long garment worn under the cloak next to the skin ⁶Or *bondservant*; also verse 25 ⁷Greek lacks *will they malign*

Have No Fear

²⁶“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.¹ ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?² And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³²So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

MATTHEW 11:2–3

THE CHRIST

Today, the title “Christ” naturally follows the name of Jesus. However, during the time that the Gospels were written, people sparingly and carefully used the word “Christ,” the Greek form of the Hebrew word “Messiah,” which literally means “anointed one.” In the Old Testament, the three types of people who were anointed were prophets (1Ki 19:16), priests (Ex 28:41), and kings (1Sa 16:13). In the New Testament, Jesus is God’s preeminent anointed one who was anointed by God to be the ultimate prophet, priest, and king (Mt 27:11; Heb 6:20; cf. Isa 61:1). The Pharisees and religious leaders during that time viewed such a claim as blasphemous and punishable by death. However, the word “Christ” is used to refer to Jesus 470 times throughout the New Testament. When the word “Christ” was used anywhere in the New Testament, the author was very aware of the implications of his use of that word—what it meant for him as an author, and what it said about his Savior.

Not Peace, but a Sword

³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Rewards

⁴⁰“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Messengers from John the Baptist

11 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

²Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers³ are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸What then did you go out to see? A man⁴ dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹What then did you go out to see? A prophet?⁵ Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is he of whom it is written,

“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,⁶ and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the Prophets and the

¹Greek *Gehenna* ²Greek *assarion*, Roman copper coin (Latin *quadrans*) worth about 1/16 of a *denarius* (which was a day’s wage for a laborer) ³*Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13

⁴Or *Why then did you go out? To see a man . . .* ⁵Some manuscripts *Why then did you go out? To see a prophet?* ⁶Or *has been coming violently*

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

Matthew 10 is the first place where Jesus referred to the twelve disciples as “apostles.” The word “apostle” is a derivative of the Greek word *apostello*, which means “to send.” Here Jesus gave the apostles the authority to drive out evil spirits and heal the sick, which up until this point only Jesus had been able to do. He then sent them to go into other towns and preach the message that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (v. 7).

It is one thing that Jesus was able to heal and cast out demons himself, but the fact that he was able to give the same authority to his disciples only further shows the strength of his divine nature and power. To represent the fact that these apostles did not act in their own strength, but fully relied on God’s provision, Jesus told them not to take provisions for themselves (vv. 9–10). Jesus instructed them to rely solely on God. His power was enough to sustain their entire journey.

Jesus also warned them that they would face opposition. Verses 16 through 23 of this chapter have been both a warning and a comfort to believers in Jesus around the world for centuries. As the apostles found out, some will not accept the message that believers in Jesus have to bring to a broken and fallen world. Millions have faced the opposition that Jesus was describing in these verses and have faithfully withstood persecution of many types, even to the point of death, relying on the Holy Spirit to give them the words to say in the face of persecution. Jesus told the apostles not to worry when they were arrested, and notice he said “when” and not “if” (v. 19). Later each of the disciples, with the exception of Judas, experienced the opposition that Jesus described. They were called to a gritty, physical, desperate, minute-by-minute faith and reliance on the person and work of Jesus to be manifested in their lives.

The authority that Jesus gave to each disciple was enough to get them through any hardship that they might have faced upon their journey, and the same is true for believers today.

Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵He who has ears to hear,¹ let him hear.

¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

¹⁷ “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”²

Woe to Unrepentant Cities

²⁰Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

Come to Me, and I Will Give You Rest

²⁵At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly 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 they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” ³He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

A Man with a Withered Hand

⁹He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse him. ¹¹He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched

¹Some manuscripts omit *to hear* ²Some manuscripts *children* (compare Luke 7:35) ³Or *for so it pleased you well*

it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

God's Chosen Servant

¹⁵Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all ¹⁶and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

- ¹⁸ "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;
²⁰ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory;
²¹ and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

²²Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

³³"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The Sign of Jonah

³⁸Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The queen of the South will rise up at

MATTHEW 12:38–42

JONAH AND THE RESURRECTION

Jesus referred to those who asked for a sign as proof of Jesus' identity as an "evil and adulterous generation" (Mt 12:39), saying that the only sign they would receive was the sign of Jonah. But what did this mean? Jonah had spent three days and three nights in the belly of a fish; in the same way, Jesus said he would spend three days and three nights in "the heart of the earth" (v. 40). Jesus was clearly foreshadowing his death, burial, and resurrection; yet it is doubtful that the Pharisees understood what he was saying. In John 20:29, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"; Jesus' frustration with the Pharisees stemmed from the fact that they saw and heard him and yet still did not believe. They were the opposite of the "blessed" he referred to in John 20:29. His purpose in referring to Jonah, however, was twofold: to give a picture of his death and resurrection and to call those who heard these words to repentance, in imitation of the people of Nineveh now that One greater than Jonah had come.

the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

Return of an Unclean Spirit

⁴³“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.”

Jesus’ Mother and Brothers

⁴⁶While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers¹ stood outside, asking to speak to him.² ⁴⁸But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” ⁴⁹And stretching out his hand toward his 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 beside the sea. ²And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears,³ let him hear.”

The Purpose of the Parables

¹⁰Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” ¹¹And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹²For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

“ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

¹⁵ For this people’s heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.’

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

¹Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 48, 49 ²Some manuscripts insert verse 47: *Someone told him, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak to you”* ³Some manuscripts add here and in verse 43 to *hear*

The Parable of the Sower Explained

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.¹ ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds² among the wheat and went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷And the servants³ of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

³¹He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³²It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”

Prophecy and Parables

³⁴All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:⁴

“I will open my mouth in parables;

I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

¹Or *stumbles* ²Probably *darnel*, a wheat-like weed ³Or *bondservants*; also verse 28 ⁴Some manuscripts *Isaiah the prophet*

 MATTHEW 14:13–21

FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is the only pre-crucifixion miracle recorded in all four Gospels, and it is significant for a multitude of reasons. Through this miracle, Jesus fulfilled the expectation of those looking forward to a new prophet after Moses (Jn 1:21; Ac 3:22; 7:37). While Moses was their prophet-leader, the Israelites received manna from heaven. Jesus' provision of bread parallels the miracle that the Israelites experienced under Moses and thus fulfills Deuteronomy 18:15 (quoted twice in Acts, referred to above). Also, Jesus showed that he could supply both the physical and the spiritual "daily bread" requested in the prayer in Matthew 6:11. Finally, Jesus showed that he is the Messiah who will provide the coming Messianic banquet (Ps 132:15; Isa 25:6; Mt 22:1–14; 26:29). Not only does the feeding of the five thousand preview that kingdom banquet, but it also provides a wholesome contrast to the degenerate banquet held by Herod in Matthew 14:1–12. In giving the people physical bread, Jesus showed that he was the compassionate provider that his people needed.

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

⁴⁷"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

New and Old Treasures

⁵¹"Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." ⁵²And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

⁵³And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, ⁵⁴and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not 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 without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." ⁵⁸And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, ²and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." ³For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. ⁶But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, ⁷so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. ⁸Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." ⁹And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. ¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, ¹¹and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from

¹Some manuscripts *his brother's wife*

JESUS AND HIS PARABLES

Jesus commonly taught the crowds and his followers through parables, which are stories that illustrate a moral or spiritual truth. In Matthew 13, Jesus told parables relating to soil, weeds, a mustard seed, yeast, hidden treasure, a pearl, and a fishing net. Jesus' parables cover a spectrum of topics and truths, and they also represent the confirmation of a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 6:9 – 10: "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Jesus told parables to teach God's truth to those who were ready and willing to hear it, but he also knew there were people in his audience who would not understand his words because their hearts were calloused. At times, parables were Jesus' tools to reveal truth to the faithful and to conceal it from those who would object to it and seek to stop his ministry and mission.

Jesus used six of the seven parables in this chapter to describe the nature of the kingdom of heaven. The people who rejected Jesus' teaching because of their inability to understand it, including the Jewish religious leaders, only further blinded themselves to the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, those who had ears to hear received a great blessing in knowing and understanding Jesus' truth — as do believers who read these stories today.

As to the parables themselves, notice that even Jesus' disciples, the men who had left their jobs, businesses, and families for the sake of this amazing teacher, misunderstood some of Jesus' parables (Mt 13:36). Jesus carefully and patiently explained to the disciples who sought to learn more. They asked for wisdom, and Jesus provided it (Jas 1:5) along with meaningful word pictures of the coming kingdom loaded with meaning and nuance. For believers today, these parables and teachings provide a rich picture of the kingdom as it exists and also as it is to come.

MATTHEW 15:1–9

TRADITIONS
OF THE ELDERS

The tradition of the elders referred to in verse 2 was not the Law of Moses. It was the oral tradition that had been built up over the centuries and was based on human interpretations of the law. But these rules were not of God; rather they were simply traditions invented by humans. Jesus used this opportunity to expose these men and the hypocritical way in which they lived their lives. They cared more about the ceremonial washing of hands than they did about faithfully obeying God's commands. God cares more about the hearts of his followers than any human tradition (1Sa 16:7).

the towns. ¹⁴When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." ¹⁷They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." ¹⁸And he said, "Bring them here to me." ¹⁹Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Water

²²Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴but the boat by this time was a long way¹ from the land,² beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And in the fourth watch of the night³ he came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

²⁸And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind,⁴ he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³²And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

³⁴And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick ³⁶and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Traditions and Commandments

15 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ⁵But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God,"⁵ he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word⁶ of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

- ⁸ "This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
⁹ in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments
of men."

¹Greek *many stadia*, a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters ²Some manuscripts *was out on the sea*

³That is, between 3 A.M. and 6 A.M. ⁴Some manuscripts *strong wind* ⁵Or is *an offering* ⁶Some manuscripts *law*

What Defiles a Person

¹⁰And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: ¹¹it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” ¹²Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” ¹³He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides.¹ And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” ¹⁵But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” ¹⁶And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?” ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

²¹And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” ²³But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” ²⁶And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” ²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.³

Jesus Heals Many

²⁹Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. ³⁰And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, ³¹so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

³²Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” ³³And the disciples said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?” ³⁴And Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven, and a few small fish.” ³⁵And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, ³⁶he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ³⁸Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

The Pharisees and Sadducees Demand Signs

16 And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ²He answered them,⁴ “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ ³And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the

¹Some manuscripts add *of the blind* ²Greek *is expelled into the latrine* ³Greek *from that hour* ⁴Some manuscripts omit the following words to the end of verse 3

appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

⁵When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ⁷And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.” ⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, “O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? ⁹Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? ¹¹How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹²Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock¹ I will build my church, and the gates of hell² shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed³ in heaven.” ²⁰Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²¹From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord!⁴ This shall never happen to you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance⁵ to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Jesus

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life⁶ will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

The Transfiguration

17 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white

¹The Greek words for *Peter* and *rock* sound similar ²Greek *the gates of Hades* ³Or *shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed* ⁴Or “[May God be] merciful to you, Lord!” ⁵Greek *stumbling block*

⁶The same Greek word can mean either *soul* or *life*, depending on the context; twice in this verse and twice in verse 26

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

A critically important question Jesus asks his followers is: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15). Jesus knew that a proper understanding of who he is would lead to a right relationship with God. He first asked the disciples to tell him who other people thought he was, then who they thought he was. Peter answered by professing what millions have come to acknowledge throughout the centuries: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). This answer could not be a more accurate description of who Jesus is. And Peter was only beginning to find out what his statement of belief would mean not only to his life, but to the life of the church that Jesus would establish on the basis of his testimony (v. 18).

The faith of any believer today can be determined by their answer to this question. True believers are those who say that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, and anyone who says otherwise does not fully understand the character and nature of Jesus. Some say that Jesus was simply a great moral teacher or a prophet, but Jesus never claimed to be anything other than the Son of God. When theories abounded about who he might be, he acknowledged that Peter alone had a correct understanding of who he was.

For believers today, it is crucial that they understand the power and truth of Peter’s proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God. To say that Jesus was, and is, the Son of God is to say that he is the truth and the one way to enter into a right relationship with God. Through Jesus, believers are able to experience everything that comes with knowing God and having a relationship with his Son — grace, peace, mercy in this life, and eternity with him in the next.

 MATTHEW 17:24–27

PAYING THE TEMPLE TAX

The temple tax was paid annually by every adult Jewish male over 20 years old to fund maintenance of the temple. This tax was based on Exodus 30:13 and amounted to two days' wages for a common laborer. Evidently, Jesus had not yet paid the tax, and the temple tax collector was following up. However, instead of speaking to Jesus, the tax collector spoke to Peter regarding his teacher's payment. Through the resulting conversation, Jesus showed that he (and his followers) are a part of a different kingdom, a heavenly kingdom. He does not live by the rules set by mankind but by the will of God the Father. However, not wanting to "give offense," Jesus paid the temple tax, but he delivered it in a way that showed that he was the Son of God.

as light. ³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son,¹ with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

⁹And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." ¹⁰And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" ¹¹He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." ¹³Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Boy with a Demon

¹⁴And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, ¹⁵said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. ¹⁶And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." ¹⁷And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the demon,² and it³ came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. ¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁰He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."⁵

Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection

²²As they were gathering⁶ in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,²³ and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

The Temple Tax

²⁴When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax went up to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the tax?" ²⁵He said, "Yes." And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tax? From their sons or from others?" ²⁶And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. ²⁷However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel.⁷ Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."

Who Is the Greatest?

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ²And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,⁸ it would be better for

¹Or my Son, my (or the) Beloved ²Greek it ³Greek the demon ⁴Greek from that hour ⁵Some manuscripts insert verse 21: But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting ⁶Some manuscripts remained ⁷Greek stater, a silver coin worth four drachmas or approximately one shekel ⁸Greek causes . . . to stumble; also verses 8, 9

him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Temptations to Sin

⁷“Woe to the world for temptations to sin!¹ For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! ⁸And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell² of fire.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.³ ¹²What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴So it is not the will of my⁴ Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

If Your Brother Sins Against You

¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed⁵ in heaven. ¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

²¹Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.⁶ ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.⁷ ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant⁸ fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,⁹ and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger

¹Greek *stumbling blocks* ²Greek *Gehenna* ³Some manuscripts add verse 11: *For the Son of Man*

came to save the lost ⁴Some manuscripts *your* ⁵Or *shall have been bound . . . shall have been loosed*

⁶Or *bondservants*; also verses 28, 31 ⁷A *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years' wages for a laborer

⁸Or *bondservant*; also verses 27, 28, 29, 32, 33 ⁹A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer

his master delivered him to the jailers,¹ until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Teaching About Divorce

19 Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ²And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” ⁴He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”²

¹⁰The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

Let the Children Come to Me

¹³Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ¹⁴but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” ¹⁵And he laid his hands on them and went away.

The Rich Young Man

¹⁶And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁷And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁰The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” ²¹Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” ²⁷Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” ²⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world,³ when the Son of Man will sit 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

MATTHEW 19:16–26

WEALTH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This story’s application is not to imply that believers need to give away all of their possessions in order to get into heaven. Rather, it is intended to show that Jesus cared about the hearts of those who were following him. Knowing all things, he knew that this rich young man’s heart was preoccupied with his wealth. So when he asked about eternal life, Jesus showed him that right standing with God flows from a pure heart. It is not enough merely to follow external standards. That sort of life tends to foster a spirit of self-righteousness. Followers of Jesus are expected to rely on Jesus alone as the one and only way to heaven, and to have a heart for God and his kingdom before all else (Mt 6:33).

¹Greek *torturers* ²Some manuscripts add *and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery*; other manuscripts *except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery* ³Greek *in the regeneration*

sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold¹ and will inherit eternal life.³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Laborers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius² a day, he sent them into his vineyard.³ And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace,⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,¹² saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’¹³ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you.¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

¹⁷And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,¹⁸ “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death¹⁹ and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

A Mother's Request

²⁰Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something.²¹ And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.”²² Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.”²³ He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

²⁹And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed him.³⁰ And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus

MATTHEW 20:20–28

SERVANTHOOD

This exchange provides an interesting view on Jesus' perception of what it takes to be able to sit in the seat of power. Here, two disciples were seeking to advance their own status. James and John were the ones asking, but the other ten were indignant as well, so all of the disciples' attitudes are on display in this story. Each of the twelve wanted to occupy seats of authority and power in heaven. However, they did not understand that those seats required partnership in suffering (v. 22). Jesus' “cup” was not only that he, as God, allowed himself to become human, but also that he was to be crucified on the cross as the perfect, sinless sacrifice for the sins of humankind (Php 2:6–9). The “cup” for James and John would be one of suffering for the kingdom. As Jesus often did, he was emphasizing that one must be willing to sacrifice their own comfort and livelihood in order to follow him.

¹Some manuscripts *manifold* ²A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer ³Or is your eye bad because I am good? ⁴Greek *diakonos* ⁵Or *bondservant*, or *servant* (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface)

was passing by, they cried out, “Lord,¹ have mercy on us, Son of David!”³¹ The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”³² And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?”³³ They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.”³⁴ And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

The Triumphal Entry

21 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt,² the foal of a beast of burden.’”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them.⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”¹⁰ And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?”¹¹ And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹² And Jesus entered the temple³ and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.¹³ He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant,¹⁶ and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

“‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise?’”

¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹⁸ In the morning, as he was returning to the city, he became hungry.¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And he said to it, “May no fruit ever come from you again!” And the fig tree withered at once.

²⁰ When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither at once?”²¹ And Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen.

²² And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.”

The Authority of Jesus Challenged

²³ And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you

¹Some manuscripts omit Lord ²Or donkey, and on a colt ³Some manuscripts add of God

JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM AS KING

Jesus' coming to Jerusalem riding on a donkey, to the accolades and praise of the gathered crowd, fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus as King. Isaiah 62:11 calls for the “daughter of Zion” to watch for this King, and Zechariah 9:9 depicts the King “humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” While most royal processions feature incredible extravagance, Jesus humbly entered town on a simple donkey. While horses were ridden during times of war, rulers rode donkeys during times of peace as a sign of humility toward the people (1Ki 1:38 – 40). Here, Jesus exemplified the peaceful return of a king to Jerusalem. By riding on a donkey, he showed that he came to bring grace and not judgment. Also, it is significant that Jesus rode a colt, which is a young and untrained donkey. Normally, it would be incredibly difficult for someone to ride an unbroken animal through a crowded and chaotic scene with an unfamiliar burden on its back. But this was Jesus, Creator of the world!

This scene was nothing less than a royal procession (2Ki 9:13), yet up until this point, Jesus had consistently avoided such displays (Mt 8:4; 9:30; 12:16). However, he was now ready to present himself publicly as the Messiah and King. This was Jesus' last trip to Jerusalem, and he chose to enter in such a way as to leave no doubt that he was the promised Messiah who had come to save the nation. No one in the city could possibly miss the procession or the prophecy-fulfilling reference Jesus' entry conveyed.

doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' ²⁶But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." ²⁷So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

The Parable of the Tenants

³³"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants¹ to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' ³⁹And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."

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

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;²
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?"

⁴³Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."³

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

22 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ²"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³and sent his servants⁴ to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."' ⁵But they paid

¹Or *bondservants*; also verses 35, 36 ²Greek *the head of the corner* ³Some manuscripts omit verse 44

⁴Or *bondservants*; also verses 4, 6, 8, 10

no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, “The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.” ¹⁰And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹²And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Paying Taxes to Caesar

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone’s opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.” ¹⁷Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²²When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

Sadducees Ask About the Resurrection

²³The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, ²⁴saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’ ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. ²⁶So too the second and third, down to the seventh. ²⁷After them all, the woman died. ²⁸In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her.”

²⁹But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. ³¹And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” ³³And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Great Commandment

³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Whose Son Is the Christ?

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, ⁴²saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said

MATTHEW 22:1–14

THE WEDDING FEAST

When families planned Jewish weddings, they sent out two invitations (similar to our “save-the-date” mailings that sometimes come before the actual invitation). In this instance, the first invitation portrays the ministry of John the Baptist. He told people to repent and prepare, for the kingdom of God was coming (Mt 3:2). The indifferent response describes Israel—specifically, the religious authorities—at the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. They ignored John’s call to repent, and they opposed the arrival of the second invitation as well in the ministry of Jesus. But God is in the business of drawing people to himself, so the king in the story still instructs his servants to invite others to attend his wedding. Those who accept these gracious invitations and are truly prepared to engage in this banquet as citizens of the kingdom (which the religious leaders were not, 22:11–13) are welcomed in. The point of this parable is to portray how God shows grace in extending invitations to his kingdom while at the same time mandating requirements for entrance.

¹Greek for you do not look at people’s faces ²A denarius was a day’s wage for a laborer

MATTHEW 23:1–39

HYPOCRISY

Throughout his ministry, Jesus consistently confronted hypocrisy, especially in the Jewish religious leaders of his day. Chapter 23 includes Jesus' angry condemnation of those who were much more concerned about securing their power base than they were about bringing their followers closer to God. The rules that they forced on others were man-made responses to their study of the law, and while they required strict adherence to those rules, they themselves did not practice what they preached (v. 4). Notice the language with which the perfect, sinless Son of God addressed them: lazy (v. 4), prideful (v. 6), hypocrites (vv. 25, 27, 29), blind (v. 26), "full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (v. 28), deluded (v. 30), self-incriminating (v. 31), hell-bound vipers (v. 33), murderers (v. 34), and condemned because of their blood-guilt (v. 35). Jesus' righteous indignation burned against these self-important men who were leading others astray. Their devotion was not to God but to a set of rules they held over the people beneath them, and Jesus was not shy to point out the contradiction that manifested itself in their daily lives. In contrast, Jesus lived without any misalignment between his heart and his actions. He lived with perfect integrity in service to God, and believers are called to desire to be like him and share his mindset (1Co 2:16).

to him, "The son of David." ⁴³He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴"The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet"?"

⁴⁵If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?" ⁴⁶And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²⁴"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ²⁵so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ²⁶They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, ²⁷and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ²⁸They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ²⁹and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ³⁰and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi ³¹by others. ³²But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. ³³And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ³⁴Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ³⁵The greatest among you shall be your servant. ³⁶Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

³⁷"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. ³⁸Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell ³⁹as yourselves.

⁴⁰"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' ⁴¹You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ⁴²And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' ⁴³You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ⁴⁴So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ⁴⁵And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. ⁴⁶And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

⁴⁷"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ⁴⁸You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

⁴⁹"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ⁵⁰You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

⁵¹"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ⁵²So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

⁵³"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ⁵⁴saying, 'If we had

¹Some manuscripts omit *hard to bear* ²Rabbi means *my teacher*, or *my master*; also verse 8 ³Or *brothers and sisters* ⁴Some manuscripts add here (or after verse 12) verse 14: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation* ⁵Greek *Gehenna*; also verse 33

lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? ³⁴ Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,³⁵ so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah,¹ whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶ Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Lament over Jerusalem

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Jesus Foretells Destruction of the Temple

24 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

Signs of the End of the Age

³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” ⁴ And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

⁹ Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰ And then many will fall away² and betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. ¹² And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The Abomination of Desolation

¹⁵ “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. ¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even

MATTHEW
24:1 – 14, 36 – 42

THE SECOND COMING (PART 1)

Here Jesus described the second coming by using symbolic language. While these words and various proposed timelines have been interpreted differently by committed Christians over the centuries, we do know that Jesus’ second coming will be preceded by persecution and opposition (vv. 9–10), marked by false prophets claiming to be the Messiah (v. 5), and will include a time of testing for believers whose persistence and commitment will be rewarded (v. 14). Above all, the second coming of Christ will be sudden (v. 36). Altogether, Jesus made it clear that there will be no mistaking the second coming when it happens, and it is important for his followers to be prepared, each and every day, for that day.

¹Some manuscripts omit *the son of Barachiah* ²Or *stumble*

the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁹"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

³²"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

No One Knows That Day and Hour

³⁶"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,¹ but the Father only. ³⁷For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

⁴⁵"Who then is the faithful and wise servant,² whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,'⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants³ and eats and drinks with drunkards,⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps⁴ and went to meet the bridegroom.⁵ ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰And

MATTHEW 25:1–46

THE SECOND COMING (PART 2)

The final section of this discourse involves judgment, which is not a new theme in the Gospel of Matthew (3:12; 6:2; 13:30; 18:23–35; 21:33–43; 22:1–14). Because Matthew spent a significant portion of his Gospel focusing on the coming of the kingdom, he also needed to discuss the judgment that comes with it. In the first two parables in this chapter, Jesus spoke about the judgment that will come upon those who are not prepared for his return, and in the last parable he focuses on all of the nations of the earth. To fully understand Jesus, it is important to see not only his love but also the reality that his coming will be accompanied by judgment. With the opportunity for people to accept his sacrifice and the grace and forgiveness that come with it, there also is an opportunity for people to reject that same sacrifice. Jesus came so that those who love God may devote their lives to following him, but his offer has another side: judgment on those who willfully choose to turn their backs on God.

¹Some manuscripts omit *nor the Son* ²Or *bondsman*; also verses 46, 48, 50 ³Or *bondsman*
⁴Or *torches* ⁵Some manuscripts add *and the bride*

while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹²But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The Parable of the Talents

¹⁴"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants¹ and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents,² to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.³ You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.' ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Final Judgment

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,⁴ you did it to me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did

¹Or *bondservants*; also verse 19 ²A *talent* was a monetary unit worth about twenty years' wages for a laborer ³Or *bondservant*; also verses 23, 26, 30 ⁴Or *brothers and sisters*

not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The Plot to Kill Jesus

26 When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples,² “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

³ Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,⁴ and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.⁵ But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

⁶ Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,⁷ a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.⁸ And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste?⁹ For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.”¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.¹² In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.¹³ Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

Judas to Betray Jesus

¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests¹⁵ and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.¹⁶ And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

The Passover with the Disciples

¹⁷ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?”¹⁸ He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’”¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve.²¹ And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”²² And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”²³ He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.²⁴ The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”²⁵ Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the³ covenant, which is poured out for many for the for-

¹ *Leprosy* was a term for several skin diseases; see Leviticus 13 ² Some manuscripts add *disciples* ³ Some manuscripts insert *new*

givenness of sins. ²⁹I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial

³⁰And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³²But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ³³Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." ³⁴Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." ³⁵Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." ³⁷And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch¹ with me." ³⁹And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." ⁴⁰And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ⁴²Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." ⁴³And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. ⁴⁵Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Sleep and take your rest later on.² See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." ⁴⁹And he came up to Jesus at once and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do."³ Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant⁴ of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" ⁵⁵At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Jesus Before Caiaphas and the Council

⁵⁷Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. ⁵⁹Now the chief priests and the whole council⁵ were seeking

¹Or *keep awake*; also verses 40, 41 ²Or *Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?* ³Or *Friend, why are you here?* ⁴Or *bondservant* ⁵Greek *Sanhedrin*

OLD TESTAMENT FULFILLMENTS

The events that led up to the crucifixion of Jesus directly parallel what was prophesied about the Messiah as the suffering servant in the Old Testament. But not only did Jesus fulfill Old Testament prophecy; others around Jesus did as well.

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (v. 14), which was the equivalent to the price of a slave (Ex 21:32). Zechariah wrote about this exact price in his Messianic foreshadowing (Zec 11:12 – 13). Thirty pieces of silver was not a very large sum of money in that era, and in Matthew, Judas' story provides a stark contrast to the verses preceding his betrayal (Mt 26:6 – 13). While Mary went to great expense to anoint Jesus with precious oil, giving to Jesus what was probably her entire dowry (and therefore her entire future), Judas turned against Jesus for a relatively small price. Great is the cost of devotion, but cheap is the price of betrayal.

After the description of Judas' betrayal, Matthew transitioned to the preparations of the Passover meal. The Passover was celebrated in remembrance of God freeing his people from Egypt (Nu 9:2). However, for believers, Jesus completely transformed the way the meal was celebrated. It is now in remembrance of God freeing his people from sin and death through Jesus. In honoring old traditions, Jesus also created new traditions for believers to follow today. During this Passover celebration, Jesus represented the very fulfillment of the Passover's promise of deliverance from sin, ushering in a new covenant to replace the old covenant. This new covenant had been promised in the Old Testament multiple times (Jer 31:31 – 34; Eze 34:25 – 31; 37:26 – 28), and Jesus finally fulfilled it.

In addition to Judas and Jesus, Peter and the rest of the disciples also fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. While Peter's denial was a blatant betrayal of Jesus, it is important to remember that Peter was not the only disciple to avoid being associated with Jesus after his arrest. None of the other disciples had the courage to follow Jesus on that night; they all hid, which Jesus referred to by quoting Zechariah 13:7 (Mt 26:31). After Jesus' resurrection, ever the Good Shepherd, Jesus brought his flock back together (28:16 – 20), as he will again in the last days (Ac 2:17 – 21).

false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward⁶¹ and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" ⁶²And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?"⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy." ⁶⁶What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." ⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, ⁶⁸saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

Peter Denies Jesus

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." ⁷⁰But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." ⁷¹And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷²And again he denied it with an oath: "I do not know the man." ⁷³After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." ⁷⁴Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Jesus Delivered to Pilate

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. ²And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor.

Judas Hangs Himself

³Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus² was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. ⁶But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." ⁷So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. ⁸Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, ¹⁰and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

Jesus Before Pilate

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so." ¹²But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" ¹⁴But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

The Crowd Chooses Barabbas

¹⁵Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶And they had then a notorious prisoner called

¹Or Have you no answer to what these men testify against you? ²Greek he

SAVIOR

SEEING IS BELIEVING

GOSPELS TO ACTS 1

From the time my four children were very young, the legend of Disney World ran wild in their heads. Through the magic of cinema, they were transported to the magical world of Arendelle, where they dreamed of climbing the North Mountain. Through storybooks they have been “Under the Sea” with Ariel and Flounder. They each could see it all in their mind’s eye. However, the reality was, they had not been there. They had only seen Disney through the eyes of others, but they had not seen it for themselves.

Then one Christmas, everything changed. We surprised them with a trip to Disney. We loaded the minivan and off we went. The ten-hour drive from our home felt like a thousand. The anticipation and excitement were on a whole other level. When we arrived, we went straight to meet the princesses. What had been only fairytales became real when Elsa, Anna, Snow White, Belle, and Tiana were standing in front of them.

The stories had been great. The movies were phenomenal, but when their faith had become sight, everything changed. Because seeing is believing.

The ancient Greeks believed that all the deep questions in the world could be explained in the *Logos*. Heraclitus and Aristotle used the *Logos* as a foundation in their philosophical works. By the time of John’s Gospel the *Logos* had become the pre-

vailing way of understanding the “higher power” that exists. However, John, under the inspiration of God, used the opening stanzas of his account to shed more light on this *Logos*. He began by acknowledging the eternality of the *Logos* by saying that it had been from the beginning. Thus, he was validating what his audience had understood for centuries. However, he then took it further by helping them understand that the *Logos* (word) is connected to the *Theos* (God). In fact, the *Logos* (word) is *Theos* (God). He was clarifying that the *Logos* is more than a “higher power.” He is more than an “all knowing” spirit. The *Logos* is God.

John was not finished providing clarity. He takes his readers into a deeper understanding of who the *Logos* is by saying, “He was with God in the beginning.” (See Jn 1:1.)

Who is this he? Where did *he* come from? John tells us that “in him was life, and the life was the light of men” (1:4). In using the personal pronoun, the Gospel writer helps us understand that God is not some far-off “being,” unable to identify with humanity. No, he has definition and is knowable. The *Logos* has substance and character and is not a mysterious force. However, John had one more significant qualifier to add to help his readers understand the identity of the *Logos*. The *Logos* (Word) became flesh and dwelt among us!

The God of the universe who had, up to this point in history resided in his celestial home, had now taken up residence with humanity on earth. What was mystery is now reality. What was spirit is now flesh and blood. What had been experienced only by faith had now become sight. Seeing is believing.

The fact that sets the Christian gospel apart from all other belief systems is that God “gave his only Son” by sending him to earth (Jn 3:16). Jesus “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Php 2:6–7). God, in his grace, sent Jesus to earth so that we could see him and therefore believe him.

God knew that humanity would need to tangibly see him, to experience him, so that we could identify with him. He stepped out of cosmic glory for 33 years. He walked the earth, living in a physical place and time. He had human emotion and was able to identify with humanity’s struggles. He modeled what living in the kingdom of God should look like. Ultimately, he stood in humanity’s place. The place where all of humankind, because of our sin, deserved to be.

We have a Savior who was seen and therefore can be believed.

Jesus Lived in a Real Time and Place

Our Savior was born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth, worked in Galilee, died and then rose from the grave in Jerusalem. These are real places in the Near East Mediterranean region of earth. Anyone today can visit these exact sites. You can walk the grounds, touch the dirt, and smell the aromas.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to be in the Holy Land. While driving along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, we came to the town of Magdala. Magdala was the home of Mary *Magdalene*, who played an integral role in Jesus’ earthly ministry.

Modern-day Magdala is a small resort community north of the town of Tiberias referenced in John 6:23 and east of Mount Arbel. In recent years, a major archaeological discovery was made here. As the ancient ruins of the city were uncovered, among the discoveries were many homes, a marketplace, and a synagogue. In the synagogue a remnant of the mosaic tile floor was discovered. The archaeological experts date the floor to the time of Jesus, making it highly likely that the floor I saw was the same one he walked on 2,000 years ago. My faith was bolstered by knowing that the stories I read in the Bible about Jesus’ encounters with Mary Magdalene happened in a real place, a place I could visit.

SAVIOR

(CONTINUED)

GOSPELS TO ACTS 1

For Christians, throughout the centuries, being able to see the places of Jesus' ministry has provided a foundation to our beliefs.

Jesus Fulfilled the Old Testament Prophecies about Himself

Not only did Jesus live in a real time and place, but also the most significant aspects of his ministry had been prophesied about in the Old Testament, thousands of years prior. Many of the movements during his 33-year life were foretold by the prophets Micah, Zechariah, Isaiah, Malachi, and many others.

The prophet Micah described that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). The book of Malachi tells us that a "messenger," who ended up being John the Baptist, would prepare the way for Jesus and announce the coming of his ministry (Mal 3:1). Zechariah foretells that Jesus would be sold out for 30 pieces of silver (Zec 11:13). Psalm 22:16–18 tells us that not only would Jesus be crucified, but also that his robe would be divided.

Imagine, if before you were born, your parents wrote a book predicting whom you would marry, where you would live, and how many children you would have. You would be blown away at their ability to correctly guess those handful of milestones about your life. However, the reality is, even for the people who know you

best, it is not very likely that they would even get a few things right about how your life was going to turn out.

In Jesus' case, scholars point to the fact that Jesus fulfilled over 400 Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah. Thousands of years before he walked the earth, people were foretelling intimate details of his life and ministry. To get a few details right might be chalked up to coincidence, but to get hundreds right makes it a miraculous revelation about the Son of God.

Seeing the prophecies of the Old Testament come to fruition gave the early Christians, and gives Christians today, the confidence to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior.

Jesus Identifies with Us

Our Savior, because he walked the earth as God in human flesh, can relate to the joys and struggles that humankind faces. He was not a God who only knew about human weakness in theoretical terms. He knew about them in practical terms because he lived through them. The writer of Hebrews says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). In Jesus, God came near to his people, so he could relate to them in a tangible way.

Jesus Celebrated

All throughout the New Testament we see instances where Jesus displays the humanity in his divinity. At the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus celebrated. In his divinity, the wedding at Cana was Jesus' first recorded miracle. It is where he turned water into choice wine (see Jn 2:10). However, in his humanity, Jesus was at this wedding as an invited guest.

It is not hard to imagine that Jesus had the same emotion that anyone has when attending a wedding—joy for the couple. Jesus identifies with human celebration.

Jesus Wept

Conversely, Jesus mourned with those who were mourning. After Mary and Martha's brother (and Jesus' friend) died, Jesus was there. He was brokenhearted for their agony. He saw their pain, and he "wept" (Jn 11:35) with them. He did not rush to fix the problem. (He would get to that later.) No, he met Mary and Martha where they were. He identified with them in their suffering.

Jesus is not a cosmic overlord who is unable to understand the plight of humans. Quite the opposite. He can identify with humanity because he was human and knows our exact emotions. Seeing Jesus put his emotions on display helps us believe that empathy for others is possible.

Jesus Modeled Kingdom Living

Kings do not willingly give up power. They hold onto it with everything they have. However, Jesus modeled the upside-down nature of God's kingdom by living out the reality that the most powerful people are the ones who hold their position loosely. He showed that kingdom living is contrary to the way humans are inclined to live.

Jesus, though divine, did not wield the power of his divinity over humanity. He did the exact opposite. He became a servant to humanity by taking on its likeness. He literally was willing to do anything to serve other humans. He was even willing to die for them (see Php 2:6–8).

Jesus modeled kingdom thinking by showing that if a person was willing to lose their life for another person, then literally they would be willing to do anything for them. On the surface when Scripture instructs us, "Bless those who persecute you," it sounds radical. But it is not radical if you were willing to give your life for them.

Seeing Jesus model the upside-down nature of the kingdom makes us believe that the radical serving of others is possible.

Jesus Stood in Our Place

Jesus had to come to earth because, ultimately, he would have to physically stand in our place through his death on the cross.

SAVIOR

(CONTINUED)

GOSPELS TO ACTS 1

In the Old Testament, the way that the people of God restored their relationship to him was through a physical sacrifice. The system required a blood sacrifice. Saying “I am sorry” would not do the trick. No, a living creature without blemish had to stand in for the guilty party. Blood was the currency of forgiveness.

This is why Jesus had to be both divine and human. In his divinity, he would lead a perfect life without sin. In his humanity, he would physically stand in for sinful humanity. “For our sake he [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2Co 5:21). One of the Protestant Reformers said, “The Son of God, though spotlessly pure, took upon him the disgrace and ignominy of our iniquities, and in return clothes us with his purity.”

Jesus was our substitute. Theologians use the word *propitiation* to describe what Jesus has done on our behalf. However, that is just a big word that means Jesus took the place where we were meant to stand. Because of our sin, we deserved death. We deserved wrath. We

deserved judgment, but Jesus physically took that upon himself.

Seeing Jesus stand in our place helps us to believe that he is our Savior.

Today, when my kids talk about Disney World, they are talking from firsthand experience. They are no longer trying to describe something in the abstract. They can describe it in concrete detail that only firsthand experience can provide. They are confident Disney exists because they have seen Disney.

Jesus did not live in the realm of the abstract. He came to earth. He embraced our messiness all the way to death, and in the end overcame death by rising from the grave. This would all sound like a fairytale if not for the fact that it all happened in a real time and place—a place we can visit today—and happened among real people who provided their eyewitness accounts.

We can see the places where Jesus lived. We can read firsthand accounts of the miraculous nature of his 33 years on earth, and, therefore, we can believe that everything about him is true, because seeing is believing.

BEGINNINGS

GENESIS
1–2
(pg. 10)

REVOLT

GENESIS
3–11
(pg. 24)

PEOPLE

GENESIS 12 to
MALACHI
(pg. 256)

INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

(pg. 1468)

SAVIOR

GOSPELS to
ACTS 1
(pg. 1518)

CHURCH

ACTS 2 to
REVELATION 20
(pg. 1686)

FOREVER

REVELATION
21–22
(pg. 1938)

Barabbas. ¹⁷So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. ¹⁹Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream." ²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²²Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³And he said, "Why? What evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!"

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

²⁴So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood;¹ see to it yourselves." ²⁵And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged² Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Jesus Is Mocked

²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters,³ and they gathered the whole battalion⁴ before him. ²⁸And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

³²As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him." ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour⁵ there was darkness over all the land⁶ until the ninth hour.⁷ ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and

¹Some manuscripts *this righteous blood*, or *this righteous man's blood* ²A Roman judicial penalty,

consisting of a severe beating with a multi-lashed whip containing embedded pieces of bone and metal

³Greek *the praetorium* ⁴Greek *cohort*; a tenth of a Roman legion, usually about 600 men ⁵That is, noon

⁶Or *earth* ⁷That is, 3 P.M.

MATTHEW 27:62–66

WORRIED ABOUT
A RESURRECTION

Matthew made sure to emphasize the fact that the tomb was sealed in order to show that there was no possible way for the disciples to steal the body. The Jewish leaders and the guard were instructed to “make it as secure as you can” (v. 65), and they did so by placing a seal on the stone that was rolled in front of the tomb and also by placing a guard there. After the grave was reported empty and the disciples began telling others about the resurrection, those who opposed Jesus attempted to spread the rumor that the disciples had stolen the body (Mt 28:11–15). However, Matthew made it clear in his Gospel that the religious leaders had sealed the tomb specifically for the purpose of preventing anyone from stealing the body and faking a resurrection, which directly contradicts the false narrative they attempted to spread. There is no way the disciples could have stolen the body of Christ, and Matthew did well to show that despite the chief priests and Pharisees’ attempts to guard the tomb, there was nothing they could do to prevent Jesus’ actual, physical resurrection from the dead.

put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

⁵¹And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son¹ of God!”

⁵⁵There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus Is Buried

⁵⁷When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud ⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶²The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate ⁶³and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ ⁶⁴Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵Pilate said to them, “You have a guard² of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

The Resurrection

28 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he³ lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

The Report of the Guard

¹¹While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹²And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers

¹Or a son ²Or Take a guard ³Some manuscripts the Lord

JESUS' ASSIGNMENT TO HIS DISCIPLES

The Great Commission (vv. 19–20) is a command that rests on the authority of Christ described in the preceding verse. The phrase “Go ... make disciples” is commonly spoken among believers, but it is important to note the word “therefore” that comes between. Followers of Jesus are expected to *go and make disciples* solely because of who Jesus is and with the power and authority that he has been given (v. 18). Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth, and he doesn't give this command without empowering his followers to go and tell others about who he is.

The Great Commission is not the first call for world evangelism in the Bible. In fact, Genesis 12:1–3 describes God's promise that Abraham and his descendants would be a blessing to all nations. Jesus was simply building on what God had already told his people long before. Believers are expected to share the true and life-giving story of Jesus to every nation far and wide; this command has always been true for people who follow Jesus.

Jesus' command involves a simple three-step process; go, baptize, and teach. Within this phrase, Jesus clarified exactly what he expects of his followers. They are to first go and tell others about him so that others can know and understand his story. Then they are to baptize those who have heard the story so that they can publicly declare their belief in who he is. Finally, believers need to teach and encourage one another (Col 3:16). Believers will never stop teaching each other and learning about the nature of God. The command to go, baptize, and teach was Jesus' last command in the book of Matthew, and it is of the utmost importance for followers of Christ.

However, Jesus did not ask his disciples to do so alone. He promised that although he was leaving them physically he would always be with them through his Spirit. As long as believers hold fast to Jesus and rely on the Holy Spirit, the pathway is open for his followers to do what they have been called to do (Php 4:13).

¹³and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in¹ the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

¹Or *into*