

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

NIV

QUEST

The Only Q&A Study Bible

STUDY

Answers Thousands of Your  
Questions About the Bible

BIBLE

PERSONAL SIZE



# CONTENTS

<i>Alphabetical Order of the Books of the Bible</i>	vii
<i>Abbreviations of the Bible Book Names</i>	ix
<i>Introduction to the NIV Quest Study Bible</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xv
<i>Contributors</i>	xvii
<i>Reading Plans</i>	xix
<i>Overview of the Bible</i>	xxvii
<i>Preface</i>	xxxiii

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis	1
Exodus	81
Leviticus	145
Numbers	192
Deuteronomy	254
Joshua	308
Judges	345
Ruth	381
1 Samuel	388
2 Samuel	434
1 Kings	478
2 Kings	525
1 Chronicles	575
2 Chronicles	626
Ezra	678
Nehemiah	696
Esther	720
Job	732
Psalms	783
Proverbs	923
Ecclesiastes	972
Song of Songs	989
Isaiah	1000
Jeremiah	1106
Lamentations	1203
Ezekiel	1216
Daniel	1293
Hosea	1317
Joel	1334
Amos	1341
Obadiah	1354
Jonah	1357
Micah	1362
Nahum	1373
Habakkuk	1379
Zephaniah	1385
Haggai	1392
Zechariah	1396
Malachi	1411

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew	1419
Mark	1474
Luke	1510
John	1567
Acts	1607
Romans	1662
1 Corinthians	1686
2 Corinthians	1710
Galatians	1724
Ephesians	1733
Philippians	1742
Colossians	1749
1 Thessalonians	1756
2 Thessalonians	1762
1 Timothy	1766
2 Timothy	1773
Titus	1779
Philemon	1783
Hebrews	1786
James	1805
1 Peter	1812
2 Peter	1821
1 John	1827
2 John	1834
3 John	1836
Jude	1838
Revelation	1841

## STUDY HELPS

<i>Table of Weights and Measures</i>	1871
<i>Prayers From the Bible</i>	1873
<i>Promises From the Bible</i>	1876
<i>Perspectives From the Bible</i>	1878
<i>Acknowledgments Index</i>	1880
<i>Index to Subjects</i>	1882
<i>Index to In-Text Maps</i>	1908
<i>Index to Charts</i>	1910
<i>Dictionary-Concordance</i>	1911
<i>Index to Color Maps</i>	1942

# INTRODUCTION

## Welcome to the *NIV Quest Study Bible*

If you've ever read the Bible and found yourself asking the tough questions . . .

- Why did that happen?
- What does this verse mean?
- How does this story impact my life today?

. . . then the *NIV Quest Study Bible* is perfect for you.

Thanks to the combined efforts of the editors at Christianity Today International and scores of contributors, the articles and study notes in this Bible answer your most commonly asked questions.

The original *NIV Quest Study Bible* was conceived in 1989 when representatives from two publishing companies, Zondervan and Christianity Today International, began discussing the possibilities of again working together on a landmark Bible (they had previously collaborated on *The NIV Student Bible*). As editors and researchers explored options, they agreed that Bible readers were routinely seeking answers to challenging questions that arose as they read the Bible. Focus groups around the United States evaluated the usefulness of potential study Bible features and helped select the features that would be included in this Bible. Then, more than 1,000 people received passages of Scripture and were asked, "What questions do you have about this portion of the Bible?" Their responses helped determine what kinds of questions the notes would answer.

Readers found the original *NIV Quest Study Bible* so helpful that the editors at Christianity Today and Zondervan decided to work together once more to update its content. An updated edition of the Bible, which included hundreds of new notes and articles, was released in 2003. Once again, the editors at Christianity Today and Zondervan have collaborated to bring you a newly updated *NIV Quest Study Bible*, and they believe this is the best one yet. In addition to many new notes and articles, each existing note and article has received a complete editorial review to ensure that all questions and answers contain the most concise and accurate information. The new Quest also includes articles that answer the top 100 questions people ask while reading the Bible. These questions were developed based on research information provided by readers like you.

## WHAT MAKES THIS BIBLE DISTINCTIVE?

The *NIV Quest Study Bible* is like a press conference. There's a prepared statement — the text of the Bible. In this case, it's the highly respected New International Version, the bestselling modern English translation. For more details on the NIV translation, see "Preface" on page xxxiii.

After the text is presented, readers — like reporters at a press conference — address their most pressing questions to the spokesperson. In this Bible edition, the answers come from respected Bible scholars, pastors and writers who provide interesting answers in an engaging style.

**HERE ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFIC FEATURES YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BIBLE:**

## BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

At the beginning of each Bible book, you'll find direct answers to specific questions about the book: Who wrote it? Why? What should I look for as I read it? You'll also begin to gain an understanding of some of the themes covered in each Bible book.

## TIME LINES AND MAPS

The time lines included in the book introductions and the maps strategically located throughout the Bible will help you locate when and where the action being described took place.



## SIDE-COLUMN NOTES

In the margins, you will find question-based notes that clarify the meaning of the Bible text. The chapter and verse from the Bible text in question is placed in parentheses behind each question. These notes deal with such issues as:

## Perplexing words and phrases.

**The cultural context.** When reading the Bible, it is important to understand what was going on in the culture of the day in order to get an accurate picture of the way life was experienced by the people of Bible times.

**“Reasonable cause” for God’s mysterious action.** Why did God do the things he did — like punish a nation for its king’s decision to take a census? We cannot completely know God’s mind, but we can venture some plausible explanations.

**Fair summations of controversial passages.** While recognizing that portions of the Bible have been debated for centuries, the study notes in this Bible try to offer balanced summaries of the various interpretations.

**Explanations of particular types of writing.** Why take the time to read a list of names? How should Biblical poetry be interpreted? Or ancient laws? The notes help explain the significance of these kinds of literature.

**Other passages that cover the same or similar events or topics.** The Scripture “LINK” feature points to other places in the Bible where a related event or topic is mentioned. These cross-references typically indicate why the verse or passage to which you are directed is relevant.





## ARTICLES

On many pages of this Bible, you will find special articles. These articles take on some of the most-asked and most thought-provoking questions asked by contemporary Bible readers. This is also where you will find the top 100 most-asked questions — questions that were developed in response to feedback gathered from research about common questions readers have about the Bible.

## INDEX TO SUBJECTS

The subject index at the back of this Bible lists major topics that may be of interest to you and gives you the Scripture verses where the notes or articles related to those subjects may be found.

## DICTIONARY-CONCORDANCE

The dictionary-concordance found in the back of this Bible contains definitions of some of the names, words, phrases and place names found in the Scripture text of the New International Version. Each entry includes Scripture references where the word is used.

## INDEXES TO MAPS AND CHARTS

In the back of the *NIV Quest Study Bible* you will find indexes to the in-text and color maps, as well as charts. These indexes list all the titles of the two-color maps and charts, as well as the page numbers where they are located. Also included is a comprehensive index to the color maps at the back of the Bible.

## READING PLANS

A carefully designed, multilevel reading plan starts on page xix. You can choose from three “courses.” Course 1 features two-week reading plans that take you quickly into passages every Christian should know. Course 2 lists 187 chapters to be read over six months; taken together, these selections provide a good foundation of Bible understanding. Course 3 guides you completely through the Bible in three years, alternating between Old Testament and New Testament readings.

## THE WORD OF GOD

Far more important than any of the tools we’ve provided is the text itself, the Word of God. The Bible is a supernaturally powerful book, one that can be explained in simple terms to preschoolers and at the same time studied for a lifetime by scholars who never exhaust its profound truths. Whatever your situation, whatever your need, we offer this updated *NIV Quest Study Bible* with the hope and the prayer that the power of God’s Word may penetrate and transform your heart and your life.



# MATTHEW

## INTRODUCTION

### WHY READ THIS BOOK?

Have you ever read a sequel to a novel without having read the original story? Trying to pick up the story line without a transition can be difficult. The Gospel of Matthew serves as a transition that connects the story of the Old Testament with the story of the New Testament, helping you understand how the life and teaching of Jesus built on what had come before.

### WHO WROTE THIS BOOK?

Matthew, sometimes called Levi, a tax collector who became one of Jesus' 12 disciples.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

To offer irrefutable proof that the long-awaited Messiah had come to inaugurate God's kingdom on earth.

### WHEN AND TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN?

Matthew possibly wrote this book in the AD 70s (though some believe he may have written it in the 50s or 60s), primarily for Jewish readers. He offered a persuasive account of the good news of Jesus the Messiah, citing Old Testament evidence that supported the claims believers had been making about Jesus.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MATTHEW:

Notice Matthew's frequent use of the Old Testament and how his Jewish orientation flavored his descriptions. For example, he frequently used *Son of David* instead of *Son of God* (which is used in the Gospel of John). One of the major themes of Matthew's Gospel is the kingdom of heaven. Note Jesus' teachings about what it means to be a citizen of that kingdom.

### WHEN DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

10 BC AD 1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

HEROD THE GREAT'S REIGN (C. 37–4 BC)

JESUS' BIRTH (C. 6/5 BC)

JESUS' FLIGHT TO EGYPT (C. 5/4 BC)

BEGINNING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY (C. AD 26)

BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY (C. AD 26)

JESUS' DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION (C. AD 30)

PAUL'S CONVERSION (C. AD 35)

BOOK OF MATTHEW WRITTEN (C. AD 60–70)

### WHY GIVE THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS THE MESSIAH? (1:1)

Matthew wanted to underscore Jesus' human birth into a family with traceable roots. A Jewish male always traced his lineage through his father—and Joseph was Jesus' legal father. The genealogy also introduces a major theme in this book: since Jesus was considered a descendant of both David and Abraham, Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecies and of the covenants God had made with them.

### LINK (1:1–17) THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

Luke also listed a genealogy of Jesus, with a couple differences (Lk 3:23–38). Matthew traced Jesus' ancestry through the royal line of David and Solomon, since he was concerned with Israel's heritage and hopes. Luke's concern was Jesus' relation to the broader human race. See *Why are the genealogies of Matthew and Luke different?* (Lk 3:23–38; p. 1517).

### WHY IS URIAH'S WIFE LISTED IN THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS THE MESSIAH? (1:6)

Including *Uriah's wife* shows a remarkable glimpse of God's grace: Jesus was willing to be identified with sinful humanity. His ancestry was not untainted. Matthew's original Jewish readers would have remembered the story of David and Bathsheba: Uriah had been cheated by David—first of his wife, Bathsheba, and then of his life (2Sa 11:1–27).

### WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CALLING JESUS THE MESSIAH? (1:16)

The Greek title *the Christ* and the Hebrew title *the Messiah* both mean “the Anointed One” and refer to the special one sent and ordained by God to save his people. See *Who is his anointed?* (Ps 2:2; p. 784).

### WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE NUMBER FOURTEEN? (1:17)

Perhaps Matthew used it because it is a multiple of seven—a number that symbolized completeness. Matthew skipped over some generations in order to achieve this literary order.

## The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

**1** This is the genealogy<sup>a</sup> of Jesus the Messiah<sup>b</sup> the son of David, the son of Abraham:

- <sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac,  
Isaac the father of Jacob,  
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
- <sup>3</sup> Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,  
Perez the father of Hezron,  
Hezron the father of Ram,
- <sup>4</sup> Ram the father of Amminadab,  
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,  
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
- <sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,  
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,  
Obed the father of Jesse,
- <sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of King David.

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

- <sup>7</sup> Solomon the father of Rehoboam,  
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,  
Abijah the father of Asa,
- <sup>8</sup> Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,  
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,  
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,
- <sup>9</sup> Uzziah the father of Jotham,  
Jotham the father of Ahaz,  
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,
- <sup>10</sup> Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,  
Manasseh the father of Amon,  
Amon the father of Josiah,
- <sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jeconiah<sup>c</sup> and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

<sup>12</sup> After the exile to Babylon:

- Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,  
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,
- <sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,  
Abihud the father of Eliakim,  
Eliakim the father of Azor,
- <sup>14</sup> Azor the father of Zadok,  
Zadok the father of Akim,  
Akim the father of Elihud,
- <sup>15</sup> Elihud the father of Eleazar,  
Eleazar the father of Matthan,  
Matthan the father of Jacob,
- <sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

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

<sup>a</sup> 1 Or is an account of the origin    <sup>b</sup> 1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One; also in verse 18.    <sup>c</sup> 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12

## SETTINGS OF THE GOSPELS 1:1





### WHY WAS DIVORCE NECESSARY WHEN JOSEPH AND MARY WERE ONLY ENGAGED? (1:19)

Joseph's wife-to-be was pregnant, and her child wasn't his — a disgrace in any era. Unlike today, a first-century engagement was a binding premarital contract leading to marriage. During the year of engagement, the couple behaved like husband and wife (except that they did not live together or have sex). To break off such an engagement, a divorce was required.

### WHY WAS JOSEPH AFRAID TO TAKE MARY AS HIS WIFE? (1:20)

In the eyes of the community, Mary had committed adultery (see previous note). This sin was punishable by death, usually by stoning. Joseph was afraid to take her as his wife because it was equivalent to admitting that he was the father of the child. Doing so would have brought him social disgrace and caused him to become religiously impure. No one would have wanted to associate with him for fear of becoming contaminated. The ostracism would also have had a direct impact on his carpentry business.

### WHY WAS A VIRGIN BIRTH NECESSARY? (1:23)

Some think it was because Adam's original sin is passed down to humanity through sinful parents. According to this view Jesus, to be free of sin, needed to circumvent the natural method of conception and be conceived in a supernatural way. Others think Jesus' birth, a miraculous birth to a sexually pure young woman, served to underscore his supernatural beginning — a sign of his divinity.

### WHO WAS KING HEROD? (2:1)

This Herod was Herod the Great, who reigned over Judea from 37 to 4 BC. A bloodthirsty tyrant who murdered his wife, mother-in-law and three sons, among others, Herod was a non-Jew. His mother was a Nabatean, and his father was an Idumean convert to Judaism, which gave Herod an understanding of Jewish traditions and thinking. The Roman Empire gave Herod his authority to rule the Jews, but most Jews hated him, even though he referred to himself as the king of the Jews.

### WHO WERE THE MAGI? (2:1)

Some have suggested that the *Magi* were a priestly tribe of Medes. Others say they were Persian elders from Babylon who were schooled in philosophy, medicine and science, and devoted to astrology, divination and the interpretation of dreams. They may have belonged to the same order of astrologers as those who served Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in Daniel's day (Da 1:20; 2:2; 4:7; 5:7).

### IF IT WAS FORBIDDEN FOR JEWS TO PRACTICE ASTROLOGY, WHY DID GOD BLESS THE MAGI? (2:2)

Most likely, these Magi discovered a rare celestial configuration that bore a special divine message and announced the birth of a king. God did not bless the Magi per se, but he used their knowledge and curiosity to lead them to the infant Jesus. With this story, God shows that Jesus is the King of kings — even the King of the Gentiles.

## Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

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

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

<sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"<sup>d</sup> (which means "God with us").

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

## The Magi Visit the Messiah

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi<sup>e</sup> from the east came to Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

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

<sup>6</sup>"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."<sup>f</sup>

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

<sup>9</sup>After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup>On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

<sup>a</sup> 18 Or *The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this*    <sup>b</sup> 19 Or *was a righteous man and*    <sup>c</sup> 21 Jesus is the Greek form of *Joshua*, which means *the LORD saves*.  
<sup>d</sup> 23 Isaiah 7:14    <sup>e</sup> 1 Traditionally *wise men*    <sup>f</sup> 6 Micah 5:2,4

## The Escape to Egypt

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

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

<sup>16</sup>When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup>Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup>“A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more.”<sup>b</sup>

## The Return to Nazareth

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

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

## John the Baptist Prepares the Way

**3** In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea <sup>2</sup>and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” <sup>3</sup>This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”<sup>c</sup>

<sup>4</sup>John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup>Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup>Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup>And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise

<sup>a</sup> 15 Hosea 11:1    <sup>b</sup> 18 Jer. 31:15    <sup>c</sup> 3 Isaiah 40:3

## CAN WE OBTAIN GUIDANCE FROM THE STARS TODAY? (2:2)

Those who rely on astrology for guidance resign themselves to superstitious fate instead of trusting God. Although Jesus said heavenly signs might indicate the dawning of prophetic events (24:29–30), the Bible clearly warns against turning to the stars for guidance (Dt 4:19; Isa 47:13–15).

## ESCAPE TO EGYPT (2:13)



## WHY DID GOD WARN JOSEPH BUT NOT THE FAMILIES OF THE OTHER MALE CHILDREN? (2:13,16)

Sometimes God dramatically intervenes in human history; at other times he allows the consequences of sin to play out. It is difficult, and often impossible, to know exactly why God chooses to intervene in some situations. People’s inhumanity toward one another causes much suffering in this world, and though this grieves God, he permits people to make destructive choices. God allowed Herod’s lust for power to run unchecked through Bethlehem, though he protected his Son for the purpose he intended.

## DID MATTHEW TAKE THIS PROPHECY OUT OF CONTEXT? (2:15)

This prophecy was from Hosea 11:1. Contrary to his custom, Matthew did not quote from the Septuagint—a Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures—but quoted from the original Hebrew text. Hosea spoke metaphorically of the nation of Israel in its predevelopment stage. The Hebrew text seems grammatically incorrect because it moves from a singular form (*son*) to a plural form (*they*). Matthew saw in this apparent grammatical error a specific prophecy about the Messiah. This interpretation may also have come directly from Jesus (Lk 24: 44–45).

## WHAT DID IT MEAN TO BE CALLED A NAZARENE? (2:23)

The word *Nazarene* was a derogatory term. Those who lived in Nazareth (or anywhere else in Galilee) were viewed as second-class citizens.

## LINK (3:1–12) JOHN THE BAPTIST

See Mark 1:3–8; Luke 3:2–17.

## WHY DID JOHN THE BAPTIST DRESS SO STRANGELY? (3:4)

Poor people of John’s day also wore camel hair clothing and leather belts; they, too, may have eaten grasshoppers and wild honey—more out of necessity than choice. What attracted the crowds was not so much what John ate and wore but his dynamic preaching in the desert.

### DID JOHN PREACH THAT SINS ARE FORGIVEN BY BAPTISM? (3:6)

There is no evidence that John linked baptism with entrance into God's kingdom. John's purpose was to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The ritual of baptism served only to illustrate physically what was occurring spiritually within their hearts. The faith expressed in John's baptism indicated a readiness for the Messiah, who would bring forgiveness. See **Does baptism save us?** (1Pe 3:21; p. 1818).

### DID JOHN INVENT BAPTISM? (3:11)

No, but John's baptism was unique. After Judah's exile to Babylon in 586 BC, Jewish rabbis used baptism as a rite of cleansing. John redefined this sacred use of water as a public sign of repentance.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE? (3:11)

The precise meaning of this phrase is difficult to specify since *fire* can symbolize both God's presence and his judgment. God's presence was revealed in fire in the burning bush (Ex 3:2), on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:18), in chariots of fire (2Ki 6:17) and on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:3), to name just a few examples. However, the phrase also suggests a figurative baptism, one in which believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit and nonbelievers are baptized with the fire of judgment.

### WHAT WAS A WINNOWING FORK? (3:12)

Farmers in ancient times tossed threshed grain into the air with a large wooden fork so the wind would blow away the lighter chaff, while the grain would drop back to the ground. John the Baptist used this image to illustrate the dual nature of Jesus' ministry: he would separate humanity — some to judgment and some to reward.

up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup>The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

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

### The Baptism of Jesus

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

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

<sup>16</sup>As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

### Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

**4** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted<sup>b</sup> by the devil. <sup>2</sup>After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

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

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

<sup>a</sup> 11 Or in    <sup>b</sup> 1 The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*.    <sup>c</sup> 4 Deut. 8:3

## HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE TRINITY? 3:16–17

The short answer is that we can't. Not fully. Finite human beings can't fully comprehend an infinite God. But we can grapple intelligently with the concept of one God who exists as three distinct and irreducible persons: Father, Son and Spirit.

The Father is referred to as God in Matthew 6:26,30. Jesus is referred to as God in John 1:1,14 and Hebrews 1:6. The Spirit is referred to as God in Acts 5:3–4. All three are referred to as God even though Mark 12:32 tells us that *God is one and there is no other but him*. How do we reconcile this?

The apostle Paul says that God placed clues in creation so we can know more about him (Ro 1:20). One of the ways we can come to know more about God's nature is by drawing analogies with things that we can see. And we do see examples of three forms in one essence when we examine God's creation. Take water, for example. Water is always water, even though it can be experienced in three different forms: liquid, solid (when frozen) and vapor. God is still God even though he can be experienced in three forms — Father, Son and Spirit. Light is another example. Any color of light can be formed from the three primary colors: red, blue and yellow. Even light that appears white and colorless to the human eye is actually a manifestation of those colors. So nature shows us that one substance with multiple aspects can exist in unity. Keep in mind that these are examples, not explanations. God cannot be explained or understood, but these examples give us a way to begin thinking about the mystery of the Trinity.

TOP 100  
MOST-ASKED

“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”<sup>a</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”<sup>b</sup>

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

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”<sup>c</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

### Jesus Begins to Preach

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

<sup>15</sup>“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,  
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles —

<sup>16</sup>the people living in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the land of the shadow of death  
a light has dawned.”<sup>d</sup>

<sup>17</sup>From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

### Jesus Calls His First Disciples

<sup>18</sup>As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you

<sup>a</sup> 6 Psalm 91:11,12    <sup>b</sup> 7 Deut. 6:16    <sup>c</sup> 10 Deut. 6:13    <sup>d</sup> 16 Isaiah 9:1,2

### LINK (3:13–17) JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

See Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:31–34.

### WHY WOULD THE SPIRIT LEAD JESUS INTO TEMPTATION? (4:1)

For Jesus to accomplish God’s will, he had to face Satan and prevail. This was the first major confrontation. Matthew presents Jesus as one who served faithfully despite enormous opposition. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by Satan, showing that temptation doesn’t need to end in failure. That’s an encouragement to all believers who find themselves the objects of Satan’s schemes (Eph 6:11).

### JESUS IS TESTED (4:1)



### LINK (4:1–11) JESUS WAS . . . TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL

See Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13.

### WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN WRONG WITH TURNING STONES INTO BREAD? (4:3–4)

The issue was not the temptation itself but the motive behind it. The devil often appeals to our pride, hoping that we will take matters into our own hands rather than trust in God. If Jesus had turned the stones into bread, he would not have been depending on his Father in heaven. All three of the temptations mentioned in verses 1–11 were shortcuts Satan

## DOES THE SPIRIT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION? 4:1

God does not tempt us to sin — that’s Satan’s specialty. However, God may see fit to test us. See **How are temptations different from trials?** (Jas 1:13; p. 1806). On occasion this testing places us in Satan’s line of fire.

In this case, the Spirit tested Jesus by allowing Satan to tempt him to sin. Jesus’ victory over temptation was crucial to the success of his divine mission. In the midst of the struggle, Jesus demonstrated his unwavering commitment to God’s plan and his word. Similarly, God may allow our faith to be tested on the path to spiritual success, as he tested Paul (2Co 12:7). As we rely on God’s help to win battles over temptation, we become more prepared to fulfill our unique, God-given purpose.

Why, then, does Jesus tell us to pray, *Lead us not into temptation* (Mt 6:13)? If God knows we’ll benefit from being tested, wouldn’t it be better to pray, “Lead us into temptation and give us strength to overcome it”?

Not necessarily. Jesus linked *lead us not into temptation* with *deliver us from the evil one* (6:13). Thus, avoiding temptation means avoiding the devil’s snares and enticements. Avoiding temptation doesn’t mean that we avoid trials that spiritually strengthen us. Jesus wants us to see God as the one who delivers, not the one who tempts. In our prayers, we look to God as the source of victory over the evil one. God tests us not that we might fall into sin but that we might experience victory. See **Why does God allow our faith to be tested?** (1Pe 1:7; p. 1814).



offered to Jesus. Each time, Jesus rejected the shortcut and trusted his Father. Jesus' quotations of Scripture were an affirmation of his trust in God.

### WAS THERE A RISK THAT JESUS MIGHT HAVE YIELDED TO SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS? (4:3–11)

Some say the Spirit did not put Jesus at risk since Jesus' divine nature could not have succumbed to temptation. Others say that because Jesus was human, his temptations were legitimate. If this had been merely a mock spiritual battle, they say, then our salvation would not be legitimate (Heb 2:14–18; 4:15).

### DOES THE DEVIL REALLY OWN THE WORLD? (4:8–9)

This is only partially true — a half-truth. The Bible does speak of Satan's power in the world (Eph 2:1–2). But Satan was exaggerating by presenting himself as sovereign over all of the earth's kingdoms.

### WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN? (4:17)

The *kingdom of heaven* is the kingdom of God. In the gospel, it refers to both the reign of God over the universe and the realm where God resides. Jesus taught that it is both a present and future reality and that it is both within and outside the believer.

### LINK (4:18–22) COME, FOLLOW ME

See Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:2–11; John 1:35–42.

### WERE SIMON AND ANDREW ACTING ON IMPULSE? (4:20)

Some see their immediate response as a model of Christian discipleship. Others, with clues from John's Gospel (Jn 1:35–51), think Simon and Andrew may have followed Jesus in a limited sense before this incident. Having already seen Jesus' power, they were ready to follow him when he asked for greater commitment.

### WHY DO MATTHEW AND LUKE DISAGREE ABOUT WHERE THIS SERMON WAS PREACHED? (5:1)

Most likely Jesus spoke from a plateau that was part way down the mountain, making both Luke (Lk 6:17) and Matthew correct. The two accounts are parallel in other respects, although Luke reduces the longer account in Matthew to its basic core. It's also possible that the sermon in Luke was a different sermon.

out to fish for people.”<sup>20</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

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

## Jesus Heals the Sick

<sup>23</sup>Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup>News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. <sup>25</sup>Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,<sup>a</sup> Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

## Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

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

## The Beatitudes

He said:

- <sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- <sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.
- <sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.
- <sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for  
righteousness,  
for they will be filled.
- <sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will be shown mercy.
- <sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.
- <sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.

<sup>a</sup> <sup>25</sup> That is, the Ten Cities

# HOW CAN ANYONE LIVE UP TO THESE HIGH STANDARDS? 5:3–12

Even though the Sermon on the Mount has been called the constitution for citizens of God's kingdom, we won't see flawed human beings reach this level of perfection in this life. Jesus began the Beatitudes with our inability in mind: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (v. 3). Those acknowledging their spiritual poverty are in the best position to experience God's blessing and enjoy his kingdom.

Our salvation and hope for heaven are rooted firmly in the grace of God (Eph 2:8). Nevertheless, God's grace will produce positive, tangible changes in our lives. Even when our attempts result in failure, we're to keep trying and trusting. The Beatitudes are an ethical model that requires a declaration of dependence on God.

The Beatitudes describe the life of blessing God intended for humanity from the beginning. The closer we come to Jesus' standards, the more we experience the blessing of God.

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

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### Salt and Light

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

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

### The Fulfillment of the Law

<sup>17</sup>“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. <sup>18</sup>For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

### Murder

<sup>21</sup>“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,<sup>a</sup> and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup>But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister<sup>b,c</sup> will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’<sup>d</sup> is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

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

<sup>25</sup>“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be

### LINK (5:3–12) BLESSED ARE

See Luke 6:20–23.

### WHY DID JESUS TURN OUR VALUE SYSTEM UPSIDE DOWN? (5:3–12)

He wanted to dispute the conventional wisdom of the time that said the wealthy and influential enjoyed more of God’s blessings than the poor and powerless did. Jesus wanted his followers to see that material things are only temporary and certainly not the only reality. He didn’t want them to think of their current situations as signs of God’s blessing or judgment. Instead, he wanted them to see that the poor can be spiritually wealthy (Jas 2:5).

### WHY REJOICE AND BE GLAD ABOUT PERSECUTION? (5:11–12)

Because it reinforces our identity with Jesus and the prophets. We can also be glad because righteousness, though it has a price, has a reward. Persecution reminds us that we can anticipate something better in heaven. Our joy comes not from the physical suffering itself but from the reason for the suffering: Jesus the Messiah.

### HOW WAS THE LAW FULFILLED? (5:17–18)

With his sin-free life and sacrificial death, Jesus perfectly kept both the letter and the spirit of the law. Other than Jesus, no one can perfectly obey God’s law. But when God looks at believers in Jesus, he sees Jesus’ righteousness instead of their sins. Jesus, with his perfect life, paid our penalty for breaking God’s law. Jesus’ righteousness is credited to believers as their own. See *Did Jesus abolish the Old Testament law or fulfill it?* (Eph 2:15; p. 1736).

### WHY ARE SOME GREATER THAN OTHERS IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN? (5:19)

The terms *least* and *great* are used to show the things that are valued in God’s spiritual kingdom. In the kingdom of heaven, obedience and faithfulness to God’s ways are valued. Those who live according to God’s ways will be rewarded. There will be no elitism in heaven, though some may receive richer blessings.

### HOW CAN WE BE MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN THE PHARISEES? (5:20)

By openly and honestly checking the spiritual condition of our hearts. The Pharisees, who were proud of their zealous efforts to follow every detail of Jewish law, could never have admitted that they were *poor in spirit* (v. 3). Their outward religious legalism covered up their inner spiritual poverty. When we confess our need and turn to Jesus for salvation, God makes us righteous, which our own efforts could not accomplish.

### WHAT’S SO BAD ABOUT NAME-CALLING? (5:22)

Sticks and stones and, yes, words can harm others. Jesus traces sin to its inner source: the condition of the human heart. Murder begins with a murderous attitude, that is, wishing harm to another person. Jesus considers the intent as dangerous as the act.

### WHAT DOES RACA MEAN? (5:22)

The Aramaic word *Raca*, derived from the Hebrew *rak* (meaning “to be empty”), refers to a vain, empty-headed, worthless person. While

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

name-calling or libel could land someone in court, it was far more serious to label someone a fool, since that term pronounced judgment on the person's inherent value. Viewing another person as utterly worthless is an attitude that leads to many other sins, including abuse, discrimination and even murder.

#### WHAT WAS JESUS' CONCEPT OF HELL? (5:22)

The word *hell* is derived from *gehenna*, which refers to the Hinnom Valley (see **Map 10** at the back of this Bible). That valley was where human sacrifices were offered to the pagan god Molek. It subsequently became a dumping ground, a place of perpetually burning trash and smoldering garbage, as well as the place where corpses of criminals were discarded. Jesus described hell as a place of torment (Lk 16:23), destruction (Mt 10:28) and eternal fire (Mk 9:43), where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 13:50; Lk 13:28).

#### LINK (5:25–26) SETTLE MATTERS QUICKLY WITH YOUR ADVERSARY

See Luke 12:58–59.

#### WILL SELF-INFLICTED INJURY HELP US SIN LESS? (5:29–30)

Jesus spent his life healing the crippled, so he certainly did not intend for people to mutilate themselves in the pursuit of holiness. Jesus was using hyperbole to get his listeners' attention. Sin is deadly serious, and radical measures are required to eradicate it. Persistent or recurring sin jeopardizes spiritual life much like gangrene threatens physical health. See **Should we really amputate our body parts?** (18:8; p. 1451).

#### DOES INFIDELITY MANDATE DIVORCE? (5:32)

Jesus *permits* divorce in the case of infidelity, but he doesn't *require* it. To the contrary, when God's grace and forgiveness bring healing into a relationship, a marriage can be restored rather than terminated. Such a miracle is unthinkable from a human perspective, but God can bring restoration and hope even into relationships torn by pain, rejection and unfaithfulness. See **Is divorce always wrong?** (19:1–9; p. 1452).

thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

#### Adultery

<sup>27</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>a</sup> <sup>28</sup>But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup>And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

#### Divorce

<sup>31</sup>“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’<sup>b</sup> <sup>32</sup>But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

#### Oaths

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

#### Eye for Eye

<sup>38</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’<sup>d</sup> <sup>39</sup>But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. <sup>40</sup>And if anyone wants to sue you and take your

<sup>a</sup> 27 Exodus 20:14    <sup>b</sup> 31 Deut. 24:1    <sup>c</sup> 37 Or from evil    <sup>d</sup> 38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21

## WHAT IS HELL LIKE? 5:21–30

The Bible offers a variety of disturbing pictures of hell. Hell is described as a place of unquenchable fire (Mk 9:43); condemnation (Mt 23:33); darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 8:11–13); chains and judgment (2Pe 2:4). While some of these images create an apparent conflict (e.g., fire and darkness), together they are a picture of misery.

The clearest picture we have of hell comes from Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31. In this parable, Jesus warned that the boundaries between heaven and hell are permanently fixed. While Lazarus entered a place of comfort (Lk 16:25), the rich man existed in torment, longing for even a drop of cool water (Lk 16:24).

Jesus' description of hell also leads to several observations. People are recognizable there, and it is a place of agony and torment (Lk 16:23). The chasm between heaven and hell prevents escape or movement from hell to heaven (Lk 16:26). And it is not possible for anyone in hell to warn loved ones alive on earth about the reality of hell (Lk 16:31).

TOP 100  
MOST-ASKED

shirt, hand over your coat as well. <sup>41</sup>If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

### Love for Enemies

<sup>43</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor<sup>a</sup> and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup>If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup>Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

### Giving to the Needy

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

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

### Prayer

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

<sup>a</sup> 43 Lev. 19:18

### IS IT WRONG TO SWEAR AN OATH TO TELL THE TRUTH IN COURT? (5:34–37)

Jesus was talking about the misuse of oaths common in Jewish culture (the equivalent of someone today saying, “I swear to God”). He was not prohibiting solemn vows. Jesus’ point was that truth telling is essential, no matter how costly. At times it may be appropriate to commit ourselves to the truthfulness of our words. Even God set an example of swearing by himself to prove his word trustworthy (e.g., Ge 22:16; Jer 22:5; 49:13). See **Since God swore an oath, should we?** (Heb 6:13; p. 1792).

### WHO CAN BE AS PERFECT AS GOD? (5:48)

No one can be as perfect as God (Ro 3:10–12). But Jesus is not calling us to an exercise in futility. The word *perfect* implies completion or maturity — something other than sinless perfection. Later Jesus summarized the whole law with two basic principles: love God and love your neighbor (Mt 22:37–40). Here, in the same way, Jesus said that the law of love (5:43–44) represents the full and mature expression of the law. To live in a perfect way, God’s love must flow through our lives to others — even to our enemies.

### ARE WE TO NEVER LET OTHERS SEE OUR GOOD DEEDS? (6:1)

It depends on our motivation. Doing the right things for the wrong reasons (to gain honor or the recognition of others, for example) undermines the purity of our good works. Jesus encourages us to let our deeds be seen so that onlookers will glorify God (5:16), not be impressed with us.

### ARE SOME PRAYERS WRONG? (6:7)

When prayers are reduced to techniques or formulas as a means of manipulating God, they are wrong. In the first century, some had developed long lists with the names of pagan gods. As they recited their lists, they hoped to correctly pronounce the names of the true gods and thereby harness the gods’ power to grant their wishes. Others endlessly repeated phrases or syllables in an attempt to earn the favor of the gods. Jesus recalled such pagan practices to show that true prayer depends on what is in the heart more than what is on the tongue.

## AREN’T THERE TIMES WHEN WE SHOULD RESIST AN EVIL PERSON? 5:39

We can better understand Jesus’ words by seeing them in context. The words *You have heard that it was said . . . But I tell you* appear repeatedly throughout Matthew 5, contrasting the Pharisaical interpretation of the Law with Jesus’ fulfillment of the Law’s true intent (v. 17). The Law allowed for retaliation, but Jesus calls for reconciliation. To be struck on the cheek was symbolic of being personally insulted, not physically attacked. *To turn . . . the other cheek* meant to ignore the insult.

Jesus came to defeat the work of Satan. He gave his followers *authority . . . to overcome all the power of the enemy* (Lk 10:19) and the forces of evil in society (Eph 6:13). James and Peter tell us to resist the devil (Jas 4:7; 1Pe 5:9), yet Jesus also wants to conquer our desire to retaliate and avenge. God’s people must work for justice but not take personal revenge.

Jesus stood silent before his accusers, allowing himself to be crucified, thereby winning the ultimate battle over the enemy (Col 2:15). Similarly, we can win battles of the heart by turning the other cheek.

### IF GOD KNOWS WHAT WE NEED BEFORE WE ASK, WHY ASK? (6:8)

Prayer does not inform God of something he doesn't know. We should pray not to get what we want but to nurture our relationship, or union, with God. When we pray in such a way, prayer can change us rather than the situation, reinforcing our confidence in God's sufficiency and realigning our will with his. At the same time, God invites us to involve ourselves in his work by praying.

### LINK (6:9–13) HOW YOU SHOULD PRAY

See Luke 11:2–4.

### WHY PRAY FOR GOD'S WILL TO BE DONE? (6:10)

When we do, we yield to God's authority. It is a humble admission that God knows better than we do about what is right. This prayer also acknowledges our desire to see God's kingdom (the realm where his will is always done) fully manifested.

### DOES GOD LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION UNLESS WE ASK HIM NOT TO? (6:13)

No, God does not tempt us. Jesus instructs us to pray this to show our dependence on God for the power to overcome evil. See the article *Does the Spirit lead us into temptation?* (4:1; p. 1425).

### DOES GOD WANT US TO FAST? (6:18)

*Fasting* is an expression of our dependence on God and our submission to his will. Those who use fasting to try to twist God's arm or manipulate him into answering their prayers don't understand that fasting is an act of humility that trains us to release our immediate physical desires to seek our higher, spiritual desire for God. See *Should Christians fast?* (9:14–15; p. 1435).

### HOW IS THE EYE LIKE A LAMP? (6:22)

In Jesus' day, the eye was thought to be like a window that carried light into the body. An eye could be either healthy or unhealthy. Because the surrounding verses focus on wealth, the meaning of the word *healthy* seems to imply "generous," and the word *unhealthy* means "greedy." A generous eye brings moral health, and a greedy eye corrupts one's entire perspective.

### LINK (6:22–23) THE EYE IS THE LAMP OF THE BODY

See Luke 11:34–36.

### HOW CAN LIGHT BE DARKNESS? (6:23)

This is a figure of speech that is explained from the context of this verse. Jesus was speaking about the *light* we take into our minds. We can take in so-called *light* that is actually *darkness*—something false or evil masquerading as something true or good. If a person is open to this kind of *light*, soon that person will be filled with darkness. So Jesus warns us to be careful about what ideas and thoughts we entertain.

### IS IT WRONG TO WORRY? (6:25)

Jesus was emphasizing that we no longer have to worry. This is an invitation to rest in the arms of a loving Father. As humans, we sometimes cross the line and violate this

<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup>your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread.  
<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,<sup>a</sup>  
but deliver us from the evil one.<sup>b</sup>

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

### Fasting

<sup>16</sup>"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>17</sup>But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### Treasures in Heaven

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

<sup>22</sup>"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,<sup>c</sup> your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup>But if your eyes are unhealthy,<sup>d</sup> your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

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

### Do Not Worry

<sup>25</sup>"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life<sup>e</sup>?

<sup>a</sup> 13 The Greek for *temptation* can also mean *testing*. <sup>b</sup> 13 Or *from evil*; some late manuscripts *one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* <sup>c</sup> 22 The Greek for *healthy* here implies *generous*. <sup>d</sup> 23 The Greek for *unhealthy* here implies *stingy*. <sup>e</sup> 27 Or *single cubit to your height*



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

### Judging Others

**7** “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup>For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

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

<sup>6</sup>“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

principle when we allow ourselves to constantly focus on ourselves instead of God.

**LINK (6:25–33) DO NOT WORRY**  
See Luke 12:22–31.

**LINK (7:3–5) SPECK OF SAWDUST**  
See Luke 6:41–42.

**WHY WOULD ANYONE GIVE PEARLS TO PIGS? (7:6)**

Although Jesus was calling his disciples to focus on their own sins rather than on anyone else’s, he was also warning them to remain vigilant. As pigs do not and cannot appreciate the value of pearls, some people do not and cannot appreciate the best of human nature — especially in spiritual matters. Not judging does not mean not discerning. Judging leads to the destruction of another person’s value, while discerning forges a detecting mechanism for self-protection.

## HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE TOO MUCH “STUFF”? 6:19–20

When we have too many material possessions, we often hold on to them too tightly; we overemphasize their importance and purpose in our lives, and this causes us anxiety. A good way to find out if we have a healthy view of material possessions is to ask ourselves, Am I actively seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness or am I worrying about losing or increasing my stuff? Jesus said, *Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear* (Mt 6:25). The remedy to our anxiety and acquisitiveness is to *seek first [God’s] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to [us] as well* (Mt 6:33). So what’s needed is the cultivation of a right frame of reference concerning material possessions.

What we have (or do not have) should not define who we are (or are not). Furthermore, we should be looking for creative ways to share what we have with others — especially those who cannot repay us in monetary or material ways. Have you ever stopped to wonder why God entrusts us with all this stuff in the first place? It is certainly not because we deserve it more than anybody else. The answer, in large part, goes back to what God said to Abram in Genesis 12:2–3: you’ve been blessed to be a blessing to others. We should never lose sight of the fact that we’ve been called to use what God has given us to serve others (Mt 20:25–28; 1Pe 4:10). We should acknowledge the reality that sometimes those with the least give the most materially (giving the shirt off their back) and relationally (giving from the heart), and that is the sacrificial giving the apostle Paul praised so highly in 2 Corinthians 8–9. So the issue is not simply how much we have or don’t have; the issue is what we *do* with what we have. And *why* we do what we do. That core issue makes all the difference in the love we develop for stuff.

We know we have too much stuff when anxiety or greed, which is idolatry (Col 3:5), keeps us from sharing with others; when we find our contentment in what we buy and own rather than in whom we love; and when we find our identity in what we possess rather than in our relationships — both with God and others. Seek first his kingdom, and everything else will fall into line.

**TOP 100**  
MOST-ASKED

### WHAT CAN WE EXPECT WHEN WE PRAY? (7:7–8)

What Jesus was promising here is insight and direction through the work of the Spirit within us. Jesus was not promising that we will receive whatever we might think we need. As the Holy Spirit directs our hearts, we will desire those things that God desires. We can have faith to see those things accomplished as the fulfillment of his promise.

### WHY IS THE RIGHT WAY SO NARROW? (7:13–14)

The narrow road and narrow gate symbolize the challenge of the way of the kingdom. It's a road of suffering and self-denial, not the path taken by the majority.

### HOW DO WE GUARD AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS WITHOUT JUDGING? (7:15–16)

Jesus' command not to judge (v. 1) is a caution against condemning others. Pointing out heresy, however, is not condemning others but merely discerning an obvious error. In this case Jesus urges us to be on the lookout for those whose lifestyles and teachings stand as an indictment against them.

### HOW CAN EVILDOERS DO MIRACLES IN JESUS' NAME? (7:22–23)

Some think this means that God occasionally works through flawed instruments. In Numbers 20, Moses disobeyed God and yet the Lord still performed a miracle through him. But God still held Moses accountable for his disobedience. In such cases, God's work is accomplished in spite of, not because of, such people. We should be careful not to judge a person's spiritual standing before God simply by the power of their actions. God is more concerned about the fruit of a person's character.

## Ask, Seek, Knock

<sup>7</sup>"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup>"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! <sup>12</sup>So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

## The Narrow and Wide Gates

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

## True and False Prophets

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

## True and False Disciples

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

## DID JESUS FORBID US TO JUDGE OTHERS? 7:1–5

In Matthew 5:20–7:6, Jesus warned his disciples against following the traditions and practices of the Pharisees, who judged others as if they themselves were beyond judgment. What's more, the Pharisees judged people by the letter, not the spirit, of the law.

So Jesus most likely meant, "Do not judge at all if you judge others the way the Pharisees do. For if you judge people that way, you will be judged with the same severity." Jesus' intent is seen in his metaphor of *specks* and *planks* (7:3–5). We all have planks in our eyes, so to speak; to judge people for the little specks stuck in their eyes, while we have big planks in our own, is arrogant and foolish.

Those with planks in their eyes can't see clearly. They are dangerously lacking in discernment. Since we all have this distorted perspective, we need to either be very humble or leave judging to God. We have a moral responsibility to discern between right and wrong, good and evil — but only if we are humbly aware that we will never be totally right — and sometimes we'll be dead wrong. We must remember that not only is our ability to judge limited but we are sinful people who will ourselves be judged one day.

## The Wise and Foolish Builders

<sup>24</sup>“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup>But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

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

## Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

**8** When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. <sup>2</sup>A man with leprosy<sup>a</sup> came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

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

## The Faith of the Centurion

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

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

<sup>8</sup>The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup>For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

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

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

## Jesus Heals Many

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

<sup>a</sup> 2 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

## LINK (7:24–27) WISE MAN WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK

See Luke 6:47–49.

## LINK (8:2–4) MAN WITH LEPROSY

See Mark 1:40–44; Luke 5:12–14.

## WHY DID JESUS TOUCH THE LEPER? (8:3)

Though he upheld the spirit of the law, Jesus could be accused by his critics of breaking the letter of the Old Testament law: to touch anything or anyone ceremonially unclean (such as a leper) was forbidden (Lev 5:2–3). Since lepers were unclean, they were banished from the community and dressed as mourners grieving their own death (Lev 13:45–46). By touching an “untouchable,” Jesus demonstrated his authority over the law. He cared more about people’s needs than about religious ritual.

## WHY DIDN’T JESUS WANT ANYONE TO HEAR OF HIS MIRACLES? (8:4)

See the article *Why didn’t Jesus want anyone to know he was the Messiah?* (16:20; p. 1449).

## LINK (8:5–13) CENTURION

See Luke 7:1–10.

## WHY WAS JESUS AMAZED? (8:10)

Jesus was amazed that this Gentile seemed more spiritually aware than most Jews seemed to be. The only other time Jesus was said to be amazed was when he was amazed by the Jews’ lack of faith (Mk 6:6).

## WHO WERE THESE SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM? (8:12)

These *subjects* were Jews, in contrast to the *many* (Gentiles) in the previous verse. Though they were native to God’s promises, the Jews also needed faith. Faith is the prerequisite of eternal life, regardless of nationality.

## WHAT’S IN STORE FOR THOSE WHO TURN FROM GOD? (8:12)

Jesus used the word *darkness* to illustrate an existence apart from the light of God’s presence. The idea is expanded with other graphic words: *weeping* implies suffering; *gnashing of teeth* signifies despair.

## DID HEALING DEPEND ON THE CENTURION’S BELIEF? (8:13)

See *Why was faith necessary for Jesus to do miracles?* (13:58; p. 1445).

## LINK (8:14–16) PETER’S MOTHER-IN-LAW

See Mark 1:29–34; Luke 4:38–41.



**LINK (8:19–22) NO PLACE TO LAY HIS HEAD**

See Luke 9:57 – 60.

**WHY DID JESUS DISCOURAGE SOME PEOPLE FROM FOLLOWING HIM? (8:20)**

He wanted them to know it would cost them something to follow him so they would not discover later that there were additional requirements to being his disciples. He was ensuring that people were following him for the right reasons and not simply because they were seeking power, status or some other selfish agenda.

**MUST WE GIVE UP FAMILY TO BE LOYAL TO JESUS? (8:21–22)**

This disciple's father most likely was still alive. Jews understood the command to *honor your father and your mother* (Ex 20:12) to mean caring for their elderly parents and giving them a proper burial. Apparently, this man had not yet put his commitment to Jesus above these cultural expectations. Some suggest the disciple may have used an expression used for putting things off: "Let me wait until my father reaches the end of his life (which, by the way, could be years from now)."

**LINK (8:23–27) A FURIOUS STORM**

See Mark 4:36 – 41; Luke 8:22 – 25. Matthew tells about Jesus calming another storm in Matthew 14:22 – 33.

**DOES HAVING FAITH MEAN WE SHOULD NEVER BE AFRAID? (8:26)**

No. Jesus meant that God is greater than whatever we are facing, and he is in control. Knowing God is present keeps fear from paralyzing us.

**WHY DON'T SOME DETAILS IN THIS ACCOUNT AGREE WITH THOSE IN MARK AND LUKE? (8:28; CF. MK 5:2; LK 8:27)**

It's not necessarily that the accounts disagree; it's that they stress different aspects of the story. Many think that while Matthew had the number of demoniacs right, Mark and Luke focused on only one of the men — probably the one who was most notorious and feared for the extreme degree to which he was demon possessed. See *Why does Matthew mention two blind men, while Mark and Luke mention only one?* (20:30; p. 1455).

**LINK (8:28–34) TWO DEMON-POSSESSED MEN**

See Mark 5:1 – 17; Luke 8:26 – 37.

**WHY WOULD DEMONS BEG TO GO INTO A HERD OF PIGS? (8:31)**

The reason is unclear. Some think demons, as spiritual beings, desire a physical body of some sort to inhabit. But these demons drove the crazed pigs to their death. Though a satisfactory answer may not be found, the point here is to demonstrate Jesus' power over the demons, not to explain demon possession.

**LINK (9:2–8) YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN**

See Mark 2:3 – 12; Luke 5:18 – 26.

<sup>16</sup>When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. <sup>17</sup>This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"He took up our infirmities  
and bore our diseases."<sup>a</sup>

**The Cost of Following Jesus**

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

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

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

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

**Jesus Calms the Storm**

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

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

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

**Jesus Restores Two Demon-Possessed Men**

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

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

<sup>32</sup>He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. <sup>33</sup>Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. <sup>34</sup>Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

**Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man**

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

<sup>a</sup> 17 Isaiah 53:4 (see Septuagint)

<sup>b</sup> 28 Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; other manuscripts *Gerasenes*

<sup>3</sup>At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”

<sup>4</sup>Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? <sup>5</sup>Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’ <sup>6</sup>But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” <sup>7</sup>Then the man got up and went home. <sup>8</sup>When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

### The Calling of Matthew

<sup>9</sup>As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

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

<sup>12</sup>On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>13</sup>But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’<sup>a</sup> For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

### Jesus Questioned About Fasting

<sup>14</sup>Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”

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

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

### Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

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

<sup>20</sup>Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. <sup>21</sup>She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

<sup>22</sup>Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

<sup>23</sup>When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, <sup>24</sup>he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed

### WHY DID THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW BECOME UPSET? (9:3)

According to Rabbinic teaching, the only one who can forgive sin is God himself. The statement that Jesus made was an indirect way of claiming his equality with God, which was blasphemy to the Jews.

### WHO WERE THESE TAX COLLECTORS? (9:9–10)

They were a group of Jews despised by other Jews for collaborating with the Roman government that ruled over them. Tax collectors paid the authorities for the privilege of collecting taxes; then they overcharged people, skimming off the top to line their own pockets. As a result, other Jews saw Jewish tax collectors as both traitors and thieves.

### LINK (9:9–13) MATTHEW GOT UP AND FOLLOWED HIM

See Mark 2:14–17; Luke 5:27–32.

### SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST? (9:14–15)

Jesus compared his time with his disciples to a wedding feast. Since he is no longer physically among us, it is appropriate to fast—not because it is commanded (as in the Old Testament) but because it is beneficial to our spiritual development. See *Does God want us to fast?* (6:18; p. 1430).

### LINK (9:14–17) YOUR DISCIPLES DO NOT FAST

See Mark 2:18–22; Luke 5:33–39.

### HOW DID WINESKINS WORK? (9:17)

Wineskins were flexible bags made of animal skins sewn in the shape of a bottle. At first they were soft and pliable, but with age they became brittle. Since wine gives off gases and expands as it undergoes the process of fermentation, a wineskin had to stretch to accommodate the expanding wine. Non-elastic, old skins would burst during the fermentation process. Jesus used this as a metaphor: *old wineskins* represented the religious traditions of the Pharisees, which were unable to accommodate the *new wine* of the kingdom of God.

### LINK (9:18–26) YOUR FAITH HAS HEALED YOU

See Mark 5:22–43; Luke 8:41–56.

### WILL WE BE HEALED IF WE HAVE FAITH? (9:22)

Jesus never taught that faith automatically brings healing. In Jesus’ 35 miracles recorded in the Gospels, no formula to guarantee healing can be found. See *Does God guarantee healing from any disease?* (Ps 103:3; p. 878) and *Is healing guaranteed?* (Jas 5:15–16; p. 181).

### WHY WERE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND A NOISY CROWD AT A FUNERAL? (9:23)

At ancient Near Eastern funerals, mourners vented their sorrow without reservation. In fact, more noise expressed greater grief, so the culture expected professional wailers to be hired to better help a family grieve. Music was commonly used, as it is today, to enhance the emotions during either festive celebrations or times of sorrow.

### WHY DID JESUS SAY THE DEAD GIRL WAS ONLY ASLEEP? (9:24)

People today use “passed away” as a euphemism for death; the Bible uses *asleep* in the

<sup>a</sup> 13 Hosea 6:6

same way (Jn 11:11–14; 1Co 11:30; 15:51; 1Th 4:13–15). Jesus spoke of death as sleep because he possesses authority to overturn it. To those belonging to Jesus, death is only a slumber until he raises them when he returns.

### WHY KEEP THIS MIRACLE QUIET? (9:30)

See the article *Why didn't Jesus want anyone to know he was the Messiah?* (16:20; p. 1449).

### WERE THE PHARISEES CONNECTING JESUS WITH DEMONS? (9:34)

They were attempting to. Jesus was not only a mystery to the Pharisees but also a threat to their authority. They had to destroy his reputation. The fastest and most efficient way to do so was to cast doubt in the minds of the people. Jesus later (12:24–37) showed how ridiculous the Pharisees' statement was: why would Satan try to destroy himself?

### HOW WERE THE CROWDS HARASSED AND HELPLESS? (9:35–38)

The crowds to which Jesus spoke were made up of common people, and they were burdened for multiple reasons: (1) They were prisoners in their own land, since the Romans had taken over Palestine. (2) They were overtaxed and needed to work overtime to pay their dues. (3) Most of them were farmers and were worn out by hard work in the fields. (4) Most of them were poor. (5) They could never live up to the rules and regulations of the Pharisees, so they felt hopeless to become right with God. In short, they had wearied souls.

### LINK (10:2–4) THE NAMES OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

See Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16.

### WHY WITHHOLD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM FROM THE GENTILES AND SAMARITANS? (10:5)

Jesus' intent was not to exclude but to prioritize. God's plan of salvation originated with the Jewish people, and Jesus the Messiah was a Jew. Later Jesus commissioned his disciples to go to the entire world (28:19; Ac 1:4–8).

### IS IT WRONG TO USE OUR OWN SUPPLIES OR MONEY TO ADVANCE JESUS' MISSION? (10:9–10)

Jesus wanted the Twelve to be completely dependent on God for their provision. He wanted them to see that God would provide for them through the hospitality of others. In fact, the New Testament churches were repeatedly encouraged to support those who ministered to them (Php 4:14–19; 1Ti 5:17–18; 3Jn 5–8). A personal lack of funds or supplies should not prevent us from advancing the gospel.

at him. <sup>25</sup>After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. <sup>26</sup>News of this spread through all that region.

### Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute

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

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

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

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

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

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

### The Workers Are Few

<sup>35</sup>Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

### Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup>"Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts — <sup>10</sup>no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. <sup>11</sup>What-

<sup>a</sup> The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

ever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the home, give it your greeting. <sup>13</sup>If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

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

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

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

<sup>26</sup>“So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. <sup>27</sup>What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. <sup>28</sup>Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.<sup>a</sup> <sup>30</sup>And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

<sup>36</sup> a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>37</sup>“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or

<sup>a</sup> 29 Or will; or knowledge <sup>b</sup> 36 Micah 7:6

### WHY SHAKE THE DUST OFF [THEIR] FEET? (10:14)

Jews returning to Israel from a foreign land shook the dust from their sandals and clothing to avoid defiling the land they considered holy. The disciples were delivering a similar warning to the people of Israel. If they rejected the message of Jesus the Messiah, they would face the same judgment as unbelieving foreigners.

### HOW ARE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS LIKE SHEEP AMONG WOLVES? (10:16)

Some think this illustrates the danger to which Jesus’ disciples would be exposed. Others place the emphasis on the character qualities of the two animals: the sheep-like response of the disciples and the ferocious reactions of the religious and political leaders.

### HOW SHREWD ARE SNAKES? (10:16)

In the ancient Near East, the serpent was a symbol of cunning whose wisdom was worth emulating. Most likely Jesus was quoting a proverb familiar to his listeners.

### WHAT’S WRONG WITH PREPARING A LEGAL DEFENSE? (10:19)

Nothing. Jesus was saying that we don’t have to worry when we face legal battles because of our stand for him. Though we may have legal counsel and a prepared defense, our trust ultimately must be in God. This doesn’t mean, however, that courts and authorities will always rule in our favor.

### LINK (10:19–22) YOU WILL BE HATED BY EVERYONE BECAUSE OF ME

See Mark 13:11–13; Luke 21:12–17.

### WHO IS BEELZEBUL? (10:25)

He is the prince of demons (12:24), that is, Satan. Baal was a Canaanite deity; the name was expanded to Beelzebul (meaning “Exalted” or “Prince Baal”). Baal was a Canaanite god meaning “lord” or “master.” An early related form was Baal-Zebul. The Jews ridiculed the idol and its worshipers by changing the name to Baal-Zebub (e.g., 2Ki 1:2) — meaning “lord of the flies — or Baal-Zebul or Beelzebul (e.g., here) — meaning “lord of the dung” or “lord of the dung hill.”

### LINK (10:26–33) YOU ARE WORTH MORE THAN MANY SPARROWS

See Luke 12:2–9.

### WHY WOULD THE PRINCE OF PEACE BRING A SWORD? (10:34)

The following verses explain what Jesus meant. The extreme loyalty that Jesus was asking of his disciples would cause some of them to lose their family ties. Jesus lived in a society in which a person’s identity was tied not only to his or her relationship with family but also to his or her relationship with society. Any deviance would be shameful to both and would lead to ostracism, banishment and complete exclusion. The image of the sword here expresses the emotional pain that some disciples would experience when separated from family and friends.

### WHY WOULD JESUS WANT TO BREAK UP FAMILIES? (10:35–37)

These verses illustrate one of the harsher truths of God’s kingdom: not everyone will respond to the gospel. Hearts full of prejudice, hate and pride will resist Jesus’ offer of



peace. Because many will reject it, the message will divide people, families and nations. See **Must we give up family to be loyal to Jesus?** (8:21–22; p. 1434).

### WHAT LITTLE ONES WAS JESUS TALKING ABOUT? (10:42)

The Greek word used here means “little” in size or “young” in age — but it can also mean “insignificant,” “lowly” or “unimportant.” Using this wide-ranging word, Jesus’ words can include children, outcasts and the ostracized — all the “nobodies” of society.

### LINK (11:2–19) SHOULD WE EXPECT SOMEONE ELSE

See Luke 7:18–35.

### WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, DOES DOUBT HAVE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE? (11:3)

Even people with strong faith ask tough questions in stressful times. John was suffering unjustly, so it is not surprising that he sought answers from Jesus. Further, since Jesus’ actions as Messiah differed from what many Jews expected, reports of Jesus’ activities must have puzzled John. Jesus’ answer was intended to bring reassurance: the miracles Jesus performed gave evidence that he was indeed *the one who was to come*.

### HOW CAN THOSE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BE GREATER THAN JOHN? (11:11)

Jesus affirmed both the greatness of John the Baptist and the greater privileges kingdom citizens enjoy. Great as he was, John served only as a forerunner of the Messiah who announced that the kingdom was near. Under the new covenant, we enjoy the fullest benefits of kingdom life (Col 1:13–14).

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE? (11:12)

The *violent people* Jesus mentioned in this verse may refer to the corrupt people like the Pharisees and Herodians who tried to control the kingdom through violence or political force. Alternatively (see the NIV text note), Jesus may have meant that it takes courageous dedication to be part of his advancing kingdom. The poor in spirit will possess the kingdom, but Christlike meekness includes bold, aggressive obedience (Lk 6:46; 9:57–62).

### WHY WERE JESUS AND JOHN SO DIFFERENT? (11:18–19)

They were not really as different as their detractors made them appear. John’s simple lifestyle fit his message of repentance and self-denial, while Jesus’ attendance at public dinners expressed his gracious willingness to mingle with those who needed him. John and Jesus were neither demon-possessed nor over-indulgent, as their opponents charged; they simply refused to play along with their critics’ childish games.

daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup>Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

<sup>40</sup>“Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. <sup>42</sup>And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

## Jesus and John the Baptist

**11** After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.<sup>a</sup>

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

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

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

“‘I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you.’<sup>c</sup>

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

<sup>16</sup>“To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

<sup>17</sup>“‘We played the pipe for you,  
and you did not dance;  
we sang a dirge,  
and you did not mourn.’

<sup>18</sup>For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ <sup>19</sup>The Son of Man came eating and drink-

<sup>a</sup> 1 Greek in their towns <sup>b</sup> 5 The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin. <sup>c</sup> 10 Mal. 3:1 <sup>d</sup> 12 Or been forcefully advancing

ing, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

### Woe on Unrepentant Towns

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

### The Father Revealed in the Son

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

<sup>27</sup>"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

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

### Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

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

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

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

<sup>a</sup> 23 That is, the realm of the dead <sup>b</sup> 7 Hosea 6:6

### WILL JUDGMENT BE LESS SEVERE FOR SOME THAN FOR OTHERS? (11:22)

Some sins may deserve more severe punishment because greater knowledge implies greater accountability. According to Jesus, a servant who knowingly disobeys his master deserves more punishment than one who disobeys in ignorance (Lk 12:47–48). God's judgment is completely just. In the past he extended special mercy to those who acted in ignorance, but now he calls everyone to repent (Ac 17:30; Ro 2:4–11).

### LINK (11:25–27) I PRAISE YOU, FATHER

See Luke 10:21–22.

### WHY USE A SYMBOL OF WORK AND SLAVERY TO PICTURE REST? (11:29)

Farmers used yokes to bind their oxen together, so yokes came to represent labor, service and submission to authority. Yokes are oppressive when the ones in charge are harsh and cruel, but the Lord's commands are *not burdensome* (1Jn 5:3). Jesus' servants can find rest and refreshment in fellowship with him even when the work is difficult and stressful.

### DID JESUS, LORD OF THE SABBATH, CHANGE THE RULES? (12:1–8)

No, but he insisted that some values were being ignored. The Pharisees were so particular about nonessentials that they failed to see the deeper truths. Minimal food preparation on the Sabbath did not offend God. Doing good on the Sabbath did not violate the spirit of the law. Ultimately, Jesus offered himself as the central overriding principle: the *Lord of the Sabbath* was qualified to say what honored God and what did not.

### LINK (12:1–8) THE SON OF MAN IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

See Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5.

### WHAT WAS SO BAD ABOUT GETTING FOOD ON THE SABBATH? (12:2)

Jesus' disciples were violating the Pharisees' detailed rules regarding Sabbath rest. God's law did forbid working on the Sabbath, but Jewish traditions defined what work entailed in stifling detail. The Pharisees considered it wrong even to pluck a bit of grain and rub it in one's hand before eating it. In their opinion, those actions constituted reaping and threshing. But God intended Sabbath keeping to be a blessing, not a burden (Mk 2:27).

### LINK (12:9–14) MAN WITH A SHRIVELED HAND

See Mark 3:1–6; Luke 6:6–11.

### WHY DIDN'T JESUS WANT PEOPLE TO TELL OTHERS WHO HE WAS? (12:16)

See the article *Why didn't Jesus want anyone to know he was the Messiah?* (16:20; p. 1449).

### HOW DID JESUS' ANONYMITY FULFILL ISAIAH'S PROPHECY? (12:17)

Isaiah described the coming Messiah as one who would *not quarrel or cry out* and as someone who was not publicly heard (v. 19). Though Jesus often confronted the religious leaders, his first goal was to bring the kingdom of God to people in need. His ministry brought compassion, healing and forgiveness.

### WERE THE PHARISEES CONNECTING JESUS WITH DEMONS? (12:24)

They were attempting to. Jesus was not only a mystery to the Pharisees but also a threat to their authority. They had to destroy his reputation. The fastest and most efficient way to do so was to cast doubt in the minds of the people. Jesus showed how ridiculous the Pharisees' statement was (vv. 25–29): Why would Satan try to destroy himself?

### LINK (12:25–29) IF SATAN DRIVES OUT SATAN

See Mark 3:23–27; Luke 11:17–22.

### WHO COULD DRIVE OUT DEMONS BESIDES JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES? (12:27)

Evidently there were Jewish exorcists who drove out demons—or at least claimed to do so. Acts 19:13 mentions a group of Jews who *went around driving out evil spirits*. Others not associated with the apostles also cast out demons in Jesus' name (Lk 9:49–50).

### CAN SOME SINS BE FORGIVEN IN THE AGE TO COME? (12:32)

This does not imply there will be a "second chance" to receive forgiveness after death (cf. Heb 9:27–28). The statement simply means that some sins will not be forgiven either now or in the future. By *the age to come*, Jesus may have meant the time of the new covenant, which began with his death and resurrection.

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

<sup>13</sup>Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. <sup>14</sup>But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

### God's Chosen Servant

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

- <sup>18</sup>"Here is my servant whom I have chosen,  
the one I love, in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him,  
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.  
<sup>19</sup>He will not quarrel or cry out;  
no one will hear his voice in the streets.  
<sup>20</sup>A bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,  
till he has brought justice through to victory.  
<sup>21</sup>In his name the nations will put their hope."<sup>a</sup>

### Jesus and Beelzebul

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

<sup>24</sup>But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

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

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

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

<sup>33</sup>"Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by

<sup>a</sup> 21 Isaiah 42:1–4

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

### The Sign of Jonah

<sup>38</sup>Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

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

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

### Jesus’ Mother and Brothers

<sup>46</sup>While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him.

### WHAT WILL EVERY EMPTY WORD COST US? (12:36–37)

Words are important because they reveal the inner attitude of our hearts. Just as saving faith must be confessed with boldness and truth, empty words (which in the context or vv. 31–32 may mean “blasphemous” words) will bring tragic consequences because they spring from a faithless heart.

### WHAT’S WRONG WITH WANTING EVIDENCE? (12:39)

Nothing, but we must be willing to accept the evidence once it is presented. Jesus repeatedly offered miraculous evidence to substantiate his claims, but he refused to perform miracles just for show. Some Pharisees and teachers of the law refused to believe despite all the evidence.

### LINK (12:39–42) SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH

See Matthew 16:4 and Luke 11:29–32. Jesus used the experience of Jonah as a metaphor for his own death, three-day entombment and resurrection. Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of a fish (Jnh 1:17).

### WHY CAN’T AN IMPURE SPIRIT REST IN ARID PLACES? (12:43)

Evil spirits evidently prefer to live in bodies (8:31–32). Since few houses exist in a desert, Jesus used *arid places* to picture the restless discomfort of a disembodied evil spirit seeking a dwelling place.

### IS LOYALTY TO OTHER BELIEVERS MORE IMPORTANT THAN LOYALTY TO ONE’S FAMILY? (12:46–50)

Jesus emphasized that membership in God’s spiritual family, not physical family heritage, is what’s important. He wasn’t denying his love for his family, but he used their presence to contrast earthly loyalties with the more important eternal allegiance.

## WHAT IS BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SPIRIT?

### 12:31–32

Jesus gave solemn warning in these verses to people whose hardheartedness placed them on the brink of disaster. *Blasphemy against the Spirit* evidently is not just a one-time offense; rather, it is an ongoing attitude of rebellion — a stubborn way of life that continually resists, rejects and insults God’s Spirit. This is what makes it, in effect, an *eternal sin* (Mk 3:29).

Some other helpful points to keep in mind:

1. Mark notes that Jesus gave this teaching because his opponents claimed he had an *impure spirit* (Mk 3:30). The Pharisees were so hardhearted that they observed the miraculous works of God’s Son and then accused him of being Satan’s coworker — a tragic, calloused contradiction of the truth.
2. Many people expressed honest uncertainty about Jesus during his earthly ministry because his identity as the Messiah only gradually dawned on them. Words spoken against the Son of Man could therefore be forgiven. Since the day of Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit’s ongoing ministry through the revealed Word offers people the opportunity to repent and accept the gospel. Thus, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to reject all that God is doing to bring us to salvation through Christ Jesus.
3. *Blasphemy against the Spirit* is unforgivable not because of something done unintentionally in the past but because of something being done deliberately and unrelentingly in the present. Jesus’ warning was motivated by love. If we are willing to repent, God is willing to forgive (1Jn 1:9).



**LINK (12:46–50) WHO IS MY MOTHER, AND WHO ARE MY BROTHERS?**

See Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21.

**LINK (13:1–15) HE TOLD THEM MANY THINGS IN PARABLES**

See Mark 4:1–12; Luke 8:4–10.

**WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM SOIL? (13:3–23)**

The parable of the sower teaches that the gospel won't be equally received by everyone. At least three things can interfere: (1) sinful opposition, (2) outside persecution and (3) peer pressure and the attraction of the world's pleasures. But if the Word does take root, it will produce a fruitful life.

**DOES THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER TEACH THAT SOME WILL LOSE THEIR SALVATION? (13:3–23)**

The parable of the sower describes levels of spiritual receptivity to the gospel, not states of salvation. Jesus explained the parable in verses 18–23. The different soils represent respectively unprepared, impulsive and distracted people whose hearts have not fully received the message of salvation. The last soil mentioned is the well-cultivated soil—the heart ready to be totally transformed by God.

**LINK (13:16–17) BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES . . . AND YOUR EARS**

See Luke 10:23–24.

**WHAT DID THE PROPHETS AND RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE LONG TO SEE AND HEAR? (13:16–17)**

The prophets of old spoke of a time when the Messiah would come to restore God's kingdom on earth. Jesus fulfilled all of their aspirations, although Jesus' Messiahship was different from what first-century Jews envisioned. He was not the military ruler who would restore Israel's splendor, for his kingdom is *not of this world* (Jn 18:36).

**LINK (13:18–23) PARABLE OF THE SOWER**

See Mark 4:13–20; Luke 8:11–15.

<sup>47</sup>Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

<sup>48</sup>He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” <sup>49</sup>Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. <sup>50</sup>For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

**The Parable of the Sower**

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

<sup>10</sup>The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

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

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

<sup>14</sup>In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

<sup>15</sup>For this people's heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.’<sup>a</sup>

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

<sup>18</sup>“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup>When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup>The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup>But since they have no root, they last only a short

<sup>a</sup> <sup>15</sup> Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)

time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>22</sup>The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup>But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

### The Parable of the Weeds

<sup>24</sup>Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup>But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup>When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

<sup>27</sup>“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

<sup>28</sup>“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

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

### The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

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

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

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

<sup>a</sup> 33 Or about 27 kilograms

### HOW DOES THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS ILLUSTRATE THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN? (13:24–30)

This refers to the Lord’s reign over his people — a realm in which God’s will is done. The other Gospel writers generally used the synonymous phrase *kingdom of God*, but Matthew generally used *kingdom of heaven*, perhaps because his original audience was comprised of mostly Jews, who avoided writing the name of God.

### LINK (13:31–32) THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE A MUSTARD SEED

See Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19.

### WHY DID JESUS TELL THIS STORY ABOUT A MUSTARD SEED? (13:31–32)

Seeds grow quietly but persistently. Like seeds, the growth of God’s kingdom is the result of divine power, not human effort. The mustard seed illustrates the amazing growth of God’s kingdom, which will reach across every conceivable barrier before its growth is complete (Eze 17:22–24; 31:3–14; Da 4:10–12).

### IS THE MUSTARD SEED REALLY THE SMALLEST SEED? (13:31–32)

It is highly unlikely that Jesus was discussing all plant life on Earth when he made this statement. He was more likely referring to the black mustard seed, which was the smallest seed that people in Israel planted.

### LINK (13:33) THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE YEAST

See Luke 13:20–21.

## WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES? 13:10–13

On one level, parables were not difficult to understand. Jesus masterfully taught moral principles by using simple, down-to-earth illustrations about everyday objects familiar to farmers, fishermen, merchants and others in his audience. At the same time, the spiritual significance of Jesus’ parables seemed obscure (even incomprehensible) to those who opposed Jesus or who simply were not attuned to his mission and message.

People with ears to hear (Mk 4:9), that is, those seriously seeking the truth, could dig deeper and find profound spiritual insight. For others, Jesus’ parables were little more than fascinating but puzzling riddles. Those who were resistant to his message did not have the interest or the energy to pursue the deeper truths found in his parables.

Jesus frequently used parables when speaking to large crowds, but in private he provided his disciples with more detailed explanations (Mk 4:33–34). At this point in Jesus’ ministry, it was God’s intent that certain secrets of the kingdom be kept somewhat hidden from the many casual observers, from the overzealous but poorly informed supporters and from outright opponents. Sometimes, however, Jesus did use more direct teaching methods (cf. Mt 5:1–7:27).

"I will open my mouth in parables,  
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the  
world."<sup>a</sup>

### The Parable of the Weeds Explained

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

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

<sup>40</sup>"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup>They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

### The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

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

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

### The Parable of the Net

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

<sup>51</sup>"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked.

"Yes," they replied.

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

### A Prophet Without Honor

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

### WHY DOES GOD ALLOW HIS KINGDOM TO BE INFILTRATED WITH THOSE WHO DO EVIL? (13:41)

God's love and patience delay his final judgment to allow more people the opportunity to repent and be forgiven (2Pe 3:9). But for those who do not repent, God's judgment is sure.

### IS HELL LITERALLY A PLACE OF FIRE, OR WAS JESUS SPEAKING FIGURATIVELY? (13:42,50)

Whether or not hell is a literal place of fire, Jesus clearly expressed several things: (1) Hell is a real place. (2) It is a place of unbearable torment. (3) Its residents have no way out. (4) It is the eternal destination of those who are not in Christ Jesus. (5) God does not reside there.

### MUST WE GIVE UP EVERYTHING WE OWN FOR THE KINGDOM? (13:44–46)

We do not need to renounce all our possessions to obtain life with God. Jesus urges us to make the kingdom of God our highest priority (6:33). If any earthly possession or ambition becomes more important than a person's commitment to follow Jesus, then Jesus cannot be Lord in his or her life.

### HOW DOES THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN OFFER OLD AND NEW TREASURES? (13:52)

People who have become disciples in the kingdom of heaven have in their hearts a storeroom of fresh new insights as well as the time-tested wisdom of the ages. Like hospitable homeowners who share their belongings, both old and new, effective teachers refresh others with both wisdom gained in the past and lessons gained through current study and experience.

### LINK (13:54–58) ISN'T THIS THE CARPENTER'S SON?

See Mark 6:1–6.

<sup>a</sup> 35 Psalm 78:2

Where then did this man get all these things?" <sup>57</sup>And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home."

<sup>58</sup>And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

### John the Baptist Beheaded

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

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

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

### Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

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

<sup>15</sup>As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

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

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

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

### Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>22</sup>Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>23</sup>After he had dismissed them, he went

#### WHY WAS FAITH NECESSARY FOR JESUS TO DO MIRACLES? (13:58)

God has unlimited power, but it pleases him to exercise his power in response to our faith. Jesus did not force divine blessings on people who openly rejected him. He often performed miracles for those who already believed, and sometimes his miracles led to faith in those who did not previously believe (Jn 11:45; 12:9–11; 14:11). But Jesus would not perform miracles simply for his own personal benefit.

#### WHO WAS THIS HEROD THE TETRARCH? (14:1)

This was Herod Antipas, who wanted to kill Jesus (Lk 13:31–32) and before whom Jesus eventually appeared during part of his trial (Lk 23:6–12). His father, Herod the Great, ruled during the time of Jesus' birth. Technically, the term *tetrarch* meant someone who governed one-fourth of a country, but sometimes the title was used simply as a synonym for *prince* or *king*. Herod Antipas reigned over the regions of Galilee and Perea (see *Setting of the Gospels* [1:1; p. 1421]) from approximately 4 BC to AD 39.

#### LINK (14:1–12) JOHN BEHEADED

See Mark 6:14–29.

#### LINK (14:13–21) FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD AND TWO FISH

See Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13. Matthew tells about Jesus feeding 4,000 in Matthew 15:32–38.

#### HOW MUCH FOOD DID JESUS PRODUCE? (14:19–21)

Verse 21 explains that 5,000 men plus women and children were present. It is safe to assume that there were about as many women as men and an average of two children per couple. Therefore, Jesus spoke to a crowd of at least 15,000 to 20,000 people. He produced enough food to satisfy all of them.

#### LINK (14:22–32) WALKING ON THE LAKE

See Mark 6:45–51; John 6:16–21.

#### WHY DID JESUS NEED TO PRAY? (14:23)

Jesus is God, but he is not the Father nor is he the Holy Spirit. While on Earth Jesus did nothing on his own but spoke only what the Father taught him (Jn 8:28) and did miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 5:17). Because he lived in constant communication with the heavenly Father, Jesus' consistent prayer life provided a living example for his disciples and enabled him to identify with our humanity (Heb 4:14–16). He demonstrated what it means to live in complete harmony with the Father's will and to *pray continually* (1Th 5:17).

### WHY DID JESUS WALK ON THE WATER? (14:25)

This incident served to strengthen the disciples' trust in Jesus at a time when they probably felt disappointed and confused by his earlier refusal to be made king (Jn 6:14–15).

### WHY DID PETER THINK HE COULD WALK ON THE WATER? (14:28)

Perhaps he sought further confirmation of the Lord's identity and power. Peter's struggling faith led him to do things that seem impulsive and even reckless. On other occasions he willingly risked his own safety and comfort to be near Jesus (e.g., 26:35; Jn 18:10–11; 21:7).

### WHY DID PEOPLE WANT TO TOUCH THE EDGE OF JESUS' CLOAK? (14:36)

Many people of that time, both Jews and Gentiles, believed that the power of a holy man such as Jesus would transfer into whatever he touched. As in the case of the hemorrhaging woman (Mk 5:25–34), Jesus affirmed that only faith brought healing, not contact with his clothes.

### WHY WAS WASHING BEFORE MEALS SO IMPORTANT? (15:2)

As a matter of religious custom, the Pharisees insisted on special hand-washing ceremonies to remove the contaminating effects of any possible contact with "unclean" persons or objects. This practice probably was derived from Old Testament teachings that prohibited contact with *unclean* things (Lev 5:2–3) and prescribed special washings for the priests (Ex 30:17–21). Jesus followed God's law, but he felt no obligation to observe all the traditions of the elders (Lk 11:37–39).

### HOW CAN WORSHIP BE IN VAIN? (15:9)

Empty rituals strip worship of its meaning and power, for God desires worshipers who worship him *in the Spirit and in truth* (Jn 4:23–24). Naturally, worship is vain if it is directed toward a false god. Worship can also be vain when it consists of a rote adherence to human rules and teachings—without honest, thoughtful, heartfelt praise to God.

### DID JESUS INTENTIONALLY OFFEND THE PHARISEES? (15:12–14)

Hypocrites are offended by the truth. As a *double-edged sword* (Heb 4:12; Rev 1:16), truth can bring either life or death. Jesus' intention was not to offend the Pharisees as much as to confront them with the truth and bring them to repentance.

up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup>and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

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

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

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

<sup>29</sup>"Come," he said.

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

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

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

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

## That Which Defiles

**15** Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, <sup>2</sup>"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

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

<sup>8</sup> "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

<sup>9</sup> They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.'<sup>c</sup>"

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

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

<sup>13</sup>He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. <sup>14</sup>Leave them;

<sup>a</sup> 4 Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16

<sup>b</sup> 4 Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9

<sup>c</sup> 9 Isaiah 29:13



they are blind guides.<sup>a</sup> If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

<sup>15</sup>Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.”

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

### The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

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

<sup>23</sup>Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

<sup>24</sup>He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

<sup>25</sup>The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

<sup>26</sup>He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

<sup>27</sup>“Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

### Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

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

<sup>32</sup>Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”

<sup>33</sup>His disciples answered, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?”

<sup>34</sup>“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.”

<sup>35</sup>He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. <sup>36</sup>Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. <sup>37</sup>They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>38</sup>The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children.

<sup>a</sup> 14 Some manuscripts *blind guides of the blind*

### WHY DID JESUS GO INTO GENTILE TERRITORY? (15:21)

The reason is unclear. Jesus may have gone to Tyre and Sidon because he was interested in ministering to non-Jews. See *Jesus Visits Syrian Phoenicia* (Mk 7:24; p. 1487). However, he clearly saw the *lost sheep of Israel* (Mt 15:24) as his main focus at this point in his ministry. Eventually he sent his disciples to the whole world (28:19–20).

### LINK (15:21–28) WOMAN, YOU HAVE GREAT FAITH

See Mark 7:24–30.

### WHY DID JESUS RESIST HELPING THIS GENTILE WOMAN? (15:23–26)

Jesus was not forcing this Gentile woman to beg but was perhaps probing the depth of her faith in the God of Israel. Or his response to the woman’s persistence may have been a lesson about the universal, responsive love of God. Also, Jesus’ use of the word *dogs*, commonly used by Jews to describe Gentiles, may have been sarcasm — his way to make the point that demeaning others is alien to the heart of God.

### LINK (15:29–31) GREAT CROWDS CAME TO HIM

See Mark 7:31–37.

### LINK (15:32–39) I DO NOT WANT TO SEND THEM AWAY HUNGRY

See Mark 8:1–10.

### WAS THIS MIRACLE DIFFERENT THAN JESUS’ FEEDING OF THE 5,000? (15:32–39)

Yes. The feeding of the 5,000 occurred in a Jewish setting, while the feeding of the 4,000 happened in the Greco-Roman region of the Decapolis. As a direct result of the demoniac’s proclamation (Mk 5:20; 6:30–44), large crowds were ready to hear Jesus’ message. The leftovers filled seven baskets (Mt 15:37), a symbol of the seven pagan nations. At the feeding of the 5,000, 12 baskets remained (14:20) — a symbol of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus declared through these miracles that he was the Savior of all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.

### WHY DIDN’T THE DISCIPLES REMEMBER HOW JESUS HAD FED THE CROWD OF MORE THAN 5,000? (15:33)

No doubt they did remember Jesus’ previous miracle of feeding more than 5,000 people. Their question probably reflected their usual custom of asking Jesus for help when problems arose.

### LINK (16:1–12) THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES . . . TESTED HIM

See the parallel passage in Mark 8:11–21. This was not the first time they wanted proof. See *What's wrong with wanting evidence?* (12:39; p. 1441).

### HOW WERE THE TEACHINGS OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES LIKE YEAST? (16:11–12)

Yeast symbolized a quiet, but potent, rapidly spreading influence. Here Jesus was referring to the negative way corrupt or hypocritical teachings can spread and weaken his followers from within.

### JESUS VISITS CAESAREA PHILIPPI (16:13)



### LINK (16:13–16) YOU ARE THE MESSIAH

See Mark 8:27–29; Luke 9:18–20.

### ON WHAT ROCK DID JESUS BUILD HIS CHURCH? (16:18)

Some believe Jesus meant that he would build his church on the rock-solid truth of his identity as the Son of God, which Peter had just acknowledged. However, the apostles played a crucial role in establishing the church's foundation (Eph 2:20). In fact Peter, whose nickname was given to him by Jesus and means "rock," may very well have been the first person to grasp the true identity of Jesus.

### WHAT ARE THE GATES OF HADES? (16:18)

Hades was the Greeks' designation for the dwelling place of departed spirits. Gates were more than entryways; they were symbols of power and authority. City gates were reinforced defensive structures and were used as gathering places where community leaders handled important legal matters (Dt 25:7).

### WHAT AUTHORITY DID JESUS GIVE TO PETER? (16:19)

Jesus gave Peter and the other apostles the authority to preach the gospel and thus open the door of his kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles (Ac 2:14–41; 10:22–48).

### WHAT CAN WE BIND AND LOOSE TODAY? (16:19)

We can *bind* and *loose* what the Lord has prohibited or permitted in Scripture (2Ti 3:16–17). To *bind* means to "forbid, refuse or prohibit;" to *loose* means to "permit or allow." Jesus intended that the apostles' inspired teaching should become the standard for our faith and

<sup>39</sup>After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

### The Demand for a Sign

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

<sup>2</sup>He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' <sup>3</sup>and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times." <sup>4</sup>A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

### The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

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

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

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

### Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

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

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

<sup>15</sup>"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

<sup>16</sup>Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

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

### Jesus Predicts His Death

<sup>21</sup>From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things

<sup>a</sup> 2,3 Some early manuscripts do not have *When evening comes . . . of the times.*

<sup>b</sup> 18 The Greek word for *Peter* means *rock*. <sup>c</sup> 18 That is, the realm of the dead

<sup>d</sup> 19 Or *will have been*

at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

<sup>22</sup>Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

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

<sup>24</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever wants to save their life<sup>a</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. <sup>26</sup>What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

<sup>28</sup>“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

### The Transfiguration

**17** After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup>There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup>Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

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

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

<sup>6</sup>When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” <sup>8</sup>When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

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

practice. God also gives special wisdom and power to the church during times of earnest prayer (Mt 18:17–20).

### LINK (16:21–28) SUFFER MANY THINGS

See Mark 8:31 — 9:1; Luke 9:22–27.

### WHY DID JESUS CALL PETER SATAN?

(16:23)

Peter’s suggestion that Jesus should not fulfill his mission of death and resurrection was not unlike the temptations Satan himself had presented to Jesus on an earlier occasion (4:1–11).

### WHAT DID A CROSS MEAN FOR PEOPLE OF JESUS’ DAY? (16:24)

This phrase probably startled Jesus’ listeners. A condemned criminal was usually forced to carry his cross, but Jesus laid down his life voluntarily. He asks us to do the same.

### HOW DID JESUS’ DISCIPLES LATER SEE JESUS COMING IN HIS KINGDOM? (16:28)

The kingdom may have come on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1–47). Or perhaps Jesus was referring to his transfiguration as a glimpse of his heavenly glory (Mt 17:1–8).

### LINK (17:1–8) HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM

See Luke 9:28–36.

### WHY WAS JESUS TRANSFIGURED? (17:2)

The disciples received a glimpse of Jesus’ heavenly splendor and majesty. And God’s spoken words powerfully reinforced Jesus’ identity as the Messiah.

### WHY DID GOD BRING MOSES AND ELIJAH BACK FROM THE DEAD? (17:3)

This was not a séance or an example of reincarnation. This event linked Jesus to the religious heritage of the Jews. Moses represented the law and Elijah represented the prophets.

## WHY DIDN’T JESUS WANT ANYONE TO KNOW HE WAS THE MESSIAH? 16:20

Practical issues may have caused him to shun popularity. The crowds were already becoming large and unmanageable, and at times Jesus needed to get away (Mk 6:31–32). At other times, he had to be firm in leaving one group of people so he could minister to another (Lk 4:42–43).

Another factor may have been that large crowds would have attracted even more attention from the religious authorities who already opposed his ministry. It would have made sense for Jesus to hide his identity so he would not be arrested before the appropriate time. Jesus had work to finish before going to the cross.

Jesus also needed to spend more time with his disciples, who needed his special revelation if they were to understand Jesus’ mission (Mk 9:30–31). Faulty ideas about the Messiah were common among the Jews, who expected an earthly or militaristic kingdom. It’s obvious the disciples did not understand Jesus’ mission, for at this time even Peter found it difficult to accept Jesus’ predictions of his coming suffering (Mt 16:22).



### WHY DID THE DISCIPLES ASK ABOUT ELIJAH? (17:10)

Elijah's appearance with Jesus on the mountain may have reminded them of a familiar prophecy in Malachi 4:5, which said that Elijah would come *before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes* (that is, before the coming of the Messiah). The *teachers of the law* evidently used the idea that *Elijah must come first* to argue against Jesus' identity as the Messiah. Jesus then explained to the disciples that John the Baptist had fulfilled Malachi's prophecy (Mt 17:11–13).

### LINK (17:11–13) ELIJAH COMES

See Mark 9:2–13.

### LINK (17:14–19) LORD, HAVE MERCY ON MY SON

See Mark 9:14–28; Luke 9:37–42.

### WHY DID JESUS USE SUCH HARSH WORDS? (17:17)

Jesus was expressing normal human emotions. He was troubled by the lack of faith in the disciples (v. 20), who thought their healing power depended on Jesus' bodily presence. They still did not understand who Jesus really was.

### WHY DIDN'T THE DISCIPLES HAVE ENOUGH FAITH? (17:20)

Faith was a struggle for them, just as it is for us today. Jesus urged his disciples not to wallow in unbelief but to recognize how God can use even a tiny amount of faith. Our faith may seem small and insignificant (especially in times of hardship and testing), but as our faith grows, so does our potential to overcome great obstacles.

### WHAT WAS THIS TWO-DRACHMA TEMPLE TAX? (17:24)

Jewish leaders collected taxes to pay for the upkeep of the temple and its services. *Drachmas* were Greek silver coins, each worth about a day's wages. Two of them were equivalent to the half-shekel required under the Hebrew monetary system (Ex 30:13–15; 2Ch 24:5–6).

### LINK (18:1–5) WHO . . . IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

See Mark 9:33–37; Luke 9:46–48.

### SHOULD ADULTS ACT LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN? (18:3)

Jesus doesn't call people to childish behavior but to childlike faith. The qualities of humility, trust, receptivity and a lack of self-sufficiency all characterize the person of faith. The kingdom of God is not earned by human effort but is received in childlike trust as a gift of the mercy and grace of God.

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

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

### Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

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

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

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

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

### Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

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

### The Temple Tax

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

<sup>25</sup>"Yes, he does," he replied.

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

<sup>26</sup>"From others," Peter answered.

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

### The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

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

<sup>2</sup>He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. <sup>3</sup>And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter

<sup>a</sup> 21 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 9:29.

the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup>Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

### Causing to Stumble

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

### The Parable of the Wandering Sheep

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

<sup>12</sup>“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? <sup>13</sup>And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. <sup>14</sup>In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

### Dealing With Sin in the Church

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

<sup>18</sup>“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be<sup>e</sup> bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be<sup>e</sup> loosed in heaven.

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

### The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

<sup>a</sup> 11 Some manuscripts include here the words of Luke 19:10. <sup>b</sup> 15 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verses 21 and 35. <sup>c</sup> 15 Some manuscripts *sins against you*

<sup>d</sup> 16 Deut. 19:15 <sup>e</sup> 18 Or *will have been*

### SHOULD WE REALLY AMPUTATE OUR BODY PARTS? (18:8)

Jesus was not advocating self-mutilation, since he made it plain that the root of our sin problem is spiritual, not physical. This somewhat extreme example shows that we must not only avoid causing others to sin but also get rid of anything that causes evil in our own lives, even at the cost of painful sacrifice (5:29–30).

### DO CHILDREN HAVE PERSONAL GUARDIAN ANGELS? (18:10)

God may assign particular angels to watch over specific individuals (Heb 1:14), although the exact details are not clear to us. Jesus was making the point that every person matters greatly to God and that his kingdom gives special honor to the *little ones* (young children or perhaps new Christians) who need our help (Mt 18:1–6). Even those considered insignificant are noticed in heaven.

### WHY WAS THERE SO LITTLE CONCERN FOR THE 99 SHEEP LEFT IN THE OPEN COUNTRY? (18:12)

They were not left unattended. We tend to assume that there was only one shepherd, but an ancient Near Eastern shepherd would rarely go out alone with 100 sheep. If a sheep was lost, the head shepherd would leave the rest of the flock safe and content with hired helpers and go search for the lost sheep. God does not abandon his followers, but he zealously seeks the lost.

### LINK (18:12–14) THE ONE THAT WANDERED OFF

See Luke 15:4–7.

### CAN WE SET PEOPLE FREE FROM THEIR SINS? (18:18)

In the highest sense, God alone can forgive sins, for he is the absolute standard of justice and the perfect giver of grace. Yet the church plays an important role in extending God's love to sinners — through administering corrective discipline, extending sincere friendship, and announcing God's forgiveness.

### DO INCREASED NUMBERS MAKE PRAYER MORE POWERFUL? (18:19–20)

Whether we pray with others or alone, God promises to hear and answer requests made in line with his will (1Jn 5:14–15). According to Jesus, though, there is a special sense of his presence and power during times of united prayer. This is especially reassuring when we must deal with problems of discipline and forgiveness, as the context suggests. However, God does not guarantee he will grant requests offered selfishly or foolishly.

### HOW LARGE WERE THESE DEBTS? (18:24–28)

It is clear that 10,000 bags of gold represented a sizeable sum of money — probably millions of dollars. It was an enormous and hopelessly insurmountable debt. By contrast, the fellow servant in Jesus' example owed a hundred silver coins — a much more manageable debt, equivalent to perhaps three or four months' wages.

### IS OUR SALVATION DEPENDENT ON WHETHER WE FORGIVE OTHERS? (18:35)

Jesus told this parable to Peter and the disciples. It is not about salvation but about personal relationships. To be right with God, we have to be right with other believers. If we ask God for forgiveness, we should forgive others.

### LINK (19:1–9) DIVORCE

See Mark 10:1–12.

### IS DIVORCE ALWAYS WRONG? (19:1–9)

Women in Jesus' time had little legal protection. They could be divorced simply for displeasing their husbands. Jesus' teaching here is that divorce is contrary to the will of God and his intention that marriage last a lifetime. Jesus acknowledged that in the case of adultery, divorce may be a sad necessity when one partner refuses to stop his or her unfaithfulness. This is not the Bible's last word on divorce, however. Paul later suggested another possible scenario for divorce: when a believer is deserted by an unbelieving spouse (1Co 7:15).

### ARE THOSE IN A SECOND OR THIRD MARRIAGE COMMITTING ADULTERY? (19:9)

Jesus reaffirmed God's ideal for marriage as one man and one woman together for life. He also acknowledged divorce as a less-than-ideal concession that was allowed because of hardened human hearts. In light of passages like Mark 10:11–12, some argue that Jesus forbade remarriage under any circumstances. Others believe remarriage is allowable only when marital unfaithfulness or desertion have occurred (1Co 7:10–17). See *Do those who divorce and remarry commit adultery?* (Lk 16:18; p. 1550).

<sup>22</sup>Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."<sup>a</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>29</sup>"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

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

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

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

### Divorce

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

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup>Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. <sup>9</sup>I tell you that anyone who divorces

<sup>a</sup> 22 Or *seventy times seven*    <sup>b</sup> 24 Greek *ten thousand talents*; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wages.    <sup>c</sup> 28 Greek *a hundred denarii*; a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see 20:2).    <sup>d</sup> 4 Gen. 1:27

<sup>e</sup> 5 Gen. 2:24

his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

<sup>10</sup>The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

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

### The Little Children and Jesus

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

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

### The Rich and the Kingdom of God

<sup>16</sup>Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

<sup>17</sup>“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

<sup>18</sup>“Which ones?” he inquired.

Jesus replied, “‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, <sup>19</sup>honor your father and mother,’<sup>a</sup> and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’<sup>b</sup>”

<sup>20</sup>“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

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

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

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

<sup>25</sup>When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

<sup>26</sup>Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

<sup>27</sup>Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

<sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup>And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or

### WAS CELIBACY INTENDED ONLY FOR A SELECT FEW? (19:11–12)

Everyone needs to understand this Scriptural teaching, but the way we apply it varies according to our different circumstances and gifts. Jesus recognized that in some situations it is better for a person to remain unmarried. Singleness can provide God-given opportunities for undistracted and fruitful Christian service; for others, however, it is better to marry (1Co 7:1–9, 25–40).

### HOW CAN A PERSON BE A EUNUCH FROM BIRTH? (19:12)

Such a person cannot engage in sexual intercourse because of congenital physical deformities. Or perhaps such a person is born with a special God-given ability to remain unmarried without sexual sin. The Bible notes two other reasons for celibacy: castration (Est 2:3; Ac 8:27) or a voluntary choice to serve in God’s kingdom without the encumbrances of married life (1Co 7:25–35).

### LINK (19:13–15) PEOPLE BROUGHT LITTLE CHILDREN TO JESUS

See Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17.

### LINK (19:16–29) SELL YOUR POSSESSIONS AND GIVE TO THE POOR

See Mark 10:17–30; Luke 18:18–30.

### ARE WE SAVED BY FAITH OR BY OBEYING GOD’S COMMANDS? (19:17)

If this were the only thing Jesus said about salvation, it might sound as though strict adherence to the commandments could earn us a place in heaven. But Jesus said much more to explain this verse. For instance, he spoke of outward obedience as an indicator of the condition of a person’s heart (7:17–21). He stressed that our relationship with God must be our primary focus but that sincere obedience should grow out of authentic faith (22:37–40; Jn 14:15).

### WHAT DO WE HAVE TO GIVE UP IN ORDER TO GAIN ETERNAL LIFE? (19:21)

Jesus was not saying that we have to become poor to gain eternal life. He was saying that it only takes one thing to block a relationship with God. Some people, like the young man, may be spiritually hindered because they depend on material possessions. But other people may have to surrender to God such things as fame, extraordinary talent, good looks or intellectualism.

### IS GOD OPPOSED TO THE RICH AND MORE FAVORABLE TO THE POOR? (19:23)

Jesus was not showing favoritism. He was simply stating that to follow him, one has to be ready to give up everything. It is hard for people who have many possessions to give them away because they have to give up not only an opulent lifestyle but social status as well.

### HOW COULD A CAMEL FIT THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE? (19:24)

Jesus’ analogy paints an amusing picture of something impossible or absurd by human standards. The disciples probably saw

<sup>a</sup> 19 Exodus 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20    <sup>b</sup> 19 Lev. 19:18

material wealth as a certain sign of God's favor, but Jesus recognized how the love of money creates temptations many cannot resist. No sinner, whether rich or poor, "deserves" to enter the kingdom of heaven. But God's grace can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles. See **What did Jesus mean by a camel going through the eye of a needle?** (Lk 18:25; p. 1553).

#### WHEN WILL THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS OCCUR? (19:28)

Some interpret this to mean the church age, when the apostles exercised spiritual authority and proclaimed the gospel that brings renewal, or new birth (Titus 3:5; 2Pe 3:2). Others believe this refers to the end of time, when heaven and earth will be renewed (Ro 8:19–21; Rev 21:1–5). According to the latter view, the apostles will receive special honor and responsibility when God's final judgment occurs (1Co 6:2).

#### LINK (20:17–19) THE SON OF MAN WILL BE DELIVERED OVER

See Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–33.

#### WHAT WAS THIS MOTHER'S AMBITION FOR HER SONS? (20:20–21)

She wanted them to occupy important positions of honor and influence as Jesus' closest advisers in his new kingdom. For us today, sitting at the king's right and left might compare to serving as key members of a presidential cabinet.

wife<sup>a</sup> or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup>But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

#### The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

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

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

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

<sup>7</sup>"'Because no one has hired us,' they answered.

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

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

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

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

<sup>16</sup>"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

#### Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

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

#### A Mother's Request

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

<sup>21</sup>"What is it you want?" he asked.

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

<sup>a</sup> 29 Some manuscripts do not have *or wife*.

<sup>b</sup> 2 A denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer.



22“*You don’t know what you are asking,*” Jesus said to them. “*Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?*”

“*We can,*” they answered.

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

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

### Two Blind Men Receive Sight

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

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

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

33“*Lord,*” they answered, “*we want our sight.*”

34Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

### Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

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

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

5“*Say to Daughter Zion,  
‘See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’*”<sup>a</sup>

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

“*Hosanna<sup>b</sup> to the Son of David!*”

<sup>a</sup> 5 Zech. 9:9    <sup>b</sup> 9 A Hebrew expression meaning “Save!” which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 15

### WAS JESUS ADVOCATING SLAVERY? (20:26–28)

Jesus wasn’t endorsing the institution of slavery, but he used it as an object lesson in humility. His own willingness to submit to the Father’s will, even to the point of death, is an example of servanthood lived out to its fullest. It is also an example that he calls us to imitate. See the article **Why doesn’t the Bible condemn slavery?** (1Pe 2:18–21; p. 1816).

### IF MINISTERS ARE SERVANTS, HOW CAN THEY BE LEADERS? (20:26–28)

Jesus was not downplaying the importance of leadership; he was highlighting the proper motives for leadership. Following Jesus’ example, godly leaders choose the way of humility. They are driven not by selfish ambition but by a burning desire to care for God’s people and accomplish God’s purposes (1Pe 5:2–6).

### LINK (20:29–34) TWO BLIND MEN

See Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43.

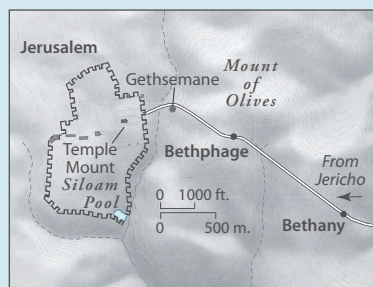
### WHY DOES MATTHEW MENTION TWO BLIND MEN, WHILE MARK AND LUKE MENTION ONLY ONE? (20:30; CF. MK 10:46; LK 18:35)

This is not a contradiction. By saying Jesus healed a blind man, Mark and Luke were not insisting that Jesus healed only one. It’s likely they just focused their accounts on the one blind man (named Bartimaeus) who was the more prominent of the two. See **Why don’t some details in this account agree with those in Mark and Luke?** (8:28; p. 1434).

### WHY DID THE BLIND MAN CALL JESUS THE SON OF DAVID? (20:30)

The blind man recognized Jesus as the prophesied Messiah. It is ironic that a man without physical sight was able to see things that others had missed.

### JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM AS KING (21:1)



### LINK (21:1–10) JESUS ENTERED JERUSALEM

See Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–38.

### WHY DID JESUS “BORROW” WITHOUT ASKING? (21:2–6)

If the request was spontaneous, Jesus undoubtedly knew the owner would gladly lend the animals once he learned that the Lord needed them (v. 3).

### LINK (21:4–9) THIS . . . WAS SPOKEN THROUGH THE PROPHET

See John 12:12–15. This prophecy was spoken by Zechariah (Zec 9:9).

### WHY DID JESUS RIDE A DONKEY? (21:7)

Donkeys or mules were often associated with leaders (Jdg 10:4; 1Ki 1:33). By riding this young colt, however, Jesus demonstrated his humility and gentleness. He also fulfilled one of the prophecies of the Messiah (Zec 9:9). See *Why have a king on a donkey instead of a warhorse?* (Zec 9:9–10; p. 1404).

### WHY DID JESUS PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROCESSION? (21:7–10)

Jesus, at the climax of his ministry, was making a statement about who he was: the Son of David, the King of kings, the conqueror of sin and sickness. See *Why carpet the road with cloaks?* (Lk 19:36; p. 1555).

### WHY DID JESUS RESORT TO FORCE? (21:12)

Though Jesus taught that we are to turn . . . the other cheek (5:39), his example here showed that there are also times when righteous anger is the correct response (Mk 3:5). But notice that Jesus controlled his anger; this was not a temper tantrum. Nor is there any indication that he laid a hand on anyone.

### LINK (21:12–16) JESUS ENTERED THE TEMPLE COURTS

See Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45–47.

### HOW HAD THE TEMPLE (GOD'S HOUSE) BECOME A DEN OF ROBBERS? (21:13)

Merchants were selling sacrificial animals and exchanging currency at exorbitant prices. By turning the court of the Gentiles into a shopping mall, they prevented Gentiles from using this part of the temple as God had intended—for prayer (Isa 56:6–7).

### LINK (21:18–22) THE TREE WITHERED

See Mark 11:12–14, 20–24.

### WHY DID JESUS RUIN THE FIG TREE? (21:19)

This was an object lesson. Though it was not the season for figs (Mk 11:13), the tree seemed to indicate that it had something to give because it was full of leaves. The leaves were an empty promise, so Jesus cursed the unfruitful tree as a visual aid—a warning that God's judgment will come to those who appear fruitful but are not.

### CAN WE MOVE MOUNTAINS IF WE HAVE ENOUGH FAITH? (21:21)

The context of this saying is one of judgment. In the Gospel of Mark, the cleansing of the temple is placed between the cursing and the withering of the fig tree to indicate that it was an enacted parable on the judgment God would bring on the temple (Jer 8:13; Mic 7:1–6). The demonstrative *this* in *this mountain* (Mt 21:21) suggests that Jesus was pointing to a specific place, namely the temple mount. And that mountain probably represented the sacrificial system that would no longer be valid after his resurrection. Faith would become the only way to become right with God.

### WILL WE RECEIVE WHATEVER WE ASK FOR IN PRAYER? (21:21–22)

Jesus' promise is faith stretching. We can pray with the conviction that God is able to

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"<sup>a</sup>

"Hosanna<sup>b</sup> in the highest heaven!"

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

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

### Jesus at the Temple

<sup>12</sup>Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves.

<sup>13</sup>"It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,"<sup>c</sup> but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'<sup>d</sup>

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

<sup>16</sup>"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

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

"From the lips of children and infants  
you, Lord, have called forth your praise'<sup>e</sup>?"

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

### Jesus Curses a Fig Tree

<sup>18</sup>Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. <sup>19</sup>Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, "May you never bear fruit again!" Immediately the tree withered.

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

<sup>21</sup>Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. <sup>22</sup>If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

### The Authority of Jesus Questioned

<sup>23</sup>Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

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

They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe

<sup>a</sup> 9 Psalm 118:25,26 <sup>b</sup> 9 A Hebrew expression meaning "Save!" which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 15 <sup>c</sup> 13 Isaiah 56:7 <sup>d</sup> 13 Jer. 7:11

<sup>e</sup> 16 Psalm 8:2 (see Septuagint)

him?" <sup>26</sup>But if we say, 'Of human origin' — we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet."

<sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

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

### The Parable of the Two Sons

<sup>28</sup>"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

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

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

<sup>31</sup>"Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

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

### The Parable of the Tenants

<sup>33</sup>"Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

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

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

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

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

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

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

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

<sup>a</sup> 42 Psalm 118:22,23

<sup>b</sup> 44 Some manuscripts do not have verse 44.

do anything (Eph 3:20; Jas 5:16). But while Jesus intended to expand our confidence in the possibilities of prayer, he was not encouraging us to use prayer to manipulate God. Sometimes God will say no to a request (2Co 12:8–9) because he has a better plan than we do (Isa 55:8–9; Php 4:6–7).

### LINK (21:23–27) WHO GAVE YOU THIS AUTHORITY

See Mark 11:27–33; Luke 20:1–8.

### WHAT DO THESE STORIES TELL US ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? (21:28–44)

Jesus used parables to illustrate truth in vivid, memorable ways. See the article **Why did Jesus speak in parables?** (13:10–13; p. 1443). Each story provides insight into God's kingdom. The parable of the two sons teaches that we enter the kingdom not by what we say but by how we respond to the Father. The parable of the tenants shows that some miss the kingdom because they reject the Son.

### LINK (21:33–46) TENANTS

See Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19.

### WHAT WAS THE CORNERSTONE? (21:42)

The Greek word literally means "head of the corner." This term is used to describe either the bottom corner of the building (a foundation stone) or the keystone of an archway. It can either cause someone to stumble or fall on someone. In any case, the stone is essential for holding the building together.

### ARE THE JEWS NO LONGER GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE? (21:43)

Jesus was speaking to the chief priests and Pharisees (v. 45). These leaders thought of themselves as the wardens of God's kingdom through Judaism. The use of the Greek *ethnos* (translated *a people*) does not indicate a new ethnic group but an organized community. Jesus was referring to his coming church, which would include both Jews and Gentiles.

### WHO WOULD BE BROKEN TO PIECES BY THE CORNERSTONE, AND WHO WOULD BE CRUSHED? (21:44)

Verse 45 shows that Jesus was referring to the chief priests and Pharisees.

**LINK (22:2–14) WEDDING BANQUET**

The apostle Luke records a similar parable in Luke 14:16–24.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT MANY ARE INVITED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN? (22:14)**

Many (perhaps “all” in view of the Semitic usage of “many”) are invited to enter the kingdom of God, but only a few will become rightful citizens of heaven. God’s invitation must be accepted, followed by appropriate conduct. Proper behavior is evidence of being chosen.

**LINK (22:15–22) IS IT RIGHT TO PAY THE IMPERIAL TAX**

See Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26.

**IS DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES EVER JUSTIFIED? (22:17–21)**

In a sinful world where tyrants sometimes gain control and government officials become corrupt, there may be times when believers must disobey governing authorities because they must answer to Jesus as their highest authority. However, we should obey the laws of the land whenever possible. See *When Is It Right to Disobey Authority?* (Ac 4:19; p. 1615).

**WHAT IS CAESAR’S AND WHAT IS GOD’S? (22:21)**

God is over all things, but he entrusts some of those things to people. The things that belong to Caesar—that is, governing authorities—are responsibilities to maintain civil order, punish wrongdoers, protect the helpless and collect taxes to administer these assignments (Ro 13:1–7; 1Pe 2:13–17). God, however, deserves our highest allegiance.

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

**The Parable of the Wedding Banquet**

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>13</sup>“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

<sup>14</sup>“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

**Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar**

<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. <sup>16</sup>They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. <sup>17</sup>Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax<sup>a</sup> to Caesar or not?”

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

<sup>21</sup>“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

<sup>22</sup>When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

<sup>a</sup> 17 A special tax levied on subject peoples, not on Roman citizens

## Marriage at the Resurrection

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

<sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. <sup>30</sup>At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. <sup>31</sup>But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you, <sup>32</sup>‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’<sup>a</sup>? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

<sup>33</sup>When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

## The Greatest Commandment

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

<sup>37</sup>Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’<sup>b</sup> <sup>38</sup>This

<sup>a</sup> 32 Exodus 3:6    <sup>b</sup> 37 Deut. 6:5

### LINK (22:25) HE LEFT HIS WIFE TO HIS BROTHER

By Jewish law, a man was supposed to marry his brother's widow, provide for her and raise their firstborn son in his brother's name. See **Why was a man required to marry his brother's widow?** (Dt 25:5 – 10; p. 289).

### WAS JESUS SAYING THERE WILL BE NO MARRIAGE IN HEAVEN? (22:30)

It seems so, but that was not Jesus' point. The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, were attempting to show that the concept of resurrection is absurd. Jesus' point had to do with the reality of the resurrection, not the lifestyle of heaven. Paul said that heaven's pleasures will be infinitely better than the best this life offers (1Co 15:35 – 57). See the article **What do we have to look forward to?** (1Co 15:35 – 57; p. 1707).

### WHAT KIND OF LOGIC DID JESUS USE? (22:31 – 33)

We might think the phrase in verse 32 could have meant, “I am the God of the one who was Abraham.” But most Jews didn't reason that way. To speak of “Yahweh (I AM), the God of Abraham,” was to imply not only a past but a present relationship. Thus, they reasoned, “If we believe there is a God, then we can also believe Abraham still is.” Because the Sadducees based their doctrine on only the five books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy), Jesus made his case from Exodus 3:6.

### LINK (22:34–40) THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

See Mark 12:28 – 31.

## HOW INVOLVED SHOULD THE CHURCH BE IN POLITICS? 22:21

There is no easy answer to this question. Perhaps the most straightforward reply is that it depends. It depends mostly on what you mean by the church's involvement.

When we speak of the “church,” if we are thinking of each individual believer bearing witness to God's truth in public debates on critical political and moral issues, then it seems clear that the level of involvement should be high, as God's people should give . . . to God what is God's (Mt 22:21). This often takes the form of checking the state's messianic ambition. But if we understand church involvement in politics to be formal representatives of a denomination taking official stances on political issues, then the line becomes quite a bit more obscured for two important reasons.

First, Scripture teaches that we are to maintain a *clear conscience toward God* (1Pe 3:21), which implies that each individual believer is responsible for his or her actions, political affiliations and beliefs. Aside from the obvious issue in this country of a church's tax-exempt status being jeopardized by engaging in party politics, the more important matter relates to the binding of consciences that can take place when church officials take positions on behalf of their members. Second, a great many stances on political issues fall into the category of prudential judgment, and this is an area in which God's people are to free to lovingly disagree while they *give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's* (Mt 22:21). The question is not *how much* political involvement is appropriate, but *which kind* of political involvement is appropriate.

So how involved should Christians become in the politics of our nation and culture? There is no set answer, but we are to observe at least two principles. First, we must show respect for our political leaders (Ro 13:1 – 7) and work together with them in caring for our society. Second, we must remind the state to not play God and resist any messianic ambitions that politicians announce (Ac 5:29).

TOP 100  
MOST-ASKED



is the first and greatest commandment.<sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’<sup>a</sup> <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

### Whose Son Is the Messiah?

<sup>41</sup>While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, <sup>42</sup>“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

<sup>43</sup>He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

<sup>44</sup>“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet.”<sup>b</sup>

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

### A Warning Against Hypocrisy

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

<sup>5</sup>“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries<sup>c</sup> wide and the tassels on their garments long; <sup>6</sup>they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; <sup>7</sup>they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

<sup>a</sup> 39 Lev. 19:18    <sup>b</sup> 44 Psalm 110:1    <sup>c</sup> 5 That is, boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on forehead and arm

### LINK (22:41–46) WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE MESSIAH?

See Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44.

### WHY DID JESUS’ QUESTION STUMP THE PHARISEES? (22:45)

By quoting from David’s own writings (Ps 110:1), Jesus showed that David himself spoke of the Messiah as Lord—a title of profound respect and honor. Because they knew a father would not call his son “Lord,” the Pharisees could not answer Jesus’ question. By using David’s words, Jesus demonstrated that the Messiah would be more than a military savior or an anointed human leader. The Messiah anticipated by David would be God in human flesh.

### LINK (23:1–7) DO NOT DO WHAT THEY DO

See Mark 12:38–39; Luke 20:45–46.

### WHAT WERE PHYLACTERIES? (23:5)

They were small leather boxes containing portions of God’s Word. They were worn by Jews who interpreted literally the instructions to fasten God’s Word on their hands and foreheads. See *What were the sign on the hand and reminder on the forehead?* (Ex 13:9; p. 100).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE MY NEIGHBOR? 22:37–40

Henri Nouwen once said that true community is the place where the individual we least like always lives next door. This is certainly a Biblical principle. Jesus taught that our neighbor might be the person least like us—consider the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37). We are called to be like the Samaritan rather than the religious leaders who passed by their Jewish countryman who had been beaten, robbed and left for dead along the road. They didn’t lift a hand to help him.

In contrast, the despised Samaritan did not walk past the Jewish man but cared for him—paying out of his own pocket for the man’s needs, not expecting repayment. This Samaritan loved radically, sacrificially and at great risk to himself. He acted decisively; he didn’t question what his fellow Samaritans would think or what might happen if the robbers were still nearby.

Loving our neighbor involves caring for those in need who cross our path. This applies certainly to friends, but especially to those least like us and to those we like the least.

Those who experience eternal life with Jesus must love like Jesus loves. So, just as Jesus loves his neighbor—like the Samaritan loved the Jewish man who was attacked by robbers—we too must love our neighbor, even though they might not like us or be able to pay us back. Jesus loves unconditionally and we should too.

**TOP 100**  
MOST-ASKED

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

### Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

<sup>13</sup>“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. <sup>[14]</sup><sup>a</sup>

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

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

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

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

<sup>27</sup>“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. <sup>28</sup>In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

<sup>29</sup>“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. <sup>30</sup>And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ <sup>31</sup>So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of

### IS IT WRONG TO CALL A SPIRITUAL LEADER FATHER? (23:9)

Not necessarily. Jesus was simply telling us not to misuse the term to inflate the egos of those seeking honor from special titles or positions. Jesus himself used the word *father* in its ordinary sense (21:31; Lk 15:12–28). The principle he taught was that we should direct primary honor and respect toward our Father in heaven. If esteem for individuals with influence, money or accomplishments diminishes our honor for God, then we have missed what Jesus was saying.

### HOW DID PHARISEES TURN SOMEONE INTO A CHILD OF HELL? (23:15)

The phrase *child of hell* was likely a Hebrew expression that referred to a particularly wicked person, in contrast to *people of the kingdom* (13:38). Jesus bluntly accused the Pharisees — who bragged about being righteous — of being blatant sinners and hypocrites. Worse yet, they spread their false teaching and legalistic ways to those they recruited. They led people further away from God’s truth by taking them deeper into human tradition.

### WHY SWEAR BY THE TEMPLE, THE ALTAR OR HEAVEN? WHY SWEAR AT ALL? (23:16–22)

The Pharisees thought they could strengthen their words by reinforcing them with oaths. It was thought that words carried more weight when they were backed by objects of value (such as the altar in the temple) or by persons of authority. People thought those who invited some sort of curse on themselves if they lied or failed to keep their promise could be trusted more than those who did not.

### WHY ARE SOME MATTERS OF THE LAW MORE IMPORTANT THAN OTHERS? (23:23)

Because some parts of the law are foundational principles that undergird the rest of the law. Though all of God’s law is important (5:17–20; Jas 2:10), Jesus asserted that *all the Law and the Prophets* hang on the commandments to love God and to love our neighbor (Mt 22:35–40). Jesus accused the Pharisees of focusing on minor details while neglecting the main point of the law.

### WHY DID JESUS CALL PHARISEES WHITEWASHED TOMBS? (23:27)

Tombs were whitewashed once a year — perhaps to show respect for the dead but primarily to make the tombs easier to see. The Jews believed that touching or walking over a grave caused a person to become ceremonially unclean (Nu 19:16). Whitewashing the tombs helped prevent accidental contact. Though a whitewashed tomb may have had a clean outward appearance, it was hiding something unclean within. To Jesus, the Pharisees were just like those tombs — appealing on the outside but rotting from within.

<sup>a</sup> 14 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.

### WHY WAS JESUS SO ANGRY WITH THESE LEADERS? (23:33)

He was angry because of their hypocrisy; six times in this chapter Jesus called them hypocrites. The religious leaders had exchanged the holy for the hollow. They were concerned with appearance rather than substance. They made a show of obeying God's law but consistently violated the spirit of the law. Worst of all, they were leading other people to do the same. Jesus, by contrast, said that he desires genuine spiritual commitment (22:37–39; Mk 7:14–23).

### WHY COULDN'T A SOVEREIGN GOD OVERRULE AN UNWILLING CITY? (23:37)

He could have, but he wanted the people to accept his love because they *wanted* to, not because they *had* to. Jesus did not force his love on Jerusalem; instead, he sought the allegiance and acceptance of willing hearts. God desires all people to turn to him in faith (1Ti 2:3–4; 2Pe 3:9), but he leaves our personal choice as part of the equation. God's sovereignty does not diminish human responsibility.

### LINK (23:37–39) JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM

See Luke 13:34–35.

### LINK (24:1–51) WHAT WILL BE THE SIGN OF YOUR COMING

See Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:5–36.

### WHAT EVENTS DID JESUS INCLUDE IN HIS ANSWER? (24:4–14)

The disciples actually asked more than one question (v. 3). Jesus answered their questions by describing the fall of Jerusalem (which occurred in AD 70). But he also talked about some events that will occur at the time of his return or at the end of the world.

those who murdered the prophets. <sup>32</sup>Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

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

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

### The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

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

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

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

<sup>9</sup>“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.

<sup>a</sup> 39 Psalm 118:26

## WHAT DID THE TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION HAVE TO DO WITH THE END OF THE AGE? 24:2–3

It is quite possible that the disciples believed the destruction of the temple would usher in the end of the age. Perhaps their curiosity about Jesus' role in all this was stirred even more because Jesus answered their questions while sitting on the Mount of Olives, a location with prophetic significance (Zec 14:4).

What might have led the disciples to think this way? First, the temple held a prominent place in the lives of the people. It was the focal point of worship, religious instruction and sacrifice. Second, the temple created an awe-inspiring, impressive sight. Thousands of craftsmen had worked for years to build its towering walls, some gleaming with white marble. Its gates were decorated with gold and silver. The Beautiful Gate (named such because it was covered with polished brass) was about 75 feet high and 60 feet wide. Such splendor would have made it difficult for the disciples to imagine the temple's ruin unless the world itself was coming to an end.

Enormous stones from the temple wall can still be seen in Jerusalem. One, for example, is 27 feet long and weighs at least 200 tons. No wonder the disciples were so impressed by its massive stones (Mk 13:1)! In their minds, the destruction of the temple would be both a physical and a spiritual calamity.

<sup>10</sup>At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup>and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup>Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup>but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup>And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

<sup>15</sup>“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’<sup>a</sup> spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — <sup>16</sup>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. <sup>18</sup>Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. <sup>19</sup>How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>20</sup>Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again.

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

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

<sup>29</sup>“Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light;  
the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>30</sup>“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth<sup>c</sup> will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.<sup>d</sup> <sup>31</sup>And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

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

## The Day and Hour Unknown

<sup>36</sup>“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,<sup>f</sup> but only the Father. <sup>37</sup>As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the

## WHAT WAS THE ABOMINATION THAT CAUSES DESOLATION? (24:15)

This first happened in 168 BC when Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the temple with a pagan altar to Zeus. Some believe it happened again around AD 40 when Emperor Caligula tried to desecrate the temple and in AD 70 when the Romans finally destroyed the temple. It may predict a similar desecration that is yet to come.

## WHY DID JESUS SAY LET THE READER UNDERSTAND? (24:15)

Jesus was probably urging his listeners to read and understand Daniel's prophecy (Da 9:27). In the same context, Daniel wrote similar words, saying, *Know and understand this* (Da 9:25; see Da 12:10). But some think these are Matthew's words, added to urge his readers to carefully consider what Jesus said.

## HOW MUCH DID JESUS TEACH HERE ABOUT THE END TIMES? (24:15–28)

These predictions accurately describe the terrible conditions leading to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Many also see a parallel to the dangerous conditions and spiritual decline to come in the last days (2Tī 3:1–5). Jesus was apparently talking about both events, underscoring the need for faithfulness, discernment and patience.

## DOES THIS DESCRIBE THE “GREAT TRIBULATION”? (24:21)

Maybe. Some think this describes a future time of unprecedented disaster — judgment to come on the world at the end of the age (Rev 6:15–17; 7:14). Others believe this refers to the terrible suffering that occurred when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. People died at the hands of Roman troops or by starvation, fire and disease. To a certain extent, God's people can expect to face tribulation in every age (Jn 16:33).

## WILL THE SUN BE LITERALLY DARKENED? (24:29)

Since Jesus' first coming was accompanied by unusual signs on earth and in the sky (28:2; Lk 2:8–14; 23:44–45), it does not seem unreasonable to believe that these signs will literally occur when Jesus returns. Other passages also tell of dramatic events that will take place at the return of Jesus (1Th 4:16–17), including a worldwide holocaust (2Pe 3:10–13).

## IF JESUS WILL COME WHEN WE DO NOT EXPECT HIM, WHY DID HE SAY WE SHOULD LOOK FOR SIGNS THAT HIS RETURN IS NEAR? (24:33,44)

First, expectancy brings hope and excitement. Second, signs work as a warning against false prophets. Third, our waiting and watching encourages endurance in the faith.

## DID ALL THESE THINGS HAPPEN WHILE THAT GENERATION WAS STILL ALIVE? (24:34)

Some think so. They believe this verse limits the timing of the events in this chapter to one literal generation — that is, to those who were alive during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Others think *this generation* refers to the generation that learns the lesson of the fig tree (vv. 32–33) and recognizes the signs of Jesus' impending return. Still others say *generation* means the Jewish race — a promise that Jews will survive until the end.

<sup>a</sup> 15 Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11    <sup>b</sup> 29 Isaiah 13:10; 34:4    <sup>c</sup> 30 Or *the tribes of the land*    <sup>d</sup> 30 See Daniel 7:13–14.    <sup>e</sup> 33 Or *he*    <sup>f</sup> 36 Some manuscripts do not have *nor the Son*.



**LINK (24:37–39) THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN**

See Luke 17:26–27.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE WHO ARE TAKEN WHEN JESUS COMES? (24:40)**

The first letter to the Thessalonians indicates that believers who have already died will rise and that those still alive will be caught up in the air with Jesus (1Th 4:16–17). Proponents of a literal millennium (Rev 20:1–6) on earth believe that those who are *taken* will participate in Jesus' literal thousand-year reign on earth before the end comes. Others believe that the thousand-year reign is just a symbol either of Jesus' eternal reign or of Jesus' reign over his church from the resurrection onward, in which case, Revelation 21:1–27 gives the rest of the story.

**WHY WOULD A MASTER CUT HIS SERVANT TO PIECES? (24:51)**

In ancient times, slave owners held complete mastery over their slaves. Slaves were considered property, and one who displeased his master could be severely punished, even killed. Such actions were within the master's legal rights. Jesus may have used this particularly gruesome punishment to illustrate the spiritual truth of his example: a hypocrite will be cut off from any life with God.

**WHAT IS THIS PLACE WITH THE HYPOCRITES? (24:51)**

Hell is frequently described by Jesus as a place *where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. The phrase is connected with (1) a place *outside, into the darkness* (8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and (2) a *blazing furnace* (13:42,50).

**WHAT DOES THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN SIGNIFY? (25:1)**

Just as an earthly kingdom identifies the domain of an earthly ruler, the *kingdom of heaven* (also called the *kingdom of God*) signifies everything over which God rules. It means more than mere territory, however. God's kingdom is spiritual (Jn 18:36) and is in the hearts of people who have submitted to him. It can also refer to the coming age, when there will be a new order of righteousness and peace.

**HOW IS THE KINGDOM LIKE TEN VIRGINS? (25:1)**

Jesus compared the kingdom to *ten virgins* who were part of a wedding party, waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. Some were prepared to meet him; others were not. The kingdom is characterized by anticipation—people are to be ready and waiting for Jesus' return.

**WHY START A WEDDING AT MIDNIGHT? (25:6)**

This was a common custom, though it's not known exactly why weddings began so late at night. Weddings typically lasted several days. The groom and his friends often began the feast at the groom's house, while the bride and her attendants waited at her house. Eventually, the groom and his friends came unannounced to claim the bride. Then the whole group formed a joyful procession back to the groom's house to celebrate.

Son of Man. <sup>38</sup>For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup>and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup>Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup>Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

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

<sup>45</sup>"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup>It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. <sup>47</sup>Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. <sup>48</sup>But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' <sup>49</sup>and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. <sup>50</sup>The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. <sup>51</sup>He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

**25** "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup>The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

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

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

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

<sup>10</sup>"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

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

<sup>12</sup>"But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

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

**The Parable of the Bags of Gold**

<sup>14</sup>"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup>To



one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,<sup>a</sup> each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup>The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup>So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup>But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### The Sheep and the Goats

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

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

### LINK (25:14–30) HE GAVE FIVE BAGS OF GOLD

Jesus tells a similar parable in Luke 19:12–27.

### SHOULD WE APPLY THIS PARABLE TO HOW WE USE OUR MONEY? (25:14–30)

Connections can be made between this parable and earthly finances. However, Jesus' parables are almost always earthly stories with a heavenly meaning whose main topic is the kingdom of God. This parable speaks of stewardship in general. By God's design, each believer has a role to fulfill in the advancement of the kingdom of God and has been spiritually gifted to fulfill that role.

### WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT OF US? (25:26–27)

God wants us to use whatever opportunities he gives us. By some standards, the third servant did well. He didn't steal, waste or lose the money—he guarded and preserved it. Nevertheless, he was judged as being unfaithful because he did nothing productive with it. We must make the most of our opportunities (Eph 5:16) and use our gifts productively (1Pe 4:10–11).

### WHY WOULD SHEEP AND GOATS BE MIXED TOGETHER? (25:32)

Although first-century herders did not pen sheep and goats in a single enclosure, they sometimes grazed sheep and goats in the same field. Several herds could mingle in one pasture and yet be easily separated when the departing shepherds called for their own flocks. The sheep recognized the distinct voice of their own shepherd (Jn 10:3–4). Jesus used this image to describe the distinction between good and bad (cf. Mt 13:30, 48–50; 22:11–14; 25:11–13, 29–30).

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

clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

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

<sup>40</sup>“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

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

<sup>44</sup>“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

<sup>45</sup>“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

<sup>46</sup>“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

### The Plot Against Jesus

**26** When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>“As you know, the Passover is two days away — and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

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

### Jesus Anointed at Bethany

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

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

### LINK (26:1–5) THE SON OF MAN WILL BE HANDED OVER

See Mark 14:1–2; Luke 22:1–2.

### LINK (26:6–13) VERY EXPENSIVE PERFUME

Mark tells about the anointing of Jesus at Bethany in Mark 14:3–9. Luke and John give similar accounts in Luke 7:37–38 and John 12:1–8.

### IS MATTHEW’S STORY THE SAME STORY AS IN MARK, LUKE AND JOHN? (26:6–13)

This story occurs in Matthew, Mark and John. The incident in Luke is an entirely different event. The point of the story is that Jesus was being prepared for his death by being anointed with perfume (a Jewish burial custom).

### WHY WERE THE DISCIPLES INDIGNANT? (26:8–9)

They thought the woman’s actions were extravagant and wasteful because the perfume she poured out was so valuable. It could have been sold and the money used for benevolent purposes. However, it seems that the major complainer was Judas, whose real motive was not concern for the poor but personal greed (Jn 12:4–6).

## ARE GOOD WORKS NECESSARY FOR ETERNAL LIFE?

### 25:35–36

Jesus did not teach that good deeds form the basis of our salvation. The Bible shows clearly that eternal life results from what God does, not what we do (Titus 3:4–7). We are saved by God’s grace, not by our works. Still, God intends that those who receive his grace do good works (Eph 2:8–10).

True faith is more than just claiming to have faith. Genuine love for God will be expressed through service to others (1Jn 3:16–18) — not to earn salvation but because a heart that truly loves God will be filled with compassion for others. Jesus wants his followers to set the pace by helping those who are hurting. Good works that come from people grateful for God’s grace are at the heart of true religion (Jas 1:27).

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

### Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

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

### The Last Supper

<sup>17</sup>On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

<sup>18</sup>He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” <sup>19</sup>So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

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

<sup>22</sup>They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

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

<sup>25</sup>Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

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

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

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

### Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

“I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 11 See Deut. 15:11. <sup>b</sup> 28 Some manuscripts *the new* <sup>c</sup> 31 Zech. 13:7

### WHY DID JESUS ENDORSE SUCH EXTRAVAGANCE? (26:10)

This was a special occasion. He knew that he would soon be crucified. In this impulsive act of sacrifice, the woman symbolically prepared his body for burial. It was a custom in those days to anoint the bodies of the dead with sweet-smelling oil or spices. Jesus had already emphasized the ongoing need to help the poor (25:35 – 36). Here he affirmed another important principle: it is never a waste to give one’s best to honor Jesus.

### LINK (26:14–16) JUDAS ISCARIOT

See Mark 14:10 – 11.

### WHAT PROMPTED JUDAS TO TURN JESUS IN? (26:14–16)

Judas’s greed may have been a factor in his accepting 30 silver coins to betray Jesus. Some speculate that Jesus’ talk of his burial (v. 12) disillusioned Judas, who may have been put off or confused by the idea that the real Messiah could die (16:21 – 25; see Mk 9:9 – 10). Others think Judas was disappointed because Jesus seemed unwilling to establish the earthly kingdom many expected. Whatever the cause, Satan was behind Judas’s act of betrayal (Jn 13:27).

### LINK (26:17–19) PASSOVER

See Mark 14:12 – 16; Luke 22:7 – 13.

### HOW DID THE DISCIPLES PREPARE FOR THE PASSOVER? (26:19)

Jewish law prescribed that a lamb be taken to the temple for slaughter (Dt 16:2,5 – 6). It was then to be roasted and eaten the same night (Ex 12:8 – 9). The disciples also had to purchase specific items required for the Passover meal, prepare the food and set the table.

### LINK (26:26–29) THIS IS MY BODY

See Mark 14:22 – 25; Luke 22:17 – 20.

### HOW DID JESUS GIVE NEW MEANING TO THE PASSOVER? (26:26–29)

Rather than change Passover, Jesus fulfilled it — Christ Jesus is our *Passover lamb* (1Co 5:7). He infused a time-honored practice with profound new meaning. For centuries, the unleavened bread had reminded God’s people of their hasty exit from Egypt (Ex 12:14 – 20,39). Now the bread would remind Jesus’ followers of his body, given as a sacrifice for their sins. The lamb had recalled the blood that spared the Israelites from death (Ex 12:3 – 13). Now the cup would remind Jesus’ followers of his blood and its saving effects.

### WHY DID JESUS SAY HE WOULD NOT DRINK AGAIN? (26:29)

Because Jesus was going to die, he would eat no more Passover meals until the coming of the future kingdom. At that time he will celebrate the great Messianic *wedding supper* (Rev 19:9) with those who have commemorated the Lord’s Supper. Even now when Christians celebrate the Lord’s Supper, they are not only remembering his crucifixion but also looking ahead to his second coming.

### LINK (26:31–35) YOU WILL DISOWN ME

See Mark 14:27 – 31; Luke 22:31 – 34.

<sup>32</sup>But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

<sup>33</sup>Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

<sup>34</sup>“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

<sup>35</sup>But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

### Gethsemane

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

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

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

<sup>42</sup>He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

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

<sup>45</sup>Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.

<sup>46</sup>Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

### Jesus Arrested

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

<sup>50</sup>Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”<sup>a</sup>

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

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

<sup>a</sup> 50 Or “Why have you come, friend?”

### LINK (26:36–46) GETHSEMANE

See Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:40–46.

### DID JESUS STRUGGLE TO OBEY? (26:38–39)

No. Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully human — revealed in this vulnerable moment. Jesus was still committed to his purpose to be the Savior of the world (Jn 12:27). However, the intense suffering he faced caused him to turn to his Father for help — just as we might pray when confronted with overwhelming emotional or physical pain.

### COULD GOD HAVE PROVIDED ANOTHER WAY FOR SALVATION? (26:39)

Scripture tells us that God’s law demanded a sacrifice to atone for our sins, and the death of God’s perfect Son was the *sacrifice of atonement* made *once for all* (Ro 3:25–26; Heb 7:27). It is essential for us to grasp the enormity of our sin and the utter hopelessness of our depravity as well as the extent of God’s amazing and gracious love (Ro 5:8; Heb 1:3).

### WHY DID JESUS ASK THE DISCIPLES TO WATCH AND PRAY? (26:41)

In the loneliness that came while he awaited death, Jesus longed for the presence of friends who would pray with him. In addition, the disciples needed to pray for their own benefit, considering their predicted denial, cowardice and abandonment of Jesus. Their boasts of allegiance (v. 35) appear pathetic in light of their behavior as the night wore on. Their failure to pray made them an easy mark for fear and temptation.

### LINK (26:47–56) THE MEN . . . SEIZED JESUS AND ARRESTED HIM

See Mark 14:43–50; Luke 22:47–53.

### WHY DID JUDAS KISS JESUS? (26:49)

A kiss was a traditional greeting. A disciple would greet his teacher with a kiss on the cheek or beard to show honor and submission. The less important person initiated the kiss. This is the irony in this passage: Judas used something meant to give honor to betray.

<sup>55</sup>In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. <sup>56</sup>But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

### Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

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

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

Finally two came forward <sup>61</sup>and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

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

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

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

<sup>65</sup>Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. <sup>66</sup>What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

<sup>67</sup>Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him <sup>68</sup>and said, “Prophesy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

### Peter Disowns Jesus

<sup>69</sup>Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

<sup>70</sup>But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

<sup>71</sup>Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

<sup>72</sup>He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

<sup>73</sup>After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

<sup>74</sup>Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

<sup>a</sup> 64 See Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13.

### LINK (26:57–68) SANHEDRIN

See Mark 14:53–65; John 18:12–13,19–24.

### WHY DID JESUS REFUSE TO ANSWER THE FALSE CHARGES? (26:63)

These same men had resisted and twisted Jesus’ words before. Why should he speak to them now? This was a biased, hostile trial, not an impartial hearing. The unfair and contradictory charges did not deserve a response. Jesus did answer, however, when the high priest charged him under oath to tell them if he was the Messiah (vv. 63–64).

### LINK (26:69–75) HE DENIED IT

See Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:16–18,25–27.

### WHAT WAS DISTINCTIVE ABOUT PETER’S ACCENT? (26:73)

Although there were many dialects and languages spoken in the region due to Roman occupation, Peter’s Galilean accent was recognizable. Some say the Galileans interchanged the pronunciation of several Aramaic letters, dividing or blending words in ways that made them unintelligible to others. Later, the religious leaders were astonished that Peter could speak so powerfully since he and John were *unschooled, ordinary men* (Ac 4:13).



**WHY DID PETER WEEP? (26:75)**

Because he suddenly felt the weight of his own failure. Though he had earlier wanted to fight for Jesus (v. 35), now his courage melted into confusion. Perhaps he was bewildered and disheartened by Jesus' earlier rejection of his rescue attempt in the garden (Jn 18:10–11). But the crowing rooster brought things back into perspective with a shocking realization: he had betrayed the one he loved, just as Jesus had foretold.

**SINCE JUDAS CONFESSED, WAS HE FORGIVEN? (27:4)**

It's obvious that Judas deeply regretted his actions. Seeing that Jesus was condemned, Judas was seized with remorse (v. 3). He returned his ill-gotten gains and confessed his sin. Yet remorse does not necessarily equal repentance. The despair that led Judas to take his own life suggests that he did not receive the inner peace that comes with forgiveness. His sorrow — not the kind that leads to forgiveness — seems to be a prime example of what Paul wrote about: *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death* (2Co 7:10).

**WHY WAS THE MONEY THAT WAS PAID FOR JESUS' BETRAYAL SUDDENLY TAINTED? (27:6)**

How ironic that the same money taken from the temple treasury by the priests to trap Jesus was now too dirty for them to put back into the treasury. Perhaps the priests wanted to distance themselves from the murderous results they had purchased with the money. They failed to see their hypocrisy: they followed the law by not returning the money to the treasury but ignored the law that forbade murder.

**WHY DID MATTHEW CREDIT JEREMIAH WITH SOMETHING ZECHARIAH SAID? (27:9–10)**

Some say that Matthew made a mistake. Others say an error was made by a later scribe. Still others suggest that Matthew combined Jeremiah's material (Jer 19:1–13 or perhaps Jer 8:2–12 or 32:6–9) with Zechariah's statement (Zec 11:12–13) but attributed it to Jeremiah because he was the better-known prophet.

**WHAT DID THE TITLE THE KING OF THE JEWS MEAN TO PILATE? (27:11)**

The Roman government was particularly sensitive to subversive elements in society that could undermine their base of power. Anyone who claimed to be a leader or a king was a potential threat. Jesus had been accused of rebelling against Rome and opposing payment of taxes to Caesar (Lk 23:1–2). Pilate's use of the inscription was a fearsome warning to those who might consider rebelling against Rome. See *Why wasn't Pilate bothered by Jesus' claim to be the king of the Jews?* (Lk 23:3–4; p. 1562).

**LINK (27:11–26) JESUS STOOD BEFORE THE GOVERNOR**

See Mark 15:2–15; Luke 23:2–3, 18–25; John 18:29–19:16.

Immediately a rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup>Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

**Judas Hangs Himself**

**27** Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. <sup>2</sup>So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

<sup>3</sup>When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. <sup>4</sup>“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

<sup>5</sup>So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

<sup>6</sup>The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.” <sup>7</sup>So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. <sup>8</sup>That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. <sup>9</sup>Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, <sup>10</sup>and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.”<sup>a</sup>

**Jesus Before Pilate**

<sup>11</sup>Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

<sup>12</sup>When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. <sup>13</sup>Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” <sup>14</sup>But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge — to the great amazement of the governor.

<sup>15</sup>Now it was the governor’s custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. <sup>16</sup>At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus<sup>b</sup> Barabbas. <sup>17</sup>So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” <sup>18</sup>For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

<sup>19</sup>While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

<sup>20</sup>But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

<sup>21</sup>“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

<sup>a</sup> 10 See Zech. 11:12,13; Jer. 19:1–13; 32:6–9.

<sup>b</sup> 16 Many manuscripts do not have Jesus; also in verse 17.

22“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

23“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

24When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

25All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”

26Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

### The Soldiers Mock Jesus

27Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. 30They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

### The Crucifixion of Jesus

32As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). 34There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” 41In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42“*He saved others,*” they said, “*but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel!*” Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” 44In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

### The Death of Jesus

45From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. 46About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli,<sup>a</sup> lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 46 Some manuscripts *Eloi, Eloi*    <sup>b</sup> 46 Psalm 22:1

### WHO WAS MOST GUILTY FOR JESUS’ DEATH? (27:24–25)

Pilate was guilty of cowardice and the unjust use of his authority. However, the high priest Caiaphas should have understood how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Messiah. Though Caiaphas knew about Jesus’ miracles and ministry, his hatred and envy caused him to condemn Jesus (Jn 11:49–50). He saw Jesus’ popularity with the people as a threat to the political power that he and the other Jewish leaders had been given by the Romans. Jesus had made it clear, however, that he laid down his life freely (Jn 10:14–17). His death was his own choice.

### HOW DO WE SHARE THE GUILT FOR JESUS’ DEATH? (27:24–25)

Because we all have sinned, we all need the salvation that comes through the sacrifice Jesus made when he gave his life on the cross. Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins.

### HOW WAS JESUS FLOGGED? (27:26)

Romans flogged prisoners using a leather whip with multiple ends and sharp bits of bone or metal embedded in the ends. A flogging could leave the back raw and bleeding, sometimes exposing bones and organs. Roman floggings were so brutal that they sometimes caused death.

### WAS JESUS SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL BRUTALITY? (27:26–31)

Flogging and crucifixion were common in the Roman Empire. Death on a cross, however, was usually reserved for criminals and slaves who were not Roman citizens. Soldiers commonly mocked their powerless prisoners, but they took special delight in taunting a man alleged to be a Jewish king.

### LINK (27:27–31) THEY . . . MOCKED HIM

See Mark 15:16–20.

### LINK (27:33–44) THEY . . . CRUCIFIED HIM

See Mark 15:22–32; Luke 23:33–43; John 19:17–24.

### WHY DID THE SOLDIERS OFFER JESUS A DRINK OF WINE AND GALL? (27:34)

Sometimes gall was mixed with wine and offered to victims of crucifixion as an anesthetic to reduce suffering—but Jesus rejected this crude painkiller. The term *gall* was used for a variety of bitter-tasting substances derived from plants or tree bark. It probably refers to the same thing as the *myrrh* mentioned in Mark 15:23. Or it may be that both gall and myrrh were added to the wine.

### DID ONE CRIMINAL REPENT OR NOT? (27:44; SEE LK 23:40–42)

According to Luke, one criminal had a change of heart. The apparent difference between the accounts of Matthew and Luke seems to stem from the timing of events. Matthew recorded earlier events when both criminals hurled insults at Jesus. Luke picks up the story when one of them, seeing Jesus forgive his executioners (Lk 23:34), decided to believe in Jesus.

### DID GOD ACTUALLY FORSAKE JESUS? (27:46)

The divine and human natures of Jesus were never separated, even during the crucifixion.

Yet it is clear, difficult as it is to explain, that Jesus' intimate fellowship with God the Father was temporarily broken as he took the sin of the entire world on himself. Jesus quoted the words of Psalm 22, which begins with despair but ends with renewed trust in God.

#### **WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE FEEL ABANDONED BY GOD? (27:46)**

With the sins of the world on him, Jesus felt the agony of separation from his Father. At times, we may feel alone, abandoned or rejected. If difficult circumstances or emotional stress leave us uncertain about God's presence, we should remember God's promise: "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb 13:5).

#### **WHY DID THE CURTAIN IN THE TEMPLE TEAR IN TWO? (27:51)**

This large blue, purple and scarlet curtain (Ex 26:31–33) separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the inner room of the temple that had earlier housed the ark, which symbolized God's presence (Ex 30:6; Lev 16:1–2). The curtain was, in effect, the barrier that separated people from God. When God supernaturally tore the curtain (perhaps by an earthquake), he showed dramatically that Jesus' death had given people access to God (Heb 9:1–15; 10:19–22).

#### **WHY DID GOD BRING SOME DEAD PEOPLE BACK TO LIFE AT THIS TIME? (27:52–53)**

The unusual events that accompanied Jesus' death and resurrection marked an unprecedented crossroads in history. The resurrection of these holy people gave additional evidence that death was not the final victor. It also foreshadowed a time when all the faithful will be raised to life (1Co 15:20,50–57; 1Th 4:13–18).

#### **LINK (27:57–61) JOSEPH TOOK THE BODY**

Also see Mark 15:42–47, Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42.

#### **WHAT KIND OF SEAL WOULD HAVE MADE THE TOMB SECURE? (27:66)**

The stone covering the tomb's entrance probably had a rope or cord wrapped across it. The cord was then sealed in wax or clay at each end, so that no one could move the stone without breaking the seal or cutting the cord. It is possible that the seal included the official imprint of the Roman Empire, so anyone who broke the seal would have been violating imperial law. Of course, the detachment of soldiers stationed by the tomb added force to the seal.

#### **LINK (28:1–8) MARY MAGDALENE AND THE OTHER MARY WENT TO LOOK AT THE TOMB**

See Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–10; John 20:1–8.

<sup>47</sup>When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

<sup>48</sup>Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. <sup>49</sup>The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

<sup>50</sup>And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

<sup>51</sup>At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split <sup>52</sup>and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup>They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and<sup>a</sup> went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

<sup>54</sup>When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

<sup>55</sup>Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. <sup>56</sup>Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph,<sup>b</sup> and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

### **The Burial of Jesus**

<sup>57</sup>As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup>Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. <sup>59</sup>Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, <sup>60</sup>and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup>Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

### **The Guard at the Tomb**

<sup>62</sup>The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. <sup>63</sup>"Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' <sup>64</sup>So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

<sup>65</sup>"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." <sup>66</sup>So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

### **Jesus Has Risen**

**28** After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

<sup>2</sup>There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back

<sup>a</sup> 53 Or tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they

<sup>b</sup> 56 Greek Joses, a variant of Joseph

the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

<sup>8</sup>So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

### The Guards' Report

<sup>11</sup>While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. <sup>12</sup>When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, <sup>13</sup>telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ <sup>14</sup>If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” <sup>15</sup>So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

### The Great Commission

<sup>16</sup>Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup>When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

#### WHY DID SOME DISCIPLES DOUBT WHAT THEY SAW? (28:17)

The resurrection was so startling that some of the disciples found it hard to believe at first. For more than a month, therefore, Jesus supplied his disciples with *many convincing proofs that he was alive* (Ac 1:3; see Ac 10:40–41). It is possible that on this occasion some were seeing the risen Jesus for the first time.

#### WHY DOESN'T JESUS USE HIS AUTHORITY TO RIGHT EARTH'S WRONGS? (28:18)

The earth's wrongs do not result from a lack of power or concern on the Lord's part but from human rebellion against his authority. Eventually Jesus will bring a full and final end to injustice. Eventually everyone will acknowledge his authority (Php 2:9–11).

#### WHO SHOULD GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES? (28:19)

Jesus' command was intended not only for his first disciples but also for us today. By sharing in the ministry of disciple making, we submit to the authority of Christ Jesus (v. 18). Individuals may have different roles and abilities, but all of Jesus' disciples can have a part in calling others to follow Christ Jesus.

#### IS THE METHOD OF BAPTISM IMPORTANT? (28:19)

Throughout church history Christians have often been divided over this question. The original Greek word translated *baptize* meant “to dip, immerse or wash,” so some insist that immersion is the required method for Christian baptism. Others think the word is used as a metaphor (e.g., Lk 12:50; 1Co 10:2) and emphasizes the significance rather than the method. In this view, pouring or sprinkling symbolizes one's commitment to Christ Jesus. All Christians essentially agree, however, that baptism must be a matter of obedience to Christ Jesus. For other matters concerning baptism, see *Why didn't Paul baptize in the way Jesus had instructed?* (Ac 19:5; p. 1644) and *Does baptism save us?* (1Pe 3:21; p. 1818).

#### IN WHAT SENSE IS JESUS ALWAYS WITH US? (28:20)

Soon after saying these words, Jesus left this earth and ascended into heaven (Lk 24:50–51). Though physically absent, he remains with believers in a spiritual sense. It is his spiritual presence within that strengthens and encourages believers (Jn 14:16–20; Ro 8:9–11). Those who trust in Jesus will find him with them no matter where they go or what problems they face.

#### WHEN IS THE END OF THE AGE? (28:20)

This phrase means “until Jesus returns again.” At that point, a new era will begin when we shall be with Jesus and see him in his physical form.