

The Gospel of Matthew

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Who is Jesus?

Roger Polanco

Text: Matthew 1-4

Introduction - The Purpose of the book of Matthew

- Why was the gospel of Matthew written? I think two unique sections at the end of the book of Matthew helps us answer this question.
- These 2 texts are Matthew 27:62-66 and Matthew 28:11-15
- One of the reasons why we know that Matthew 28:11-15 is important is because it is unique to Matthew. It's not included in Mark or Luke. Also note that Matthew tells the story of the resurrection very quickly without many details, but gives us 3 unique texts. Matthew 27:62-66, Matthew 28:11-15 and Matthew 28:16-20
- Note Matthew 28:15 "And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day."
 - This story about the disciples stealing the body was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.
 - If the disciples stole the body- then Jesus was not risen from the dead which means Jesus is an imposter and deceiver. A false messiah like others who had risen in the past (see Acts 5:33-37)
 - So Matthew is writing this book to tell us who Jesus is. Is he a deceiver like the religious leaders say?- Matthew 27:63 or is he the Messiah- the fulfillment of all of God's purposes, plans and prophecies?
 - I believe answering the above question is the purpose of the book of Matthew. If not the purpose of the book, it is definitely the purpose of the first 4 chapters of the book of Matthew.
 - So who is Jesus?
 - There is no topic more exciting than to talk about Jesus; when we talk about Jesus we are talking about God himself.

Matthew 1

- The record or book of the genealogy of Jesus
 - Record of the genealogy- See Genesis 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27
 - Jesus is the continuation of the story of Genesis
 - Genealogy- Genesis- same word in 1:18.
 - Matthew 1:1-17- is giving us his earthly beginning
 - Matthew 1:18- is giving us his divine beginning.
- Jesus the Messiah
 - 1st point Matthew is making is that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made in the

O.T. to Abraham and David.

- Note emphasis on the Son of David and Son of Abraham-
 - In Isaiah 9:6- a son is given. Isaiah 7:14: a virgin will be with Child and bear a son
 - Jesus is the son, the promise son of Isaiah. The son we have been waiting for.
- 1:18: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows”
 - Birth- word genesis- this is his divine origin.
 - That is the emphasis. That Jesus is Divine
 - Note: V18: Before they came together/ By the Holy Spirit
 - V19: Actually Joseph wanted to send her way
 - V20: the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.
 - V25: Kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son
 - There were controversies around the birth of Jesus
 - Was Jesus born of fornication? See John 8:41
 - This would have clarified the controversy regarding Jesus’ birth
 - Note the words child: V18: Found with child, 20, 23
 - Note that in chapter 2- How many references there are to Jesus being the Child
 - An interesting thing: In Matthew 1, two names are given to Jesus. But in Matthew 2 he is always called the Child. This tells us how important the Isaiah 7 and 9 Scriptures are
 - Matthew wants us to KNOW that Jesus is the Promised Child of Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6. That He IS the promised King.
 - Note the word ‘son’: V21-Bear a son, V23,25
 - These two words emphasize the two Isaiah Scriptures
 - Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”
 - Isaiah 9:6 “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”
 - This genesis, like Genesis 1, began with the Holy Spirit
 - See Genesis 1:2
 - God is starting a New Creation.
 - V20: Dreams: 2, 12, 13, 19, 22- also at the end of the story- 27:19
 - What book of the Bible has the word dream the most? Genesis- 30 times.
 - Matthew has the word 6 times.
 - This indicates that God is at work to fulfill his promises (just like in the book of Genesis).

- V21: theme verse
 - Jesus: Jehovah saves- If you want something done right, you must do it yourself.
 - His people: the book will identify his people- not just Jews but Gentiles
 - Saving them from what? Sin- the problem is sin. That's our problem.
- V22: this was to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet
 - Jesus is not just the fulfillment of the promises of the O.T., but also of the prophecies of the Old Testament
 - The word 'fulfill' is used throughout the book; it's especially prevalent in the beginning of the story and at the end.
- V23: They shall call his name Immanuel which translated means God with us
 - Note in V23: It says "THEY shall call him." The name Emanuel was never meant to be his actual name, rather it is a description of how they see him. Its a name that people will give him. Because when you see Jesus- You will know that God is with us.
 - God with us:
 - Jesus is the New tabernacle- God dwelling with his people- Exodus 25:8
 - Note the end of the book: Matthew 28:20: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age"
 - The God who became flesh to be with us, is the same God who is with us always as we try to do his mission.

Jesus the New Moses from Matthew 1

- Note the correlation between these two passages
 - Matthew 1:23 " 'BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL ,' which translated means, 'GOD WITH US.' "
 - Exodus 2:2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.
 - He was beautiful- Special
 - Acts 7:20 "It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home."
 - Acts 7:25 "And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand."
 - Point: Moses had a special purpose
 - Point: Both Jesus and Moses were born for a special purpose.

Jesus the New Israel from Matthew 1

- Both Jesus and Israel had a miraculous beginning
 - Israel was born of old parents but Jesus was born of a virgin

Matthew 2

- V1: Jesus was born in Bethlehem
 - There is a big emphasis in this chapter on Bethlehem. See V5, 6, 8, 16
 - If you remember from the gospel of John, there were question about Jesus being the Messiah because of many believing he was born in Nazareth. This chapter serves two purposes. First it tells that Jesus was born in Bethlehem as was prophesied in Micah 5:2, but also why Jesus grew up in Nazareth- V23. Thus why he was call Jesus of Nazareth and not of Bethlehem
 - I think both the story of the Visiting Magi and the story of the Slaughters at Bethlehem would have been stories well-known in Jerusalem. “Do you remember that time the magi came to Jerusalem?” or “Do you remember when crazy Herod killed those babies in Bethlehem?” Matthew is appealing to history to help people understand why Jesus ended up in Nazareth.
- **V1-2: “Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem...where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”**
 - These were Gentile believers who were searching for, and then worshipping a Jewish King. The Gentiles are a part of God’s plan.
- V2: “We saw His star in the east.”
 - See V7, 16
 - Numbers 24:17 “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.”
 - The idea of a star is to reaffirm that Jesus is a king. Another scripture is being fulfilled.
- V5-6: “It was written by the prophet...out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel”
 - Note Matthew’s quotation of Micah 5:2
 - Matthew wants to emphasize how this ruler will be like a shepherd. That he is a shepherd king
 - Micah 5:4 emphasizes the shepherd metaphor. It's almost like he combines them.
 - Why? Matthew seems to like the shepherd metaphor- see Matthew 9:36, 10:6, 14:19
 - Might be to show connection between Jesus and Moses and David- who were all 3 rulers AND shepherds.
 - If you look up the Micah passages you will see
 - Micah 5:2-4 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.” [3] Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. [4] And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.”
 - Note that this ruler is divine- from the days of eternity, he comes from the people of

Israel (which Matthew proves from the genealogies), he will **shepherd**, he will be great to the ends of the earth (irony that the magi have come from the ends of the earth to see him)

- V8: “Go and search carefully for the Child”
 - Herod is searching to kill while the Gentiles search to worship.
 - Matthew is setting us up for Jews rejection of the Messiah and the Gentiles inclusion
- V11: they presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh
 - Gifts worthy of a king.
 - But these are a clear allusion to Isaiah 60:6- the Gentiles being part of God’s people.
 - Isaiah 60:1-6- talks about a light appearing V1 (we saw his star), and V3 nations will come to your light (the magi coming when they saw the star), V4 your sons will come from afar (the magi coming from the east), V5 they will bring the wealth of nations, V6 talks about gold and frankincense.
 - Isaiah 60:6 “A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the LORD”
 - Matthew’s point is this: Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 60. He is the servant king. But he is not just the king of the Jews. He will be a universal king who will also save the Gentiles.

Jesus the new Moses

- Moses and Jesus were Shepherd rulers who would be rejected by his people.

Matthew 2:13-15: the Flight to Egypt

- V13: “Get up! Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt”
 - Can you imagine the change of emotion? One moment Jesus is being worshipped as king and the next moment they must flee because Herod wants to kill him
 - Matthew is giving us a preview of what is to come at the end of the story.
 - **Note elements of this story that remind us of the exodus**
 - Angel of the Lord, Get up, flee, while it is still night to Egypt
 - It almost like Matthew is saying a new exodus is taking place.
 - God’s people are still in bondage and God has sent them a new Moses to free them
 - The fact that God’s people are still in bondage or exile is the point of the quotation of Jeremiah 31:15 in Matthew 2:18. Jesus is experiencing exile. But if you keep reading in Jeremiah 31 you know that the tears will stop (Jeremiah 31:15), He will bring back his people back from exile (Jer. 31:16), God will fulfill his promises (Jer. 31:20), He will give them a new covenant (Jer. 31:31)
 - God has entered the exile in order to free them from it.
 - It explains why Jesus is going through all of this. In the first exodus, Pharaoh’s firstborn son had to die in order for God’s people to be free. In this exodus, God’s

firstborn son had to die. He had to be rejected in order for us to be free.

- Yet there are some element of this exodus that are different. The big notable one is that in the exodus story, Egypt is the enemy and God is trying to get them out of it. Here, God has to get his son out of Israel the promised land and bring him to Egypt-ironically the place of refuge
 - Matthew is making an important point. Jerusalem has become the new Egypt with a new pharaoh (Herod). This explains why God has to destroy Jerusalem. An important theme in the book of Matthew.

• But most important Matthew is making the point that Jesus is the New Moses- who has come to free His people

- As good of a time as any to talk about the idea that Jesus is the new Moses.
- We have already noted that Jesus and Moses were born for a special purpose.
- Jesus and Moses were both shepherds of God’s people.
- Here we see that both Moses and Jesus were nearly killed in their infancy by an evil ruler- Moses by Pharaoh (Exodus 2), Jesus by Herod the new Pharaoh
- Both Jesus and Moses have to flee their country in order to be saved from that ruler.
- Both Moses and Jesus were able to come back after the person who tried to kill them was dead.
 - Matthew 2:20 NASB95 “Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.”
 - Exodus 4:19 NASB95 “Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, ‘Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.’”
- Both Moses and Jesus had the Spirit of God
 - Jesus when he was baptized- Matthew 3:15
 - Moses in Numbers 11:17
- Moses like Jesus spent a period of 40 in the Wilderness
 - Matthew 4:1 and the book of Exodus and Numbers
- Other parallels between Moses and Jesus includes: (See *I Brought You Out: Studies on the Exodus*, Page 46)
 - Special child rescue from an evil king bent on his destruction
 - One who leaves a place of glory to cast his lot with the lowly
 - One who works signs and wonders
 - One changes water to blood and the other water to wine
 - A savior and redeemer who delivers God’s people from bondage
 - One who provides bread and water to the people
 - One who sees the form of God and hears God’s voice on behalf of the people
 - One who reveals the will of God to people

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- A mediator of a new covenant and giver of the law
 - One who builds a tabernacle for God to dwell in among the people
 - One who institutes the priesthood and sacrificial system to provide forgiveness of sins
 - One who leads the people to the promised land
 - One who is despised and rejected by the people- Stephen's point in Acts
 - Why these parallels?
 - first Matthew want us to see that God has kept his promise to raise up a prophet like Moses.
 - Deuteronomy 18:15-19 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. [16] This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' [17] The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. [18] I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. [19] It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.'"
 - Notice the point- a prophet like me- from your countrymen (brothers)
 - Jesus is a true prophet who is like Moses but from among you, from your countrymen (a brother). Jesus is from 'among them', he is like them because he has lived their experiences.
 - But notice the emphasis of that text. This prophet, like Moses, has God's Word, or God's commandments, and we must listen to him.
 - If Jesus is who Matthew says he is then we must listen to him.
 - As you are already aware, there are connections between the story sections in the book of Matthew and the discourse or teaching that Jesus does. What follows the stories about Jesus being Jehovah, the king, the new Moses? It's the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew is trying to get us to listen attentively to this sermon and obey it .
 - If we don't listen to the new Moses, we will be cut off.
 - Do you remember the exhortation in the book of Hebrews?
 - Hebrews 2:1-3 "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. [2] For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, [3] how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard"
 - Hebrews 12:25 "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven."
 - Point: We must listen to the new Moses.
 - There is an emphasis in the book of Matthew on doing what God says.

- The way the Sermon on the Mount finishes is:
 - You shall know them by their fruits
 - Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”
 - The parable of the two builders.
- Emphasis on lawlessness
 - Matthew 7:23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”
 - Matthew 13:41 “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness”
 - Matthew 23:28 “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”
 - Matthew 24:12 “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.”
- Remember the parable of the two sons which is unique to Matthew?
 - Matthew 21:28-31 “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ [29] And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it and went. [30] The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’; but he did not go. [31] Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.”
- **Jesus is the New Moses, with a New Law, which He expect his people to obey.**
- We as leaders need to hear this so badly- that was the failing of the religious leaders in Jesus times.
 - Matthew 23:2-4 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; [3] therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them. [4] They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.”
 - We need to ask ourselves, “Are we doing what God says?”

Matthew 2:15: Jesus as the New Israel

- V15: “This was to fulfill...Out of Egypt I call my son”
 - This is a quotation from Hosea 11:1.
 - Hosea 11:1 “When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.”
 - It’s clear when you read Hosea 11:1 that it is talking about Israel. How can Jesus be a fulfillment of this?

- Jesus is a fulfillment by being a type.
- Matthew is saying Jesus fulfilled Hosea 11:1 by being a type of Israel. Both Jesus and Israel are sons.

• Jesus is the New Israel.

- Jesus like Israel had a miraculous beginning
- Jesus like Israel is called the Son of God.
- Jesus like Israel was brought out of Egypt
- Jesus like Israel was oppressed and persecuted by a king
- Jesus like Israel passed through the water (Jesus when he was baptized, and Israel when they cross the red sea).
 - That's why Jesus was baptized. To fulfill scripture
 - Matthew 3:15 "But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him."
 - Jesus is not saying let me get baptized because that's a good and right thing to do. Jesus must be baptized to fulfill Scripture
 - The word 'fulfilled' is the same word used in 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23
 - Jesus must be baptized to be a type of Israel and to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah which say the servant of the Lord must have the Spirit of God- Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, Isaiah 61:1
- Jesus like Israel was led to the wilderness. That's what we see in Matthew 4.
 - Let's note some similarities between Matthew 4:1-4 and Deut. 8:
 - Matthew 4:1-4: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2] And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. [3] And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." [4] But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'""
 - Deuteronomy 8:1-5 "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers. [2] You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. [3] He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. [4] Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. [5] Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son."
 - Note that both Israel and Jesus in the wilderness are called son- Matthew 4:3 and Deut. 8:5

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- Jesus and Israel were led to the wilderness- Mat. 4:1 and Deut. 8:2
 - Jesus and Israel were there for a time of 40. Mat. 4:2- forty days and Deut. 4:2
 - Both were tested- Mat. 4:1 and Deut. 8:2
 - Both hungered- Matthew 4:2 and Deut. 8:3
 - Big difference is this:
 - That Israel failed their role as the son of God by disobeying God, testing God and worshiping idols
 - Jesus passed the test- by living according to every word that preceded from the mouth of God.
 - In Deut. 8:2 why did God test Israel?
 - To know if Israel would obey.
 - Jesus was the perfect child who had God's word in his heart (Deut. 6:6) and obeyed his command.
 - **I want us to think about this role of the son. In a bigger way that will help us put many images together in the Bible**
 - I want us to think of the son imagery as a role or office to be occupied. We already saw here that Israel had a role to be God's son and through that role be a blessing, but he failed. Jesus fulfilled it.
 - Who are some others who had this role?
 - Remember Adam- In Luke 3:38- He is called the son of God.
 - Adam like Israel was a son of God. They were supposed to partners with God to be a blessing in this world. Both failed in their roles by not obeying God's word.
 - Do you remember the kind of relationship God had with David's descendants? It was a father/son relationship
 - 2 Samuel 7:14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men"
 - Psalm 2:6-7 "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." [7] "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"
 - The kings were sons of God and they were supposed to be partners with God to be blessings to this world
 - But as the genealogy shows us- the kings fail in this task as well.
 - Thus the emphasis on David's sin
 - Matthew 1:6 "Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah."
 - Everyone who has stepped into this role has failed. Every son has failed. Israel failed and the kings failed. That is why Israel is in captivity.
 - Enter the book of Isaiah.

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- Do you remember our two key scriptures from Isaiah?
 - Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”
 - Isaiah 9:6 “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”
 - Here comes The Son- the One who will do it. He is The King.
 - Isaiah then uses another metaphor to talk about the same role.
 - The servant: Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, Isaiah 61:1
 - This is why sometimes in Isaiah it can be confusing.
 - Sometimes Israel is called the servant- Isaiah 45:4, 49:2
 - But in the same book there is another servant that can’t be Israel...
 - Isaiah 49:3, 5 “He said to Me, ‘You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.’ [5] And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength)”
 - How can Israel be the servant and also bring Jacob back to him? -Jesus steps into this role- to free us from captivity.
 - The servant role and the son role are the same role.
 - Do you remember what was said at Jesus’ baptism?
 - Matthew 3:17 “and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’”
 - My beloved son- Quotation Ps. 2:7
 - In whom I am well-pleased- Isaiah 42:1
 - Jesus has come to fulfill both roles
 - We are now the Servants of the Lord.
 - In Isaiah the servant metaphor goes from singular to plural.- See Isaiah 54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13, 14, 15
 - Note that all the references to the servant in plural comes after Isaiah 53.
 - Isaiah 54:17 “ ‘No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me,’ declares the LORD.”
 - Isaiah 65:13 “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry. Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.”
 - We are sons of God now; we are the new Israel; we are the servants of the Lord. Those that are in Christ.
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- Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”
- We are supposed to be a blessing to all the nations.
- We must evangelize to all nations.
- This is scary. But look at what the Son was willing to do in order to bring us the gospel. He was a fugitive, he underwent persecution. Why do we want to be so comfortable?
- He will be with us- Emmanuel- God with us. The more lonely we are, the scarier it gets, the more we will rely on him, and the closer He will be.

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John the Baptizer

Chase D. Byers

Text: Matthew 3, 11, 14, 17

Introduction

1. Matthew 11:11 – “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared, but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”
 - i. If anyone can make a claim like this, it would be the eternal Jesus Christ.
 1. A statement like this should help us see our need to study the character and life of John the Baptizer.
2. Acts 18:24-19:7 – “Now a Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, an eloquent man who was competent in the use of the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately about Jesus, although he knew only John’s baptism. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately. When he wanted to cross over to Achaia, the brothers and sisters wrote to the disciples to welcome him. After he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating through the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” “No,” they told him, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” “Into what then were you baptized?” he asked them. “Into John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy. Now there were about twelve men in all.”
 - i. Several decades after John has been beheaded his teaching was still impacting others and making disciples.
 1. Alexandria, the place where Apollos was from, was over 500 miles away from where John was doing his preaching. Although he likely learned this teaching once he left his home place, it still shows how far John’s teaching went.
 2. Ephesus, where Paul baptized these 12 men into the name of Jesus, is nearly 800 miles away from John’s preaching and baptizing location (if you travel by sea.)
 3. The point: John’s message impacted countless souls for many decades, and for good reason. If we will study John’s simple message of repentance and his proclamation of the coming Messiah, we will learn why he had such great impact.
3. [John the Baptizer] “was Jesus’ cousin and is one of only two people in history whose coming, like that of his cousin, was foretold by prophets and announced by angels.” (Croll, pg. 9)
4. Revelation 20:4 – “Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given

authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

- i. We need not forget that John the Baptizer was a disciple of Jesus Christ. He was the one who said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)
- ii. John was beheaded for the cause of Christ. For teaching what was true, and telling all men to repent, even kings.
- iii. “It would fill John with joy if we, by thinking about his ministry and message, grow closer to the LORD he so faithfully served.” (Croll, pg. 16)

Matthew 3

1. 3:1 – Who is John the Baptizer?

1. His Family

i. Father – Zechariah. “Zechariah” means “Whom YHWH remembers”.

1. Luke 1:5a – “In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah’s division named Zechariah.”
 - a. Zechariah was one of many priests who would have been serving in the temple. Concerning the priesthood Josephus wrote: “for although there be four courses of the priests, and every one of them have above five thousand men in them, yet do they officiate on certain days only; and when those days are over, other priests succeed in the performance of their sacrifices, and assemble together at mid-day, and receive the keys of the temple, and the vessels by tale, without any thing relating to food or drink being carried into the temple.” (Antiquity, Against Apion, 2.8)
 - b. His job was to go into the sanctuary and burn incense (Luke 1:9). This is the location where the angel Gabriel came and proclaimed John’s birth.
2. Zechariah was described as a righteous man. (Luke 1:6)
3. Zechariah would come around to know what John’s purpose was. (Luke 1:59-79)
 - a. As it was described by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:13-17)
 - b. And by his own confession and prophecy (Luke 1:76-77)

ii. Mother – Elizabeth. “Elizabeth” means, “God is an oath”.

1. Luke 1:5b – “His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.”
 - a. Elizabeth was also from a priestly family.
2. Elizabeth was described as a righteous woman. (Luke 1:6)
3. Elizabeth had been barren and was now old (Luke 1:7)
4. Elizabeth saw God’s hand on her miraculous pregnancy (Luke 1:25)

iii. His Relation to Jesus

1. To Mary, Gabriel said in Luke 1:36a – “And even consider your relative Elizabeth”
 - a. “relative” or συγγενίς. “A relative (by blood); by extension, a kinswoman” (Strong’s)
 - b. How could Jesus and John be related if Jesus was from the tribe of Judah and John was from Levi? Simple scenario: a sister of one of Mary’s parent could have married a Levite, and they have Elizabeth. Making Mary and Elizabeth first cousins.
2. Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant when Gabriel came to Mary (Luke 1:36). 3 months later she would have John (Luke 1:56). Presumably 6 months after that, Mary would have Jesus. Putting 6 months of an age difference between John and Jesus.

2. His Name

i. John

1. People wanted to name him “Zechariah” after his father (Luke 1:61)
2. “John” was his God-given name.
 - a. “The name John (Iōannēs) literally means “Jehovah is gracious.” It refers to a “gift” or the idea of a person or thing which is “given.” It affirms that God is the Giver and His gift is gracious.” (Caldwell, pg. 125)
 - b. “Yohanan is sometimes written Johanan, occurring this way twenty-two times in the Old Testament. Yohanan is also the name of one of the Maccabees – the leading family in the intertestamental revolt against Greek rule. In Hebrew, the first letter of John’s name is yod or jot, which is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The pronunciation of yod/jot differs, with most contemporary Western scholars, and Israelis, preferring the former. This variation in the pronunciation of yod/jot would explain why the Hebrew version of John’s name is sometimes transcribed as Yohanan and sometimes as Johanan. In English, and some other languages, the ‘h’ of John has become silent, but not so elsewhere, where the name is written Johan but pronounced Yohan. English is not the only language that mangles John’s name: other versions from around the world include Ivan, Sean, Ian, Hans, Vanya, Jean, Juan, João and Giovanni. In Arabic his name is Yuhanna, although he is called Yahya in the Quran.” (Croll, pg. 225-226).

ii. Baptizer

1. I prefer this as to “Baptist”. “Baptizer” gets to the point. John was a person baptizing other people.
2. What would be even more clear is if we translated it as “John the Immerser.”
3. Commentators are split on whether proselyte baptizing was happening before John’s baptizing.
 - a. “John is introduced abruptly, distinguished by his regular title, *the Baptist* (so also Mark, Luke and Josephus), since he was apparently the first to baptize others (proselyte baptism and the baptisms at Qumran were self-

administered).” (France, pg. 90)

- b. “It is doubtful, however, whether proselyte baptism existed among the Jews previous to the [time of John the Baptist], as it is not mentioned in history until the 3rd century of the Christian era” (McGarvey, pg. 33)
- c. “Positive testimony that the baptism of proselytes existed in the time of Hillel and Shammai.” Which would mean that (previous to Christ) the baptism of proselytes was customary.” (Edersheim, II, pg. 747)

3. His Upbringing

- i. John would have become a priest if it was not for this divine intervention. John’s upbringing would have been in and around priests, pharisees, and temple service.
- ii. He was from the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron on both sides of his parents.
- iii. Luke 1:80 – “The child grew up and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.”

2. 3:3-4 – The Prophets and John

1. Isaiah 40:3

- i. Here in Matthew, he only quotes from Isaiah. See Mark’s gospel where he mashes up Isaiah and Malachi (Mark 1:2).
- ii. As Luke indicates (Luke 3:5-6), we understand better this prophecy if we continue reading in Isaiah: “Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; the uneven ground will become smooth and the rough places, a plain. And the glory of the LORD will appear, and all humanity together will see it, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:4-5)
- iii. In quoting this passage (almost exactly as it is rendered in the LXX), it makes 5 things clear about John the Baptist and his mission:
 - 1. It explains why he was in the wilderness (vs 1)
 - 2. John is a “voice” crying out (vs 2)
 - 3. John is a preparer of the way (vs 11-12)
 - 4. The Lord is coming (vs 11-12)
 - 5. John is making His paths straight (vs 6-10)
 - a. A simple picture: John is to create a smooth ride into the Kingdom for the Lord and His glory.
 - b. “Thus, when kings went on trips they sent advancement to prepare a way. Sometimes this meant leveling mountains, raising valleys, filling swamps, bridging rivers or removing other obstacles.” (Chumbley, pg. 55)

2. Malachi 3:1

- i. Although not quoted here in Matthew’s gospel, it is quoted later in 11:10 by Jesus concerning John.
- ii. This prophecy carries with it the idea of “preparing the way” like in Isaiah but adds the idea of “messenger”.

1. John would prepare the way by preaching a message that he was given by inspiration.
3. Coming in the likeness of Elijah – Why is he dressed like that? (3:4)
 - i. Why is he dressed like that?
 1. This would identify him like one of the prophets of old
 - a. 2 Kings 1:8 – “They replied, “A **hairy man with a leather belt** around his waist.” He said, “It’s Elijah the Tishbite.””
 - b. Zech. 13:4 – “On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they **will not put on a hairy cloak** in order to deceive.”
 2. John was not a rich man, he wore common clothing, some would even say poor.
 - a. Jesus will say in chapter 11 concerning John, “What then did you go out to see? **A man dressed in soft clothes?** See, those who wear soft clothes are in royal palaces.” (Mt. 11:8)
 - b. To see more detailed research on the history and use of camel hair, see Croll’s book (pages 55-58.)
 - ii. Why is he eating locusts and wild honey?
 1. That is what is in the wilderness!
 2. Locust considered a clean food (Lev. 11:22)
 3. John was not a man of great means and wealth. He had one job that he put all of his focus into: prepare the way of the Lord.
 - iii. Why is he in the wilderness?
 1. “This is not where we expect a voice to be sounding; we look for it in the great city, where there will be many to hear. But there is often sinfulness and vice in the city, and there are passages in Scripture where the Lord’s people are in the wilderness. It may be that the language here is not simply geographical but also theological: it is there, in the lonely wilderness, the place of openness to the message of God, that preparation is being made to receive the Lord.” (Morris, comments on Mt. 3:3)
 - iv. For further comparison on Elijah and John see notes on 11:14

3. 3:2, 5-12 – What is he preaching?

1. Preaching that men should repent – vs 2
 - i. In the Old Testament, God always wanted this for His people, to repent and turn from their sinful ways. Many of those times God delivered that message through the mouth of a prophet – 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 51:13; Is. 55:6-7; Jer. 26:3; Eze. 14:6; 18:21-23; Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:10; Zech. 1:3.
 - ii. So we should not be surprised that when this prophet comes on the scene, he is also preaching that men should be turning from sin and turning back to God.
 - iii. μετανοέω – “to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider (morally, feel compunction).” (Strong’s)
 - iv. μετανοέω – “to repent, to change any or all of the elements composing one’s life:

attitude, thoughts, and behaviors concerning the demands of God for right living.” (Mounce)

- v. Jesus will soon bring forth this same message of repentance – Mt. 4:17
 - vi. Jesus will send out his apostles to bring forth this same message of repentance – Mark 6:12
 - vii. His apostles will boldly proclaim this same message in the book of Acts – Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20.
2. Preaching that the kingdom of heaven is here – vs 2
- i. Matthew uses “kingdom of heaven” 30x in his gospel, and “Kingdom of God” 6x. The other 3 gospels exclusively use “Kingdom of God”.
 - ii. It is helpful to note when Matthew uses “Kingdom of Heaven”, he is often referring to the coming of the King and His Rule.
 - 1. “The kingdom is closely connected with the person of Jesus, and this is what is in mind with John's use of the expression. He is pointing to the truth that Jesus will shortly appear, and with him the kingdom. There is a sense in which the kingdom is future (cf. 25:31, 34; 26:29), and another sense in which it is present. It is this latter to which John points.” (Morris, comments on Mt. 3:2)
3. Preaching how to repent (bear fruit) – vs 7-10
- i. Luke 3:10-14
 - 1. Sharing – vs 11
 - 2. Being honest in your dealings with others – vs 12-14
 - 3. Being content with your wages – vs 14
 - ii. We can often be too vague when it comes to calling on others to repent, John the Baptist was straight forward and unafraid to tell people what repentance would look like for them.
4. Preaching about wrath to come – vs 7-10
- i. The Pharisees and Sadducees coming to John would have been men others would have wanted to come and join them.
 - ii. John sees that they are coming only to avoid the wrath to come, not to participate in deeper change and commitment.
5. Preaching about baptism – vs 11
- i. Baptism in water
 - 1. What did Jewish people know about baptism to this point?
 - a. Proselyte baptism as discussed on page 4.
 - b. Jewish ritual cleansings in *mikvehs* (small baptistries scattered throughout the holy lands for Jews to ceremonially wash in).
 - i. Perhaps referred to in Hebrews 6:4, 9:10
 - 2. The mode? Full immersion. In the Jordan river.
 - a. βαπτίζω – to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed. (Strong's)

b. John chose places where there was “much water” (John 3:23)

3. The why?

a. As they were repenting.

b. As they were confessing.

c. For the forgiveness of sins

i. Although not in Matthew’s gospel, this is stated in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3.

ii. Was it for the forgiveness of sins? Yes, because it says it forgave their sins.

iii. Some have asked the question, “would these people need to be baptized once again after the death of Christ?”

iv. Paul thought so – Acts 19:1-7. The emphasis Paul makes here is 2-fold:

1. The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance.

2. They needed to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

a. Perhaps the emphasis here is on the name of the Risen Lord Jesus and how that relates to baptism (Rom. 6:1-7).

ii. Baptism in Holy Spirit

1. By his own admission, his baptism is not accomplishing this. But the one who is to come after him will.

2. What is this referring to?

a. The outpouring of God’s Spirit as has been anticipated in the Old Testament.

i. Joel 2:28-29 – “**After this I will pour out my Spirit** on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions. **I will even pour out my Spirit** on the male and female slaves in those days.” (emphasis mine, CDB).

ii. Isaiah 32:15 – “until the **Spirit from on high is poured out** on us.” (emphasis mine, CDB).

iii. Ezekiel 39:29 – “I will no longer hide my face from them, for **I will pour out my Spirit** on the house of Israel.” This is the declaration of the Lord GOD.” (emphasis mine, CDB).

b. This was anticipated because God’s Spirit never came back to the second temple.

i. Consider the temple scenes and the dramatic moving in of God’s Glory (Ex. 40:33-38; Lev. 9:23-24; 1 Kings 8:9-10; 2 Chron. 7:1-3)

ii. Consider the prophecies in Ezekiel concerning God’s Spirit/glory being driven out of the temple.

1. Ezekiel 8:6 – Idol worship in the temple starts driving it out.

2. Ezekiel 10:3 – Now the glory is out of the temple.

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3. Ezekiel 10:18-19 – It is still leaving.
 4. Ezekiel 11:22-23 – It is finally gone.
 5. Ezekiel 43:1-5 – Prophecies that the Spirit is coming back into this new temple. But when?
- iii. Did the Spirit move back into the second temple in the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah? Not likely.
 1. No dramatic move in day – Ezra 6:15-16
 2. Malachi 3:1 – “See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. **Then the Lord you seek** will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in — see, he is coming,” says the LORD of Armies.” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - c. Does this mean we have all been baptized in the Holy Spirit if we have been baptized in the name of Jesus?
 - i. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism (Acts 2:38)
 - ii. The gift is the Spirit that dwells in us (Acts 5:32)
 - iii. Paul consistently reminds Christians that the Spirit dwells in them to motivate obedience and produce confidence. (Romans 8; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16-18).
 - iv. So to be baptized in the name of Jesus would be to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. It has been poured out on us the same way it was for Jews at Pentecost. This would make sense to me when you consider passages like John 3:5; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 12:13.
 - v. It would also seem odd if the baptism of the Holy Spirit by Jesus that John refers to here only applied to the 12 apostles, the 120 in Acts 1-2, and Cornelius and his household in Acts 10. Not to mention it would have likely only have been the 12 apostles who would have heard John say this.
 1. For a more thorough treatment of this, see “**All Believers Are Baptized In The Holy Spirit**” by Gary Fisher in the appendix.
 - d. Were the apostles baptized in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost?
 - i. The Spirit was certainly poured out on them (Acts 2:1-4)
 - ii. Jesus said they would be (Acts 1:5)
 - iii. The Spirit was poured out on Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44-48).
 1. Peter connected these events (Acts 11:15-17; 15:8-9)
- iii. Baptism in Fire
 1. Jesus is not only bringing God’s Spirit to pour out on mankind, but He is also bringing judgment. We should allow the immediate context to make this point clear:
 - a. Matthew 3:10 – “The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit will be cut down and **thrown into the**
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- fire.”** (emphasis mine, CDB)
- b. Matthew 3:12 – “His winnowing shovel is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn. But the chaff he will **burn with fire that never goes out.**” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - c. This also agrees with the prophets – Malachi 4:1-3.
2. Some have suggested that the baptism of fire has to do with purification as we see in other places in Scripture.
 - a. “Baptizing with the Holy Spirit goes along with baptizing with fire, which here stands for purification... but the link with the Holy Spirit makes it more likely that the same people are referred to and that they are purified as well as indwelt (fire was linked with the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:3).” (Morris, comments on Mt. 3:11)
 - b. “Purification by fire was also a prophetic hope (Is. 4:4; Zc.13:9 Mal. 3:2; Is. 1:25). John therefore predicts a real cleansing, in contrast with his own merely outward token.” (France, pg. 93)
6. Preaching about the coming Messiah – vs 11-12
 - i. Jesus is greater than John – vs 11
 - ii. Jesus is the groom, John is the groom’s friend – John 3:27-30
 1. John knew his place and role in this Kingdom.
 2. John understood that his role was to become obsolete. “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30)
 - iii. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – John 1:29
 1. An obvious reference to the atoning nature of a sacrifice as seen in Leviticus 16.
 2. Perhaps even more clear is the prophecy concerning the suffering servant in Isaiah 53:6-7.
 3. To what degree John fully understood the self-sacrifice Jesus would offer 3 years later, we are unsure.

4. 3:13-17 – The Baptism of Jesus

1. Vs 13 – Baptizing in the Jordan River
 - i. Also baptizes in Aenon near Salim – John 3:23
2. Vs 14 – John’s understood hesitancy
 - i. I would imagine many of us would do the same. Knowing that John is baptizing for the forgiveness of sin, why would the sinless Son of God need to be baptized?
3. Vs 15 – Jesus’ Persistence
 - i. Why would this “fulfill all righteousness”?
 1. Jesus is doing all things that are “right”.
 2. This marks the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Something the Father had “eternally purposed” since the beginning. (Eph. 3:9-11; 1 Pet. 1:19-20)

3. Baptism is something Jesus is going to require of all of his followers.
4. Vs 16-17 – Significance of Jesus’ Baptism
 - i. All 3 persons of the Godhead are present here.
 - ii. The anointing of the Holy Spirit
 1. A sign of Jesus’ ministry beginning.
 - a. Matthew 12:28 – “If **I drive out demons by the Spirit of God**, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - b. Acts 10:37-38 – “You know the events that took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached: **how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the devil, because God was with him.**” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - iii. The voice of the Father
 1. “this is my beloved son”
 - a. Clear overtones from the following Old Testament passages:
 - i. Gen. 22:2 (LXX) – “And he said, **Take thy son, the beloved one**, whom thou hast loved—Isaac, and go into the high land, and offer him there for a whole-burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - ii. Psalms 2:7 – I will declare the LORD’s decree. He said to me, “**You are my Son; today I have become your Father.**” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - iii. Isaiah 42:1 – “**This is my servant; I strengthen him, this is my chosen one; I delight in him. I have put my Spirit on him;** he will bring justice to the nations. (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - b. “Jesus was not “begotten” in the ordinary sense, but was *brought forth* as God, from God, and out of God. The double prophecy of Hosea 11:1 declared, “When Israel was a child then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1). Here God calls Israel both a child whom God “loved” and one whom God called “my son.” Jesus became a figure of Israel as a whole. He was brought into a foreign land, and then called out by the power of God (cf. 2:15).” (Pope, pg. 98)
 2. “in whom I am well pleased”
 3. We hear this again at the transfiguration, only with the added admonition for the apostles on the mount to “listen to him” – Matt. 17:5
 4. It is also helpful to think about the impact this would have had on those present for this event.

Matthew 11, 17

1. 11:1-3 – John’s Circumstances & Question

1. Vs 2 – The nature of John’s imprisonment

- i. Gospel writers wait to tell the story of why he was imprisoned.
 1. Matthew's Gospel – No mention of his imprisonment until 11:2.
 2. Mark's Gospel – John is arrested in 1:14, but the story is not told until 6:14ff.
 3. Luke's Gospel – John is arrested in 3:20, but his death is not mentioned until 9:7-9.
 4. John's Gospel – It is mentioned that John "had not yet been arrested" in 3:24, but other than that we do not see John come back on the scene in this gospel or reference made to his imprisonment. Although reference is made to him by others and Jesus (4:1; 5:33-36; 10:40-41).
- ii. The disciples of John are coming and going, so it would seem John had some amount of freedom, not in total confinement.
- iii. It is hard to think about being in John's position, getting to hear about these things, but not getting to see them.

2. Vs 3 – John's Question

- i. Why did he ask this?
 1. He was experiencing doubt. Why?
 - a. We all experience doubt, why couldn't he?
 - b. John had not seen or heard Christ do any miracles, he has been in prison!
 - c. He had a different vision for what the Kingdom would be like.
 - d. Suffering produces doubt, but he went to the right source.
 2. He was passing his disciples off to Jesus.
 - a. He didn't do it in a sneaky way before – John 1:29, 36
 3. Perhaps he is simply asking the question, "is this the same person I baptized?"

2. 11:4-6 – Jesus' Answer

1. Vs 4-5 – Look at the evidence.
 - i. This is what Jesus was anointed to do – Luke 4:18-19/Is. 61:1-2
 - ii. See Luke 7:18-35
2. Vs 6 – Blessed is the one who isn't offended by me.
 - i. Passages about Jesus being the rock of offense – 1 Pet. 2:8; Rom. 9:33
 - ii. Jesus is reminding John that He is the one to come, because he fulfills the passages from Isaiah.
 1. In the signs and wonders – Is. 35:5 & Is. 61:1, Luke 4
 2. But also in being the stumbling block – Is. 8:14-15

3. 11:7-14 – Jesus' Commendation of John

1. Vs 7-10 – Jesus calls John a prophet and a messenger
 - i. What kind of prophet did the people want? Likely one talking about military reform.

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- ii. Vs 7-8 – John certainly wasn't either of these things.
 - 1. “a reed shaken by the wind.” Someone who is easily moved and swayed by the culture and their surroundings.
 - 2. “A man dressed in soft clothes.” John was quite the opposite, even down to the way he dressed in camel's hair.
 - iii. Vs 9 – John was a prophet. A proclaimer of God's message and will. In a lot of cases, it is sometimes more helpful to think of a prophet as a messenger (as verse 10 indicates).
 - iv. Vs 10 – Jesus himself quotes from Malachi 3:1, opposed to the authors of the gospels quoting it in retrospect. Jesus recognized the prophetic significance of John's coming.
 - 1. Jesus even flips the “me” for “you”.
 - 2. Vs 11a – “among those born of women no one greater than John the Baptist has appeared”
 - i. Greater in what way? 2 possibilities:
 - 1. Greater in his moral character, consistency, and dedication to proclaiming the way of the Lord.
 - 2. Greater in that he is the last of the prophets, how blessed is John that his mission is to help usher in this great Kingdom.
 - 3. Vs 11b – “least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” What does Jesus mean by this?
 - i. Jesus is ushering in the new Kingdom, so for John exiting the last one, you would be more blessed and greater since you are coming into the new Kingdom.
 - 1. To be in the bottom 10 on Jesus' Kingdom is better to have been in the top 10 in the last kingdom.
 - 2. “To be *in* that kingdom, even as the *least*, is to be *greater* (in the same sense) than the great man who proclaimed its coming, but remained as yet outside it.” (France, pg. 194)
 - 4. Vs 12-13 – The Kingdom of Heaven suffering violence
 - i. Morris summarizes the difficulties of this text like this: “It is a very difficult expression and has been understood in any one of three general ways: (1) The kingdom is being violently treated (taking the word as a passive), that is, its messengers and preachers and adherents are rejected with violence, which may refer to activities like those of Herod and of Jewish opponents of the gospel. (2) The kingdom suffers violence in the sense that some who look for it (the *violent men*; people like the Zealots?) are trying to bring it about by violent means; perhaps also they view it as no more than a political kingdom. (3) The kingdom is entered with burning zeal. This may be in the sense, “goes forward with triumphant force” (taking the verb as middle), or the verb may have the meaning “*invite urgently*, of the ‘genteel constraint imposed on a reluctant guest’” (BAGD, 2.d). Cf. NIV, “has been forcefully advancing”. (Morris, comments on Mt. 11:12)
 - 1. I tend to agree with a combination of 1 and 2. This Kingdom that Jesus has begun to preach about has already suffered violence at the hands of others and will continue to do so (Mt. 12:14; John 10:39; 11:53).
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2. While it is suffering this violence there are those in opposition to Jesus' way of bringing in this Kingdom (John 18:36). Their way of bringing in this kingdom would be to seize it by force and kick out the Romans. A want for some kind of military Messiah.
5. Vs 14 – The Elijah that is to Come
- i. It is here that we will also deal with Matt. 17:10-13 – How is John the Elijah to come?
 1. Notice the many comparisons between Elijah and John:

	Elijah	John the Baptizer
Hair with leather belt	2 Ki. 1:8	Mt. 3:4; Mk. 1:6
Called a prophet	1 Ki. 18:22	Mt. 11:9
Wilderness living and eating	1 Ki. 17:2-7	Luke 1:80; Mt. 3:4
Bold to speak to Kings	1 Ki. 18:17-18; 2 Ki. 1:3-17	Mt. 14; Mk. 6:14ff
Wanted dead by Queens	1 Ki. 19:1-3	Mt. 14; Mk. 6:14ff
Facing discouragement and doubt	1 Ki. 19	Mt. 11:1-3
Forerunners	For Elisha	For Christ – Mt. 3:11
Preached repentance to all people	1 Ki. 18:21	Mt. 3:8
“turned their hearts back”	1 Ki. 18:37	Luke 1:17
Anointed a successor in a public way	1 Ki. 19:16-21	Mt. 3:13-17
Arrived during a time of spiritual darkness	1 Ki. 21:25-26	Luke 1:79
Men of prayer	James 5:17	Luke 5:33; 11:1
Work done near Jordan River	1 Kings 17:5	Mt. 3:5
Mocked others falsehood and wrongness	1 Kings 18:27	Mt. 3:7-10

2. 17:10 – It is understandable for the disciples to have asked this, having just seen Elijah on this mountain (17:3)
3. 17:11 – “Elijah is coming and will restore everything” – Jesus is speaking in the future tense that the prophets would have been using to anticipate this coming Elijah.
 - a. The “restoration” Jesus speaks of would be the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6 – “Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And he will **turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers**. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.” (emphasis mine, CDB)
 - b. What is being restored is the hearts of the people.
4. 17:12 – Jesus' language is clear, Elijah did come, but they did not recognize him as the one prophesied about.
 - a. Instead, they did whatever they wanted to him. The same fate Jesus will face at the end of this gospel account.
5. 17:13 – The clearest statement across all 4 gospels that John is the fulfillment of

the Elijah that is to come in Malachi 3:1 & 4:5-6.

- a. If the disciples understood this, then we should be able to as well! Considering the many things they don't understand at this point.
 - b. This would mean there is no reason to continue looking for an Elijah.
 - c. William Branham tries to take this spot in Malachi 4. (see **Examining William Branham as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6** in the appendix).
- ii. What others were saying about John the Baptist
1. The prophets – see Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6; & Is. 40:3
 2. Jesus – see Mt. 11:7-15; John 5:31-36
 3. Zechariah – see Luke 1:67-79
 4. Common people – Matt. 14:5b; 21:24-26; Luke 25:33; 11:1; 20:6
 5. Gabriel – see Luke 1:12-17

4. 11:15-19 – Jesus' & John's Generation

1. Vs 15 – A call to listen and learn from John's example
 - i. "It is a call for more than superficial understanding, and invitation to explore the implications of what has been said." (France, pg. 196)
2. Vs 16-19 – A frustrating generation
 1. Vs 16-17 – A generation that will not listen
 - a. Much like the ones who would not dance when the flute was played, or much like the ones who would not mourn when the lament was sang, so is this generation who is not responding in the way they should to John and Jesus' preaching.
 2. Vs 18-19 – A generation that is never pleased
 - a. Vs 18 – When John came and would not eat and drink, this generation said he has a demon.
 - b. Vs 19 – But when Jesus came eating and drinking, they mocked him as a friend of tax collectors and sinners, naming him a drunk and glutton.
 - c. The point is simple: this generation will never be pleased. Once they get what they want, they complain about it. Much like children.
 - d. What this really reveals is the hardened hearts of this generation.

Matthew 14

1. 14:1 – Which Herod is this again?

1. See **Herodian Dynasty Chart** in appendix.
 - i. This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great

2. 14:2 – The Context for the Story

1. This tells us what Herod thought of John, even after his death.
2. Mark's gospel tells us that Herod feared John (Mark 6:20)
3. Interesting that Herod thought this explained the miracles, even though John was not doing miracles. (John 10:41)

3. 14:3-5 – John's Circumstances

1. Josephus' retelling of this story includes more details concerning his first wife and how she reacts to his intentions to marry Herodias, it does not end well for Herod!
2. This Herodias is also his niece! (see **Herodian Dynasty Chart** in appendix.)
 - i. see **Intriguing Comments From Josephus Concerning John the Baptist** in the appendix
3. John saying this is "unlawful" – vs 4
 - i. Unlawful according to the law of the land?
 - ii. Unlawful according to the law of God?
 1. "Antipas broke Jewish law by marrying his half brother's wife (Lev. 18:16). John's protest would therefore represent Orthodox Jewish opinion, and would be damaging to Antipas' prestige among his Jewish subjects." (France, pg. 234)
 2. Was Herod Jewish? Kind of. He had relatives who were called Jewish.
 - a. Acts 24:24a – "Several days later, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish..."
 - b. His Father, Herod the Great, was a Jewish convert.
4. Herod feared the crowd. Why? – vs 5
 - i. Similar to when they fear the crowd for Jesus.
 1. Matthew 21:45-46 – "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew he was speaking about them. Although they were looking for a way to arrest him, **they feared the crowds, because the people regarded him as a prophet.**" (emphasis mine, CDB)
 2. Jesus made this same connection in 17:12 – "But I tell you: Elijah has already come, and they didn't recognize him. On the contrary, they did whatever they pleased to him. **In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.**" (emphasis mine, CDB)

4. 14:6-12 – The Plot Leading to John's Death

1. Vs 6 – Herod's birthday and step-daughter
 - i. "Celebrating birthdays was a Hellenistic rather than Hebrew custom." (Chumbley, pg. 265)
 - ii. The name of his step-daughter was "Salome" according to Josephus. (Antiquities, 18.5.4)
2. Vs 7 – This dance was presumably lustful in nature, provoking the king to make a foolish oath.

3. Vs 8 – This is no surprise that she had to go ask her mother, this was all orchestrated by her and shows the youthfulness and possible naivety of Salome.
4. Vs 9 – Herod’s reasoning for going through with this.
 - i. On “regretted it”, see Mark 6:26
5. Vs 10-11 – Beheading John was such a Roman way of executing him. It also would have went against Jewish law to execute a man without a trial (Deut. 18-21). But Herod has clearly shown that he has no regard for Jewish law.
 - i. Chumbley had some interesting connections between John’s execution and Jesus’ crucifixion: “In many ways the death of John anticipated the death of Jesus (17.12). Both were handed over (*paradidomi*, 4.12, 27.2, 18, 26), seized (*krateo*, v 3, 26.4, 48, 50) and bound (*deo*, v 3, 27.2). Antipas delayed issuing John's execution order because of the people (v 5) and the Jewish hierarchy delayed their plot against Jesus because of the people (26.5). Antipas was reluctant to execute John: pilot was reluctant to execute Jesus (27.11-26). Both, however, caved to external pressure tied to ill-advised promises (v 7, 9, 27.15-17). Further, the wives of both men played a role behind the scenes: Herodias as the instigator of John's death (v 3, 8), Pilate’s wife as an unsuccessful advocate for Jesus (27.19). John's violent and humiliating death forbode Jesus’ violent and humiliating death (17.12) and both were buried by their disciples (v 12, 27.57-61). (Chumbley, pg. 267-268)
6. Vs 12 – John’s disciples take care of the body
 - i. Last time we saw John’s disciples was in 11:2.
 - ii. It is hard to think about the feelings Jesus would have been experiencing when these disciples told Jesus about his cousin.
 - iii. It is also hard to imagine that at least some of these disciples would not have started following Jesus now that John is gone.
7. The sins that lead to John’s death:
 - i. Lust/sensuality
 - ii. Pride
 - iii. Hatred
 - iv. Lack of courage
 - v. Rash vows
 - vi. Bad influences
 - vii. Adultery/unlawful marriage
8. see **Intriguing Comments From Josephus Concerning John the Baptist** in the appendix for more detail on how the people reacted to John’s death.

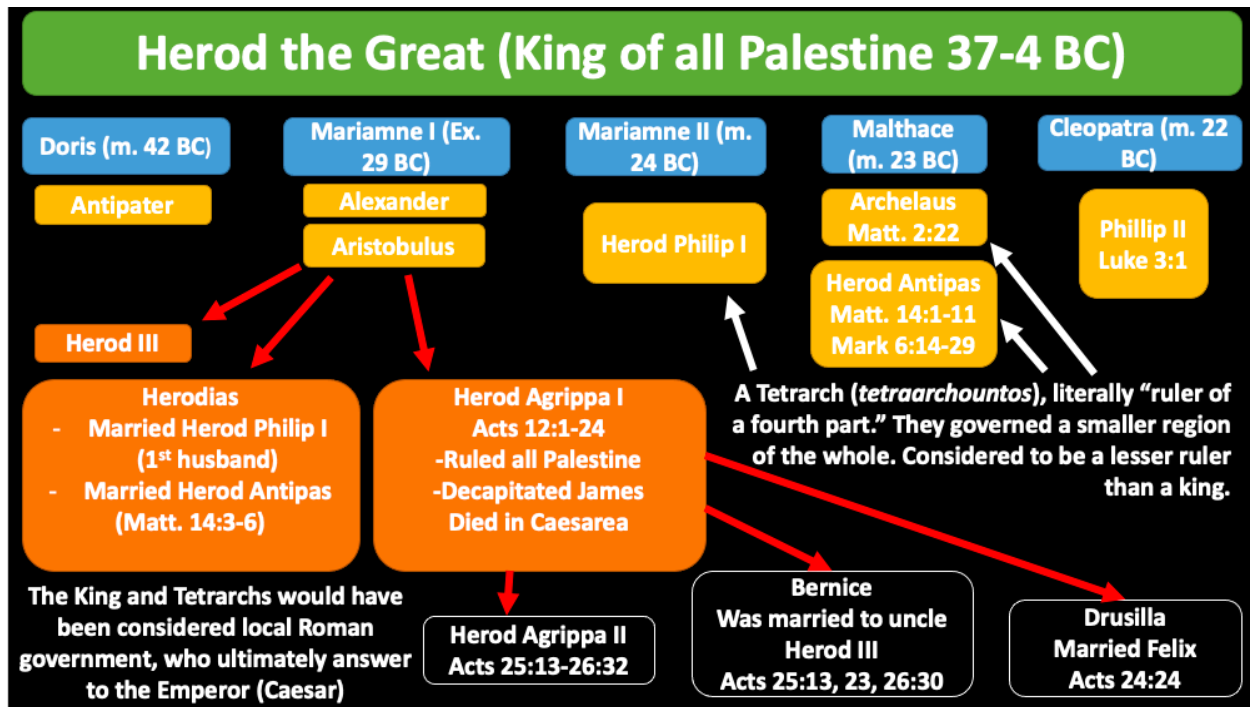
Conclusions and Applications

1. We cannot study the topic of John the Baptizer and not come to this conclusion: we have gotten so soft.
 - i. Are we a reed shaken by the wind?

- ii. Are we fat and well-dressed preachers?
- 2. Warnings we must heed from John today:
 - i. “I am a ___ generation Christian” can come from an attitude like “we have Abraham as our father”
 - ii. Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.
 - 1. It is one thing to say we are going to repent, but what are we doing to show it?
- 3. Character traits we must adopt from John:
 - i. We need **boldness** like John the Baptist
 - a. John was bold to tell the religious leaders of his day that they needed to repent, where many might be bashful.
 - b. John was bold to tell even kings that they should repent.
 - c. John was so bold all the way to the end. Even if this meant death for him, that is how serious the truth was to him.
 - d. John was bold to not only tell people that they needed to repent, but he would tell them *how* they could repent.
 - ii. We need **humility** like John the Baptist
 - a. John 3:30 – “He must increase, but I must decrease.”
 - b. Our goal in ministry is not to serve ourselves or receive recognition, it is for those we serve and teach to see Jesus more, and us less.
 - iii. We need **loyalty** like John the Baptist
 - a. Similar to above we need to be loyal the way John was. He never once misplaced his loyalty but was unwavering in his commitment to serving Jesus and his role in the kingdom.
 - iv. We need **purpose** and **drive** like John the Baptist
 - a. John saw the urgency in his mission, he was a driven man with a specific purpose.
 - b. Do we see and understand our purpose and mission as clearly as he did?
- 4. We all need a John the Baptist in our life. Someone who will call us out when we need it.
 - i. Someone who can call out sin – Mt. 18:15
 - ii. Someone to confess our sin to and can pray with us – James 5:16
 - iii. Someone who is spiritual who can gently, yet firmly, restore – Gal. 6:1-2

Appendix

Herodian Dynasty Chart



Suggested timeline of John the Baptist

1. John the witness: John 1:6-13.
2. John's birth narrative: Luke 1:5-25, 36-37, 39-80.
3. John preaching and baptizing: Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18.
4. Jesus baptized: Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; (John 1:14-15).
5. Behold the Lamb of God: John 1:19-34.
6. John passes on disciples to Jesus: John 1:35-42.
7. John's and Jesus's ministries coincide: John 3:22-30.
8. Jesus's disciples baptize more than John: John 4:1-3.
9. John put in prison: Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14; Luke 3:19-20 (John 3:24).
10. Questions about fasting: Matthew 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39.
11. Jesus says John is a witness: John 5:33-36.
12. Messengers from John: Matthew 11:1-19; Luke 7:18-35.
13. Antipas perplexed: Matthew 14:1-2; Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9.
14. John beheaded: Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29.
15. People think Jesus is John: Matthew 16:13-16; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-20.

16. Jesus says John is Elijah: Matthew 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13.
17. Jesus' disciples ask him to teach about prayer, as John had done: Luke 11:1- 13.
18. Jesus compared to John: John 10:40-42.
19. The law lives from the prophets to John: Luke 16:16.
20. Jesus' authority questioned: Matthew 21:23-32; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8.

Intriguing Comments From Josephus Concerning John the Baptist

1. Further details given on what happened when Herod married Herodias:
 - i. "About this time Aretas (the king of Arabia Petres) and Herod had a quarrel on the account following: Herod the tetrarch had, married the daughter of Aretas, and had lived with her a great while; but when he was once at Rome, he lodged with Herod, 548 who was his brother indeed, but not by the same mother; for this Herod was the son of the high priest Sireoh's daughter. However, he fell in love with Herodias, this last Herod's wife, who was the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and the sister of Agrippa the Great. This man ventured to talk to her about a marriage between them; which address, when she admitted, an agreement was made for her to change her habitation, and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome: one article of this marriage also was this, that he should divorce Aretas's daughter. So Antipus, when he had made this agreement, sailed to Rome; but when he had done there the business he went about, and was returned again, his wife having discovered the agreement he had made with Herodias, and having learned it before he had notice of her knowledge of the whole design, she desired him to send her to Macherus, which is a place in the borders of the dominions of Aretas and Herod, without informing him of any of her intentions. Accordingly Herod sent her thither, as thinking his wife had not perceived any thing; now she had sent a good while before to Macherus, which was subject to her father and so all things necessary for her journey were made ready for her by the general of Aretas's army; and by that means she soon came into Arabia, under the conduct of the several generals, who carried her from one to another successively; and she soon came to her father, and told him of Herod's intentions. So Aretas made this the first occasion of his enmity between him and Herod, who had also some quarrel with him about their limits at the country of Gamalitis. So they raised armies on both sides, and prepared for war, and sent their generals to fight instead of themselves; and when they had joined battle, all Herod's army was destroyed by the treachery of some fugitives, who, though they were of the tetrarchy of Philip, joined with Aretas's army.. So Herod wrote about these affairs to Tiberius, who being very angry at the attempt made by Aretas, wrote to Vitellius to make war upon him, and either to take him alive, and bring him to him in bonds, or to kill him, and send him his head. This was the charge that Tiberius gave to the president of Syria." (Antiquities, 18.5.1)
2. Josephus comments on the reactions to John the Baptist's death:
 - i. "Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was

thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him." (Antiquities, 18.5.2)

All Believers Are Baptized In The Holy Spirit by Gary Fisher

1. OT expectation
 - i. That together with God fully establishing His reign over His people, and over the earth, there would be a fresh and unprecedented outpouring of God's Spirit. One of the clearest signs of the arrival of the new age of salvation and blessing: the coming of God's Spirit
 - ii. Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Isa. 32:15; 44:3-5; Joel 2:28-32; Zech. 12:10
 - iii. Notice the use of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3 as shorthand for the gospel era
 - iv. The Spirit was not absent from the OT, but the NT is to be marked by the presence of the Spirit in a special way
2. Titus 3:5-6
 - i. The "we" here is all Christians
 - ii. The washing of regeneration is the washing that causes us to be born again, baptism
 - iii. The renewing by the Holy Spirit occurs at the same time
 - iv. The Holy Spirit was poured upon us richly through Jesus
 1. Connect with OT passages and Acts 2:33
 2. The result is being immersed in the Spirit who was poured out
3. Acts 2:38
 - i. Why wouldn't we connect the gift of the Holy Spirit with the context, with the Joel prophecy, and with what is happening on the day of Pentecost?
 - ii. Especially when the Joel passage specifically said that the Spirit would be poured out on all mankind.
4. Luke 3:16
 - i. Notice that John said to them **all** (see also vs. 15 and all wondering)
 - ii. I think the use of fire in the context leads to understanding the fire aspect of the baptism to be judgment/punishment.
 - iii. To limit Jesus' baptizing with the Holy Spirit to the 12, Cornelius & company, and Paul would mean that at most 12 in John's audience were baptized by Jesus in the Spirit, and quite possibly less than that.

5. 1 Corinthians 12:13

- i. Translation issue: **in** one Spirit or **by** one Spirit
 1. Argument for **by** one Spirit making the Spirit the baptizer and not the element in which we were baptized is that four times in the context the same preposition is used and means by the Spirit (twice in vs. 3, twice in vs. 9)
 2. Argument that it means **in** or **with**
 - a. Other passages that use this preposition with baptism and the Spirit mean in the Spirit (cf. Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16)
 - b. Notice the same preposition: with water (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Jn. 1:26, 33); in the Jordan (Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5); in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2)
 - c. Every time the NT speaks of being baptized by someone, the preposition is *hupo*, not *en* (cf. Mt. 3:6, 13-14; Mk. 1:5, 9; Lk. 3:7; 7:30)
 - d. Is there any biblical support for the idea that the Spirit baptizes us, that He is the One who does the baptizing? If so, what does He baptize us in/with? Jesus baptizes with/in the Holy Spirit. But does the Holy Spirit Himself ever do baptizing work?
 3. If the correct translation is, in fact, in or with the Spirit the argument is over and we are all baptized in the Spirit
 4. All made to drink of one Spirit is a different metaphor leading to the same conclusion
 - a. Paul's point in the context is to emphasize unity
 - b. The result of being baptized in the Spirit is that we drink of Him

6. John 7:37-39

- i. Notice the stages: be thirsty, come and drink, become a source of living water
- ii. He spoke this of the Spirit whom those who believed in Him were to receive
- iii. But not yet, because He wasn't glorified yet; He would not pour out the Spirit until He returned to the Father (cf. Jn. 16:7)
- iv. There are many figures that can be used to describe our receiving the Spirit
 1. The Spirit is richly poured out, we drink of Him, we are baptized in Him, we receive Him, He is given to us, we are filled with Him, He dwells in us, etc.
 2. Obviously these are not physically literal (cf. eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, being buried with or crucified with Christ)
 3. But they are real
 4. The metaphor changes with the context and with the point being emphasized

7. Acts 19:1-7

- i. If they didn't receive the Spirit when they believed, then into what were they baptized?
- ii. If one is baptized into Christ then he has received the Spirit

8. John 3:5

- i. The baptism we receive involves two elements: water and Spirit. We understand that being born of water involves baptism in water; why wouldn't being born of the Spirit involve baptism in the Spirit?
 - ii. It is a spiritual birth (not a fleshly birth) because we are born of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. By the way, this then shows that Eph. 4:5 does not contradict this view ... there is one baptism composed of two elements
 - iv. See also Gal. 4:29 (born according to the Spirit)
9. Ephesians 5:18
- i. Because we are immersed in the Spirit, the Spirit should fill us
 - ii. That is a progressive thing: as we grow into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:19-22)
 - 1. Notice that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time only event (cf. Acts 4:31)
 - 2. Compare the use of the disciples believing; they are said to have believed various times
10. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:13-14; Acts 5:32; Rom. 5:5; Gal. 3:5)
- i. Once you understand the concept, then where does the NT not speak of our being immersed in the Spirit.

Examining William Branham as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6

1. This may be fruitless to mention, but in the event anyone else runs into it I wanted to summarize the argument here.
2. William Branham was a self-proclaimed "prophet" and faith healer who had his biggest following in the 1940-50s. He is best summarized as a oneness Pentecostal.
3. After having studied with one of his followers in recent years (there are still a few thousands Branhamites left), one of the biggest proofs they give for Branham being a prophet is by saying he fulfills the prophecy seen in Malachi 4:5-6.
 - i. They deny John the Baptist being the fulfillment of this passage for 2 reasons:
 1. They say Jesus is not explicitly quoting Malachi 4:5-6 in Matthew 17:11, but is actually referring to Malachi 3:1. This leaves Malachi 4:5-6 open to Branham being the fulfillment.
 - a. I find this problematic because Mal. 3:1 is not using restoration language, but is saying he will "clear the way". The restoration language is found in Mal. 4:6 – "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers."
 2. Their other issue with accepting John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6 comes from their misunderstanding of the language used in vs 5 – "Look, I am going to send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes." They would say that since the day of the Lord did not come (meaning the end of the world and final judgment), then obviously it could not be referring to John the Baptist, because the world did not come to an end at that point in history.

- a. I have found it helpful to point out to them that this language used in vs 5 is not exclusively used in Malachi, and when used in other places it is general judgment language, not language to only refer to the final judgment day.
- b. Examples of this would be Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18-24; Zeph. 1:2-3.

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Sermon on the Mount

Gary Fisher

Text: Matthew 5-7

I. Introduction

- A. Jesus was teaching and healing: see Matthew 4:23 and 9:35
 - 1. 5-7 gives sample of teaching and 8-9 give samples of healings
 - 2. Teaching is more central to Jesus' mission than healing
 - a. Comes first both in 4:23 and 9:35 and in the sample given (5-7 before 8-9)
 - b. Two verbs: teaching and proclaiming
 - c. Other passages show the idea of the miracles confirming the message (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:1-4)
 - 3. We are helped in interpreting this sermon: it is the gospel of the kingdom
 - B. This is the first of 5 sermons that structure Matthew
 - 1. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 23 (or 24)-25
 - 2. All follow blocks of narrative material
 - 3. All end the same way 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1
 - C. Part of the parallels with Israel
 - 1. Exodus (2:15)
 - 2. Baptism (cf., Red Sea) (3:13-17)
 - 3. Testing in the wilderness for 40 days/years (4:1-11)
 - 4. Delivers/receives law on the mountain
 - 5. Moses as foreshadowing of Jesus; for example,
 - a. Slaughter of children connected with births
 - b. Had to flee to escape clutches of despot
 - c. Law on the mountain
 - D. Going through all (the cities and villages) of Galilee; Josephus says there were 204 (4:23; 9:35)
 - E. Notice the alls and everys: all Galilee, every kind, every kind, all Syria, all who were ill ... (4:23-24)
 - F. Jesus' reputation spread beyond the area of His actual presence (4:25)
 - G. Jesus went up on the mountain
 - 1. Matthew places this teaching at the forefront of his writing
 - 2. Mountain is a place that suits His weighty words
 - 3. Other times on mountain in Matthew: 4:8; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3; 26:30; 28:16
 - H. Outline of the sermon
 - 1. Introduction
-

-
- a. Character of disciple of Christ 5:3-12
 - b. Mission of disciple 13-16
 2. Ethics of Jesus are higher than what they have heard 17-48
 - a. Clarification: Jesus is not doing violence to the law, but is surpassing the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees 17-20
 - b. Murder 21-26
 - c. Adultery 27-32
 - d. Honesty 33-37
 - e. Revenge 38-42
 - f. Hating enemies 43-48
 3. Not doing righteousness to be seen by men 6:1-18
 - a. Alms 2-4
 - b. Prayer 5-15
 - c. Fasting 16-18
 4. Overcoming materialism 19-34
 - a. Not storing up treasures on earth 19-21
 - b. Not dividing focus 22-24
 - c. Not worrying 25-34
 5. Miscellaneous exhortations 7:1-12
 - a. Don't judge 1-5
 - b. Don't give what is holy to dogs 6
 - c. Seek and find 7-11
 - d. Treat others how you want to be treated 12
 6. Concluding exhortations 13-27
 - a. Enter through the narrow gate 13-14
 - b. Beware of false prophets 15-20
 - c. Avoid self-deception 21-23
 - d. Hear and act 24-27
 7. Conclusion 28-29

II. Character of disciple of Christ 5:3-12

A. Introduction

1. Description of the life of the true disciple
 - a. Pocket guide to how to behave in the kingdom of God
 - b. These beatitudes encompass Jesus' fundamental vision
 - c. They are like proverbs: brief, dense, memorable
2. Jesus praises the exact opposite of what the world values; reverses conventional values

3. All about the kingdom (see promises in 3 and 10). These show kingdom blessings for those who live by kingdom standards
- B. Poor in spirit 3
1. This word for poor means utter destitution, having nothing at all, desperate need
 2. In spirit
 - a. I believe indicates that he is not talking about material circumstances
 - b. They realize they have nothing spiritually
 - c. Before God, they are utterly nothing, bring only emptiness and need
 - d. Keenly aware of spiritually destitution and reliant entirely on the grace of God for salvation: Luke 18:9-14
 3. The world prizes self-reliance, self-confidence in the face of challenges
 - a. In our day: express yourself, believe in yourself, realize the powers that are innate in yourself, be self-confident, self-reliant, self-assured
 - b. Reach out, take and eat the fruit of that forbidden tree
 4. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven
 - a. The spiritually destitute, who had no apparent claim to the kingdom, would be the very ones to possess it
 - b. The great reversal that is characteristic of grace
 - c. When we cast ourselves on Christ in total dependence on Him, He graciously reigns over us as King
- C. Mourn 4
1. Strong word: means loud mourning after severe, painful loss
 2. Over recognized poverty of spirit; sorrow over sin
 - a. Intense remorse, not a superficial regret, over one's sinfulness and alienation from God
 - b. True repentance makes no excuses and offers no rationalizations. It grieves sin from a broken heart
 - c. Must not acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy with a cold heart
 - d. Ezra 9-10; Psalm 51:4; Daniel 9; James 4:9, etc.
 3. Can be no comfort where there is no grief
- D. Meek 5
1. Broken will and receptive heart before God
 - a. Animal which has learned to accept control
 - b. Always implies a teachable spirit
 2. Suffer wrong without bitterness or seeking revenge
 - a. Does not claim rights
 - b. Contrast with boldness (2 Corinthians 10:1), quarrelsomeness (2 Timothy 2:24-25), jealousy and selfish ambition (James 3:13-14)
 - c. You might expect the strong, aggressive and self-assertive to inherit the earth, seize the earth by crushing those in their way
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3. Inherit the earth (not just land of Palestine, see 5:13)
- E. Hunger and thirst after righteousness 6
1. Intense craving of someone who is starving, desperate
 - a. Not a genteel hunger satisfied by a midmorning snack
 - b. How bad do we want righteousness? Do anything to satisfy the craving?
 2. Righteous means right behavior before God, doing what is right
 - a. We need to realize our lack of this, not boast of righteous accomplishments
 - b. See 1:19; 3:15; 5:10,20,45; 6:1,33
 3. We seek to satisfy ourselves with the wrong things
 - a. Looks delicious and inviting, but like cotton candy doesn't nourish or fill
 - b. Grab for anything that promises to fill emptiness
 4. We must not be content with our spiritual condition
 - a. Must ever be sought; never in the grasp
 - b. Avoid things which spoil spiritual appetite
 5. They do not achieve, but God fulfills their longing and will not disappoint
 - a. Filled only through God, not sated by passions and lusts
 - b. Filled means sated, filled to overflowing, expresses absolute and utter satisfaction
- F. Merciful 7
1. Compassion and action for those who need help; take on other people's troubles, help them in distress, freely join them in time of trial
 2. See in Matthew 9:13; 12:7; 23:23; 5:43-48; 18:21-35; 25:31-46 and Jesus' example
 3. Some are too concerned about themselves to care about others
 4. Those who have experienced God's mercy should show it
- G. Pure in heart 8
1. Purity means both unstained and unmixed
 2. Pure not just on the surface but in the very center of their being
 3. To will one thing, God's will, with all of one's being
- H. Peacemakers 9
1. Sin is at the root of all lack of peace
 2. Not peace keepers, but peace makers: see 5:21-26, 38-41
 3. Consider the application for participation in warfare
 4. They reflect the actions of their Father
- I. Persecuted for righteousness sake 10
1. Opposition marks the life of disciple of Christ
 - a. Because character and life constitute a standing rebuke to the world
 - b. Speak out for God leads to violent reprisals from the ungodly
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2. Early Christians were accused of
 - a. Cannibalism (Lord's Supper)
 - b. Incest (called each other brother and sister)
 - c. Atheism (rejected Roman gods)
 3. A perfect Christian is not always nice, popular and never offends anyone
 4. Jesus did not hold out false prospects to His followers
- J. Move to second person, not the third 11-12
- K. Being overjoyed leaves no room to wallow in self-pity

III. Mission of the kingdom citizens 13-16

- A. Salt of the earth 13
1. From the disciple's blessedness to their responsibility
 2. Emphasize the you as in **you** are the salt ...
 3. Must maintain distinctiveness
 - a. Salt is different from the meat into which it is rubbed
 - b. Performs its function by being unlike the pork
 - c. Hammy salt!
 - d. We must not lose the qualities that characterize disciples
 4. We water down the soup when we add a dash of the love of money and a pinch of lust, etc.
 5. Mission is the essence of discipleship: give salt to the world
 6. A disciple could lose the qualities of the disciple
 - a. Unsalty salt is like unwet water
 - b. You can't salt salt
- B. Light of the world 14-16
1. Universal focus of our mission (of the earth in 13 also)
 - a. See Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 9:1-2; Matthew 4:15-16; Acts 13:47
 - b. Disciples are to be an extension of the Messiah's work by taking up His mission of bringing salvation to the world
 2. Fleeing into the invisible denies our call
 - a. To hide betrays God's purpose for us
 - b. No such thing as secret discipleship: one destroys the other
 - c. There is always an excuse: prudence, gradual accustoming of men to new ideas, avoidance of rupture by premature outspokenness
 - d. True reason: fear of rejection
 3. Our good works should glorify God
 - a. It is God who fills us with righteousness 5:6
 - b. Purpose of lamp is to give light; purpose of disciples is to show the glory of

God

- c. They lead others to recognize God's transforming power in the world
- d. No showmanship, though

IV. Jesus clarifies His position regarding the law 17-20

- A. Why does Jesus say that He didn't come to abolish the Law or the Prophets?
 1. Because they thought He was against the Law and was trying to sabotage the Scriptures
 2. Jesus does not want them to think that because He is unswervingly loyal to the Law
- B. What was Jesus doing/saying that was leaving people with that impression?
 1. What He taught contradicted the scribes and Pharisees
 - a. When Jesus taught differently from them, they assumed He was teaching against the law, since they were the experts in the law
 - b. Jesus challenges traditional interpretations
 2. What Jesus did seemed so wrong
 - a. Working on the Sabbath (by their definitions)
 - b. Not washing His hands before eating (not really in Scripture, but like it was)
 - c. Not fasting. How can they not fast?!!
 - d. Associating with sinners, even Samaritans, etc.
 3. Jesus said that their righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees
 - a. There was a proverb that if two men enter heaven, one will be a scribe and the other a Pharisee
 - b. They were the religious experts; they knew and catalogued the law
 - c. His hearers would have gasped and wondered if it were possible to achieve such righteousness
 - d. What if we said unless our righteousness exceeds that of pastors and missionaries . . .
 4. We are prone to take what we have always done and the deeds of great men as the standard.
 - a. Partially because we don't study ourselves
 - b. If Jesus were to come here today, what would He do and teach? What would we think?
- C. What was Jesus' position regarding the law?
 1. Smallest letter or stroke
 - a. Each letter
 1. Yodh was their smallest letter; looked a little like an apostrophe
 2. There were about 66,420 of them in the O T
 3. You would think one wouldn't be missed

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- b. Each pen stroke (serif)
 - 1. There were letters of theirs that were almost identical
 - 2. Like the differences between c and e, b and d and p
 - c. Every single detail is exactly right (John 10:34-35)
 - 2. Let's explore this
 - a. Debate between Bible being infallible and inerrant
 - 1. Infallible: right in all it affirms about faith, but not necessarily historical and scientific matters
 - 2. Inerrant: right in all that it affirms about all things
 - b. If Bible is not inerrant, then it is liable to be wrong in anything we can actually verify; that doesn't work
 - c. Some needed cautions
 - 1. Bible has figures of speech (that fox, e.g.)
 - 2. Bible is not trying to be infinitely precise
 - 3. We are talking about the autograph copies, not copyist errors
 - 3. Break one of the least commandments
 - a. We don't get to pick and choose
 - b. It all shows attitude toward the Lord
 - c. We should give more emphasis to weightier matters but never play fast and loose with the Lord's word
 - d. Adam and Eve's sin
 - D. So, is the law still in force for us today?
 - 1. No: Galatians 3:19-25; 6:15; Hebrews 8:7-13, etc.
 - 2. If this were saying that we are under law today, we would then be under every last detail
 - a. People want to say that we are under the moral, not ceremonial law
 - b. Or just lift a few things from the OT for us today
 - 3. And it is true that the OT is very helpful and should be carefully studied
 - a. Cited all the time in the NT
 - b. Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11
 - c. Is all about Jesus in the final analysis
 - 4. Then what is Jesus saying?
 - a. Abolish vs fulfill, not abolish vs keep
 - b. Point is that Jesus is not against the law, not doing violence to it
 - c. Brings the law to fulfillment, to divinely intended goal
 - d. The OT points to the NT; so, we have been led by the OT to what we are under today.
 - e. Jesus does not see Himself as against the OT, but as being its fulfillment
 - E. So, Jesus will contrast their false interpretations with His will
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1. Truly I say to you
 - a. Distinctive feature of Jesus' teaching style
 - b. 30 x in Matthew, 13 in Mark, 6 in Luke and 25 in John (doubled)
2. You have heard vs I say to you: the righteousness of Jesus vs that of the scribes and Pharisees

V. Murder 21-26

- A. You have heard that the ancients were told (see 21, 33)
 1. Jesus did not say, it is written, even though sounds like Scripture
 2. Jesus is saying that their righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees; he is citing inadequate Pharisaic interpretations
 3. Jesus fulfills the law in that His gospel goes to the heart, the true meaning for the law, moves beyond the surface level of the law to a life reflecting the character of God
- B. But I say to you
 1. He doesn't hesitate to set Himself up as the authority
 2. Rabbis would say 'there is a teaching that' and never expressed opinion of their own without buttressing with quotations from great teachers of the past
 3. Jesus makes bold assertion of personal authority not grounded on legal precedent or scholarly opinion
- C. Problem with scribal teaching on murder was that it didn't go far enough
 1. Anger is a capital crime
 - a. Root of murder is anger
 - b. Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; James 1:19-20
 - c. There can be a righteous anger but it is God-centered, not self-focused
 1. We feel bitterness, resentment and irritation because of how we are treated
 2. We nurse, harbor, lick our wounds
 2. Must not murder with our words
 - a. A father doesn't take kindly to someone bullying his child
 - b. We use our words to hurt others
 - c. The phrase 'sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never harm me' is wrong
 - d. Apply this to family or to people in the congregation that I resent
 3. Punishment not limited to local tribunal
- D. Reconciliation takes precedence over religious duties 23-24
 1. When he has a legitimate grievance
 2. Don't just wait for him to come to you
 3. Takes precedence over religious duties
 - a. Interrupts act of worship, priority

- b. How many worship services would be temporarily emptied if this were taken seriously?
 - c. Very serious matter 1 John 4:20-21
- E. Reconciliation on the road 25-26
- 1. Neglected grievances can have irrevocable consequences
 - a. Maximum penalty
 - b. Early parole is not an option for those who resist reconciliation
 - 2. We need to deal with the hard feeling between us
 - a. We usually blame the other person
 - b. But no one makes me have resentment, bitterness, anger, hatred
 - c. We will deny it, but we are touchy, avoid, put down, feel blood pressure rise

VI. Adultery 27-32

- A. Reminds us of what they said about murder: just thinking about the external manifestation
- B. Jesus traces back to the root 27-28
- 1. Sin is subtle
 - 2. When the heart is the same, the sin is the same
 - 3. Cf., coveting neighbor's wife: Exodus 20:17
 - 4. Background concepts
 - a. God gave women, marriage, one flesh relationship
 - b. God could have made women really ugly and the activity involved in becoming one flesh disgusting, repulsive, painful
 - c. God blessed us by making women attractive, desirable and becoming one to be something enjoyable for those who are married
 - d. Man perverts what God makes and uses wrongfully
 - e. The attraction and enjoyment is for marriage only
 - 1. In marriage is an act of self-giving, unity, belonging, love
 - 2. Outside of marriage, it dehumanizes the other person into an object of passion
 - 3. We are thinking of them in terms of physical attributes
 - 5. Not a condemnation of desire for wife—though that must not be a selfish, harsh thing. But the problem here is a desire for someone that belongs to another man
 - 6. Application to internet pornography
 - a. A plague and a curse on our time—we must deal with it seriously and eradicate it
 - b. Shine the light of Scripture and transparency on it
 - c. Would you want your son to see where your eyes went, to know what you felt and thought?

C. Drastic measures to deal with sin 29-30

1. Right eye or hand
 - a. Avoiding spiritual downfall is worthy of any sacrifice, no matter how great
 - b. Doesn't mention the foot because not used so much in adultery
2. Tear it out and throw it from you
 - a. At once, not gradually; decisive
 - b. Must not compromise with these temptations a single moment
 - c. Don't pamper, flirt with, nibble around the edges. Hate it, crush it, dig it out
 - d. Forceful: the eye plucked out is not to be held in hand, but immediately thrown away
 - e. In sexual purity, decisiveness is everything; violent measures
 - f. Must let God control the neck muscles. Servants of God get quite well acquainted with the floor
3. It is better
 - a. Better to discard the eye than to be thrown into hell because of it
 - b. Makes sense to amputate to save life
 - c. Must become more serious about sin

D. Some specific suggestions

1. Accountability with someone not in same situation: Galatians 6:1; James 5:16; Hebrews 3:13; seek help when tempted
2. Stay closer to the Lord, rely on Him, love Him, let Him strengthen you
3. Gratitude and letting God fill you up
 - a. Don't feel sorry for yourself
 - b. This is not hormonally driven: Adam and Eve didn't eat forbidden fruit because food was scarce
4. Be forceful and radical: keep this away, period, whatever it takes; bounce your eyes and bounce your thoughts
5. Love God, not the world and the things in it; we will do what we want to

E. Divorce 31-32

1. Their view and OT background
 - a. Their concern was to divorce the right way, follow proper procedure
 - b. Consider the meaning of Deut 24; it is contingency legislation
 - c. Written because of the hardness of their heart; consider Gen 2
2. Jesus' shocking response
 - a. To divorce a mate is to tempt them to commit adultery by remarrying
 - b. Jesus transcends the Jewish discussion by saying that divorce is not God's will and therefore that remarriage with or without certificate, constitutes adultery before God
 - c. So, Jesus is saying that the marriage of a divorced person is adultery
 - d. When an illicit union already exists, then divorce is not the cause

3. Remarriage of the victimized party is adultery
 - a. He wrongs her. He divorces her
 - b. When she remarries and thus commits adultery, it is in part his fault

VII. Lying 33-37

- A. Cf., 21, the two passages that have the complete introductory phrase
- B. What they were doing
 1. Evasions to escape the force of their promises: Matthew 23:16-22
 2. They had two classes of utterances: those with vow committing speaker to truthfulness and those that implied no such commitment
 3. Kind of like having fingers crossed
- C. All oaths/words are before God and binding
- D. Our character should make oaths totally unnecessary
 1. Person's word should be reliable without qualification and without need of further guarantee
 - a. Honesty does not need an oath to prop it up
 - b. Should not have a double standard
 2. We should have such integrity that an oath is not necessary to make our words credible
 3. Oath should not commit us to a higher standard of honesty than is normal for us
 4. If a child asks a parent for a promise, it is an indictment of their not being trustworthy
- E. Qualifications
 1. Not prohibiting solemn oaths
 - a. God took oaths: Luke 1:73; Acts 2:27-31
 - b. Paul often called God to witness
 2. Not saying everything must be told: 1 Samuel 16:1-5
 3. A statement of intention is not a lie because one changes their mind: 2 Corinthians 1:15-22
- F. Everything we say must be true
 1. We tell lies to get out of trouble, influence people, enhance our image
 2. Liars are often careless about details
 3. Consider Ephesians 4:25; Proverbs 26:18-19

VIII. Revenge 38-42

- A. The law to prevent revenge was so perverted that it was used as a warrant for it
 1. Intended as a judicial standard
 2. Distorted to justify personal acts of vengeance

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- B. Jesus' shocking teaching recommends the polar opposite of our natural tendency
 - 1. Give up our rights
 - a. We worship at the altar of self and fervently grasp for our rights
 - b. Self-interest clouds our thinking and actions
 - 2. Condemns retaliation and revenge
 - a. Treat those who do us evil far better than they deserve
 - b. Exceed what is just
 - c. Render service gladly without resentment even when unreasonable tasks are required
 - d. Consider application to carnal warfare
 - 3. Generosity
 - a. Think of other's needs; not protecting personal resources/honor
 - b. Needs of others come before my convenience
 - C. Limitations
 - 1. Not woodenly literal: not to leave the courtroom naked!
 - 2. Not requiring giving endless amounts of money to those who seek a soft touch: Proverbs 11:15; 17:18; 22:26

IX. Hating enemies 43-48

- A. Previous dealt with not retaliating against enemy, this to positively doing good for enemy
- B. They had heard ...
 - 1. Not an OT statement; OT does not say to hate enemy: Proverbs 24:17-18
 - 2. Although imprecatory prayers about God's enemies
- C. How to treat an enemy
 - 1. Love them: means to seek what is best for them
 - 2. Pray for them: can't pray for someone sincerely and still hate them!
 - 3. If the cruel torture of crucifixion could not silence Jesus' prayers for His enemies, what could justify silencing ours?
- D. Be better than tax collectors
 - 1. They were hardly models for Christian behavior
 - 2. From righteousness better than scribes and Pharisees to righteousness better than tax collectors and Gentiles
 - a. People called them licensed robbers
 - b. Had reputations lower than used chariot salesmen!
 - 3. Even they loved those who loved them ... their mothers and other tax collectors!
- E. Be like God
 - 1. To be persecuted is to align oneself with prophets; to bless and pray for persecutors is to align oneself with the character of God

2. Man was created to be like God: Genesis 1:26; now again Colossians 3:10
3. Let's draw our conduct from God, not practices of society and what everybody else is doing
4. If Jesus loved His enemies the way we love ours, where would we be???
5. Our goal is God!!

X. Giving alms 6:1-4

A. Introduction

1. In chapter 6 there are two rival deities: self-glorification and money
2. He applies a principle to what we do with others, God and ourselves
3. The three parts have parallel structure
 - a. When you ... do not
 - b. Truly I tell you, they have their reward in full
 - c. But when you ... your Father who sees in secret will reward you
4. Don't advertise
 - a. Righteousness should not be an act or performance for applause
 - b. Goal of pleasing God is traded for pygmy cousin: pleasing men
 - c. Contrast 5:16: for God's glory or for your own glory: who does our light point toward?

B. Giving alms for self-glorification

1. The places where they gave were chosen with maximum visibility in mind
2. A selfless act perverted into a completely selfish one
3. Public relations stunt

C. They were paid in full; term used in receipting bills

1. They got what they were after but that is all they get
2. They wanted praise of men, paid for it, and received it

D. Give without self-consciousness; don't even announce it to yourself

1. Generosity should become second nature: a ball player swinging at the pitch or a musician fingering the notes
2. Emphasizes the sense of privacy that should be present when we give to help others
3. Don't pridefully celebrate your own acts of love
4. Don't be self-aware of our generosity: Matthew 25:31-46

E. Image consciousness

1. We work on how to look good, not be good
2. We focus on impressing others, not pleasing God
3. Don't focus with children on how to act when people are watching, but on character

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- F. Have you done something really nice, sacrificial for someone and then wished others had seen it, had noticed?
 - 1. Are we trying to buy their friendship and resentful when they don't correspond?
 - 2. Expectations of recipient
 - a. Parents with their married children
 - b. Grandparents with their grandkids
 - c. Or just with friends, do you expect level of attention?
 - 3. Do we complain about all that I did for you?

XI. Praying 5-15

- A. Place chosen for maximum visibility
 - 1. Concept of regular prayer: Daniel 6:10; Psalm 119:164; Luke 2:37
 - 2. They planned their day so as to be in some conspicuous place when it was time to pray
 - 3. Parade their piety before the eyes of others
 - 4. Do we have more to say to God in public than in private?
 - 5. Prayer can give people an opportunity to parade their piety before the eyes of others
- B. Verbosity
 - 1. There is no special technique or formula; cf., Rosary
 - 2. We aren't badgering a reluctant Deity to notice us!
- C. Model prayer
 - 1. Guide and framework, not fixed formula; pray like this, not pray this
 - a. How you should pray, not what you should pray
 - b. A model, not a set form of words
 - 2. Organization
 - a. 3 petitions centered on God himself
 - 1. Bible prayers often start with worship and adoration
 - 2. God's interests and His agenda before personal petitions
 - 3. God's honor, kingdom, purpose
 - 4. Disciple's priorities: promote God's reputation, advance His cause and perform His will
 - 5. Not start with our hopes, desires, affections; not to vindicate our causes, meet our needs, fulfill our desires
 - b. 3 petitions centered on our own needs
 - 3. Our Father in heaven
 - a. Stresses closeness and transcendence
 - b. In heaven balances Father
 - 4. Hallowed be Your name

- a. Name represents the person's nature, character, being
- b. Burning desire that world bow before God
- 5. Your kingdom come: God to rule and reign
- 6. Your will be done
 - a. Heaven is a pattern for earth 16:19
 - b. Obedience there should be duplicated here
- 7. Give us our daily bread
 - a. Our deepest needs: daily sustenance, forgiveness and avoidance of sin
 - b. Pray for our needs, not our greeds
 - c. Our affluence: Proverbs 30:7-9
 - 1. We don't ask to eat, but not to eat so much
 - 2. Books on losing weight, not surviving starvation
- 8. Forgive as we forgive
 - a. We are up to our ears in debt to God
 - b. We can be lost as well for not forgiving as for not believing
 - c. Concern is with personal relationships: forgive debtors, not debts
 - d. If we say we will never forgive, then we are asking God not to forgive us!
- 9. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil
 - a. Protect us from doing what would destroy our relationship with Him
 - b. We depend on God to avoid sin

XII. Fasting 16-18

- A. It is impressive that Satan manages to corrupt the most spiritual of activities
- B. They took deliberate steps to make sure others could not miss the fact that they were fasting
 - 1. Trying to look religious, mostly looked ridiculous
 - 2. More interested in appearing to fast than in fasting
 - 3. Don't think about the impression we are making
- C. Their reward is the admiration that they received
- D. Do we try to show off and impress with our ...
 - 1. Bible study and knowledge
 - 2. Position as preacher, elder (important thing is being a disciple)
 - 3. Leading in worship
- E. Churches compete in size, conversions, etc.

XIII. Not storing up treasures on earth 19-21

- A. Meaning

1. Investing in material things, in this life
 2. Ambitions, hopes, interests pinned on this life
 3. Verse of hymn: Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise, Thou mine inheritance, now and always: Thou and Thou only, first in my heart, High King of heaven my Treasure Thou art
- B. What it does not mean
1. Not an absolute prohibition; not/but passage: Luke 14:12; 1 Peter 3:3-4; John 4:21; 6:27; Proverbs 8:10
 2. Scriptures teach
 - a. Provide for relatives: 1 Timothy 5:8
 - b. Enjoy Creator's gifts: 1 Timothy 4:3-4; 6:17; Ecclesiastes
 - c. Provide for future: Proverbs 6:6-8
- C. Wise investments
1. We like to invest in things that are secure. Things on earth may be destroyed by nature or men; our treasure here is assailed from every direction
 2. Heavenly investment lasts forever: see 1 Tim 6:17-19; Luke 12:16-21
 3. Apparently never dawned on the rich fool to solve silo problems by storing some of God's plenty in the mouths of the needy
- D. Heart always follows treasure
1. We move toward what we gaze at
 2. Our lives drift relentlessly toward the spot where our treasures are stored, where our time, energy and passion are deposited
 3. Like Gollum's ring, becomes something we cannot do without and the focus of our attention
 4. What do we most focus on, what do we focus on with our children?
 5. We get attached: carcass and pet illustrations

XIV. Not dividing focus 22-24

- A. Eyes represent direction we are looking and thus aims and interests of life
- B. We can't have treasure in both places
1. Divides our interests
 2. Double vision is a disease
 3. We go through life with no clear vision, orientation, and direction
- C. Behind the two treasures and the two visions is the more basic choice of two masters
1. We seek to pull off a delicate balancing act
 2. But marching orders of God and money are in entirely different directions
- D. Our actions belie our words
1. We say we have chosen God but in our daily life money sets our priorities and determines our choices

2. We have plenty of excuses like needs of the moment
- E. We need to see things more clearly: one investment is so much better than the other

XV. Not worrying 25-34

- A. He punctuates the paragraph with exhortations not to worry 25, 31, 34
- B. God gave us life and body. We should trust Him for the things necessary to sustain them
 1. We get distracted (double vision) from being too concerned over this
 2. If our life and body came from God we can surely trust him for a little food and clothes; elementary logic should help here
 3. We live too much within this compass
 - a. Think about, talk about, read about
 - b. These things just mean too much to us
 4. He was talking to people who were capable of passing through real poverty
- C. God cares for the animals and the plants
 1. Their Creator is your Father
 2. They know nothing about cultivation, crop rotation, fertilizer, irrigation, etc., but they are taken care of
 3. Not a charter for laziness; birds work, search, hunt, etc.
 4. As glorious as Solomon's wardrobe was, the splendor of the wildflower is far greater
 5. Grass was fuel used in baking oven
 - a. If God lavishes such beauty on the fuel, won't He care for those served by the fuel?
 - b. Is not God's care for men much greater?
 6. Men are more important than animals: this age deifies animals and devalues men
- D. You can't worry yourself a day older or add a day to your lifespan by worry
 1. Better 18 inches to your lifespan, not height; unless you play basketball, who really wants that?
 2. Actually, anxiety has the opposite effect: shortens lifespan
- E. Pagans, who do not have a good Father, worry over these things
 1. Shows distrust of God: worry assumes that God doesn't know His people's needs, doesn't care, or lacks the means to meet them
 2. Little faith occurs 5x in NT, 4x in Matthew (8:26; 14:31; 16:8)
 3. How would you feel as a father?
 4. Since the pagan gods were deaf, dumb, blind and impotent they felt like they had to rely entirely on themselves to meet their own needs
 5. Ironic that those enslaved to wealth don't enjoy it or would not be constantly craving more
- F. Seek first

1. If you want to worry, He tells us what to worry about (see 2 Corinthians 11:28)
2. Make living for God your worry, controlling drive, ultimate quest
3. His kingdom: God's sovereign rule in our life
4. His righteousness: Living so that God's will is done in our lives: 5:20

G. Don't worry about tomorrow

1. Last resort of anxious soul; if can't worry about present, conjures up something in the future to worry about
2. Don't cripple present by fear of imagined future
3. Each day has troubles, but God's grace enables us to endure

XVI. Don't judge 7:1-5

A. Warns against a judgmental, faultfinding mentality 1-2

1. Do we expect all to have same conviction as we do on everything: Romans 14
2. Do we expect all to make the same applications that we do: Hebrews 5:14
3. Do we criticize people who are different than we are: 1 Corinthians 9
4. We are not the judge: James 2:13; 4:11-12
5. Accusing the brethren is Satan's sin: Revelation 12:10

B. Warns against hypocritical judgment 3-5

1. We may suspect in others the faults we are guilty of
 - a. Log eyed reformer saving a speck eyed sinner
 - b. Redwood teaching a shrub to be low profile!
 - c. Whether it is a collision or a fender bender
 - d. Some sins are greater than others: speck vs beam
2. Great eye specialist he would be
 - a. Imagine a zealous Christian walking around with a log protruding from his eye (as if one end would even fit!)
 - b. A blind oculist only makes his patient worse
 - c. Every movement of his own head will only whack the poor patient's skull!
3. The word should be more used as a mirror than a window

XVII. Don't give what is holy to dogs 6

A. This is complementary counsel that helps us not misunderstand 1-5

1. Not being judgmental does not mean that we are to abandon the use of critical faculties in connection with sacred concerns
2. Warning against gullibility
3. We do need to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24) even when we must acknowledge someone as a dog or pig (2 Peter 2), wolf (15) or fox (Luke 13:32)
4. Note though there are 5 verses for judgmental people and one for undiscerning

people; that ratio reflects assessment of our greater danger

- B. We need to be sensitive as to when it is right to move on to a more receptive environment
 - 1. Do not force feed people with the truth
 - 2. Some people do not value the gospel; pigs don't value pearls; they will be upset with you for throwing them a jewel when all they want is slop
 - 3. Consider Matthew 21:23-27; Acts 13:45-46; 18:6; 19:9, etc.
 - 4. Not deciding that a loved one **WILL** obey the gospel
- C. Our main task is not to search zealously for ways to apply Matthew 7:6, but to obey the commission of Matthew 28:19-20 and to teach

XVIII. Seek and find 7-11

- A. What is the subject?
 - 1. Ask and it shall be given to you: see 11 and God giving what is good (note also Luke 11:13)
 - 2. Seek and you will find
 - a. Seek not material things 6:32, but the kingdom and God's righteousness 33 (identical form of the verb with 6:33)
 - b. Find: consider 7:14. See also 10:39; 11:29; 13:44; 16:25
 - 3. Knock and the door will be opened probably refers to the door of the gate of salvation 7:13
- B. We must turn to God for these things
 - 1. Everyone who: God makes no exceptions
 - 2. Climax of increasing urgency
 - 3. Gifts of the Spirit are available if we seek them and pray
 - 4. God is more generous than earthly fathers: an amazing thought
 - 5. Note also that God does not think that everyone is basically good!

XIX. Treat others how you want to be treated 12

- A. Therefore: gratitude for the generosity the Lord has had toward us
- B. Condenses 39 books of OT into 15 Greek words
- C. Handy summary of kingdom righteousness
- D. Powerful rule that helps us decide moral issues without the need for multiplied case law
- E. Brackets body of the sermon with 5:17
- F. Meant to be practiced, not just praised

XX. Enter through the narrow gate 13-14

- A. Notice the structure

-
1. Saved and lost 13-14
 2. Warnings
 - a. Outsiders who pretend to be insiders 15-20
 - b. Outsiders who think they are insiders 21-23
 - c. A line even within the group of insiders 24-27
 - B. Call for action
 1. Enter, not consider or admire
 2. To be carried out, not merely commended
 3. Two totally opposite orientations and respective outcomes; there is no middle ground, no third option
 - C. The broad way is much easier
 1. More inviting, easy, comfortable
 2. Accommodates a crowd, more popular, spacious
 3. No demands, no discipline required
 4. Few moral constraints; can weave back and forth; moral latitude or everyone to do what is right in their own eyes
 - D. Narrow way is confining
 1. Cannot deviate to the right or to the left
 2. Morally and ethically restrictive
 3. Establishes clear boundaries for one's behavior that must not be crossed
 4. Not spacious enough to accommodate our sins
 5. Takes off the hide
 - E. Find implies search
 1. Must look carefully, inconspicuous, not easy to spot
 2. Verse 7's promise
 - F. Destination is the key
 1. It is wise to choose a road based on where we want to go, not based on the appeal of the road itself
 2. Path of moral laxity is a dead-end road
 3. Horrifying punishment is the destination to which the world insanely rushes

XXI. Beware of false prophets 15-20

- A. False prophet is comforting; presents an easier option: Jeremiah 23:16-18
- B. Must distinguish between their nature and their outward appearance and claims
 1. Don't be deceived; don't take at face value: Ezekiel 22:27-28; Zephaniah 3:3-4
 2. They make clever efforts to disguise themselves
 3. Always need to test: 1 Corinthians 14:37-38; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 1 John 4:1-

6; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

- C. Their fruits encompass their message
 - 1. Words condemn or justify
 - 2. Teachings proceeds from what they are
 - 3. Isaiah 8:20; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Titus 1:9-13
 - 4. Must examine the content, not just the packaging
- D. Fruits include their character and conduct
 - 1. What we are reveals itself eventually in what we do
 - 2. Can fake it for a little while
 - 3. Beware the teacher who does not live what he teaches
 - 4. Not always revealed quickly: 1 Timothy 5:24
- E. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and burned up
 - 1. There are no exceptions to this principle
 - 2. People who run orchards do not put up with rotten trees
- F. Complications of finding the narrow way: unpopular, tough, obscured by false teachers

XXII. Avoid self-deception 21-23

- A. Constant danger that we might be deceiving ourselves
 - 1. Judgment day will be a day of surprises
 - 2. A profoundly searching and disturbing paragraph for all professing disciples, the religiously active
 - 3. That they didn't realize their failure makes the verdict more poignant
- B. Essence of discipleship is doing God's will, not ...
 - 1. Claims of kingdom activity
 - a. Loud profession
 - b. Says vs. does
 - 2. Outstanding achievements
 - a. These were good things mentioned with approval elsewhere in Matthew
 - b. Jesus' name often a mark of genuineness 10:22; 18:5,20; 19:29; 24:9
 - 3. Great spiritual experience
 - 4. Results, spectacular success, spiritual triumphs
- C. They didn't do the Lord's will
 - 1. They disregarded the law
 - 2. Are not genuine disciples no matter how many spectacular deeds they perform

3. Lead away from the narrow road of repentance down the wide boulevard of lawlessness
 4. The importance of the will of God
- D. Amazing how close to spiritual reality one may come without knowing the Lord: Balaam, Judas, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 1 John 2:19

XXIII. Hear and act 24-27

- A. Hearing Jesus' words
1. Jesus heals leper with one word (in Greek) 8:3
 2. Say the word and my servant will be healed 8:8, 13
 3. Jesus heals sick 8:16, stills storm 8:26, expels demons 8:32 and forgives sin 9:2 by a word
- B. So much space in NT is devoted to warnings
- C. Stability
1. Obedience to Jesus' teaching is the only solid basis for withstanding future crises
 2. Storm/calamity tells who we really are, reveals true nature of foundation
 3. Reminds us of whitewashed wall of Ezekiel 13
 4. Winds fell, but it fell not
- D. Hearing but not heeding Jesus' teaching leaves one unprepared for divine judgment
1. Hearing sermons is dangerous unless we put them into practice
 2. Judgment is final; no further opportunity. Have you faced the inevitability of judgment beyond death?
 3. Abrupt and striking conclusion. Jesus did not end sermon with a strain of consolation

XXIV. Conclusion 28-29

- A. Jesus astonished people; there was no one like Him
- B. Formula that concludes each of the 5 main discourses contains identical phrasing
- C. Scribes always taught with footnotes basing their opinions on the opinions of teachers before them, but Jesus based His teaching on Himself

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The Parables of Matthew

Jonathan Sadler

Text: Matthew 13, 18, 20-22

Introduction To Parables

Wonderful Stories of Eternity

- I. “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.” – Matthew 7:28-29
- II. “No one ever spoke like this man!” – John 7:49
- III. Various times in Jesus’ ministry it was noted by the crowds that He taught in an incredibly unique way. Jesus was a lot of different things, but among the most prevalent of His roles, He was a teacher.
- IV. I’m convinced that statements, like the ones in Matthew 7 and John 7, can also be applied to Jesus’ parables. Jesus’ ability to use common place items and situations to reveal deep secrets of God’s eternal kingdom and the righteous living required of its citizens is second to none. The parables Jesus spoke stand out among all His teachings.
- V. Studying and teaching the parables is a daunting task. When Jesus, the Good Teacher, spoke in parables He often offered no explanation. He presented simple stories to simple people expecting simple humility. I feel that attempting to explain the details of His stories somehow detracts from their power.
 - a. In order to learn from the parables, we must approach them with humility, hunger, and the unpretentious nature of a disciple.
 - b. If we feel we already know the parables, so ‘why read them?’, we’re missing the primary instruction that Jesus paired with this form of teaching. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”.
 - c. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” – Matthew 5:6
- VI. In this outline you will find:
 - a. What Are Parables?
 - b. Notes On Parables
 - c. Lessons From Matthew’s Parables
 - d. Properly Using Parables
 - e. Charting The Parables
 - f. Appendices
 - g. Bibliography

What Are Parables?

Definition and Uses

- I. παραβολή — g3850 — parabolē
 - a. There are several definitions offered by various authors and scholars for the Greek word. In my opinion the simplest and most concise definition of a parable is this popular one: “A placing of one thing beside another; juxtaposition.”
 - b. Trench (p. 3-5) expounds on the differences of parables and other forms of stories. *“To sum up all, the parable differs from the fable, by moving in a spiritual world, and never transgressing the actual order of natural things – from myth, because in that there is an unconscious blending of the deeper meaning with the outward symbol, the two remaining separate in the parable – from the proverb, inasmuch as it is longer carried out, and not accidentally but necessarily figurative – from the allegory, by comparing one thing with another, and not transferring, as the allegory, the properties of one to the other.”*
 - c. The uniqueness of parables makes them valuable as a form of teaching as they are attainable to any audience and can be suited to a particular culture quite easily.
- II. Parables are not exclusive to the gospels:
 - a. Judges 9:7-14 – Trees anointed as king.
 - b. 2 Samuel 12:1-4 – Poor man’s ewe lamb.
 - c. Psalm 1:3-4 – Tree planted by water vs. chaff.
 - d. Isaiah 5:1-7 – Vineyard yielding wild grapes.
- III. There are also “Modern Parables” we’re familiar with:
 - a. A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, he wordlessly picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar. He then proceeded to fill the jar with rocks. “Is the jar full?” he asked his students. “Yes,” everyone responded. The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly; The pebbles rolled into the areas between the rocks. “Is the jar full?” he asked again. The students responded with a unanimous: “Yes.” The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course the sand filled up all the space left. He asked once more: “Is the jar full?”. “Yes, of course,” everyone responded. The professor then produced a bottle of water from under the table and poured the entire content into the jar, filling the empty space between the sand. Everyone laughed.

“Now,” the professor said as the laughter subsided. “I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things. Your family, your children, health, friends, and favorite passions. If everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house or car. The sand is everything else, the small stuff. If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued, “there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things critical to your happiness. Spend time with your children. Spend time with your parents. Visit your grandparents. Take your spouse out for dinner. Go out with your friends. There will always be time to clean the house and mow the lawn. Take care of the rocks first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand...”

IV. It could also be noted that some “parables” Jesus used were actions rather than words:

- a. John 13:1-7 – Washing the Disciples’ feet
- b. Matthew 21:18-22 / Mark 11:12-14, 20-25 – The withered fig tree
- c. Ezekiel and Hosea also “act out” parables; Ezekiel 4, Hosea 1-3

Categorizing Parables

I. Like the many definitions given for parables, there are numerous classifications of types of parables:

- a. Jeremias, for example, organized the parables around ten themes: (Jeremias p. 89-184)
 - i. Now is the Day of Salvation
 - ii. God’s Mercy for Sinners
 - iii. The Great Assurance
 - iv. In Sight of Disaster
 - v. It May Be Too Late
 - vi. The Challenge of the Hour
 - vii. Realized Discipleship
 - viii. The Via Dolorosa and Exaltation of the Son of Man
 - ix. The Consummation
 - x. Parabolic Actions
- b. In this outline and the chart provided I categorize the parables into 5 different classifications:
 - i. The Nature of the Kingdom
 - ii. Righteous Living
 - iii. Judgement
 - iv. Principles
 - v. The Nature of God

Numbering The Parables

- I. There are several lists of parables in the gospels, depending on the definition chosen by each author.
 - a. In the strictest definition of “parable” some lists include only 30 parables
 - b. In lists with more loose criteria there are some 70+ parables
 - c. In my own personal counting, there are 55 spoken parables, take that or leave it.

Notes On Parables

Why Did Jesus Use Parables?

- I. The reasoning for Jesus’ use of parables is found within The Parable of the Sower.
 - a. After Jesus offers the simple story of the farmer going to spread seed on various soils He simply concludes with, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” – Matthew 13:9
 - b. Before His telling of this introductory parable the text mentions that there were “great

crowds gathered about him”. It seems that the great crowds and Jesus’ decision to speak to them in parables are correlated.

- i. You can see especially the effect that Jesus’ parabolic statements had on the crowds in John 6:35-66. After Jesus spoke and explained the parable of “The Bread of Life” many in the crowd, including those claiming to be his disciples, left.
- c. Jesus explains his rationale very clearly when his questioning disciples don’t understand the story (Matthew 13:10-17). His explanation contains several points of focus:
 - i. For his true disciples – “To you has been given the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.”
 1. The true disciple will benefit from the parables of Jesus for one simple reason: they seek for truth. The very fact that the disciples ASKED Jesus for an explanation shows they have a desire to obtain truth from Him.
 - ii. For unbelievers – “To them it has not been given.”
 1. By contrast, the unbeliever will only hear a story. Imagine being in the crowds and hearing Jesus start speaking about a farmer and offering no explanation. A heart seeking to be filled will ask, a heart already full won’t.
 - iii. Contrasting the one who has and the one who has not.
 1. Jesus goes on to explain that the root problem was the disciples had and the unbelievers had not. But what did they have? The disciples had a basic understanding, not of the parable itself (which is why they asked), but that truth is found in Jesus alone.
 - iv. Fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy – cited from Isaiah 6:9-10
 1. Sticking with Matthew’s theme of Jesus as a fulfillment of prophecy, Jesus also emphasizes that through parables He is accomplishing the purpose of God as described in Isaiah.
 2. Just like Isaiah was commissioned to speak to a people who were spiritually blind and deaf to justify God’s righteous punishment for them, Jesus spoke to a spiritually blind and deaf people.
 3. Although Jesus’s teaching could be understood by those who love truth, for those who refused to love truth and instead took pleasure in unrighteousness, God’s word deludes them. (2 Thess. 2:10-12)
 - v. Fulfillment of Asaph’s prophecy – cited from Psalm 78:2
 1. Finally, later in Matthew 13, Jesus’s use of parables is connected to a Psalm of Asaph (Psalm 78). This psalm recounts the history of salvation among God’s people, and their continual rejection of Him.
 2. I wonder if this connection is made to illustrate Asaph’s similar fate. He tried to teach the people of Israel and failed. Jesus likewise spoke to God’s people and was largely rejected.

Characteristics Of Jesus' Parables

I. Relatable:

- a. Jesus' use of parables was for many purposes, among which attainability was one. When Jesus spoke of a farmer spreading seed, it was because many in His audience would have been familiar with that very practice.
- b. The parables, however, were not just relatable stories. To say only that is to strip the parables of their divine wisdom. "There is a shallow spirit ever ready to empty Scripture of the depth of its meaning, to explain, 'This means nothing, this circumstance is not to be pressed;' and this saying, we may fail to draw out from the Word of God all of the riches therein contained; we may fail to admire the wisdom with which the type was constructed to correspond with its antitype." (Trench p. 16)
- c. While the images Jesus chose to use to communicate big ideas to his audience were certainly culturally relevant and very possible to imagine happening real-time; they were not usually "normal" circumstances.
- d. "The Good Samaritan" for example was a very extreme situation to describe the total overhaul in thinking God expected for His people to have when it came to neighborliness.
- e. "The Wedding Feast" parables are also over-exaggerated – there were certainly have been at least ONE of the invited guests to have come to the call of the feast.

II. Purpose driven:

- a. Jesus often had a specific reason for a specific parable:
 - i. "The Rich Fool" (Luke 12:13-21) was provoked by the covetous brother who demanded Jesus be arbiter over his familial financial dispute.
 - ii. "The Pharisee and the Tax Collector" was inspired by Jesus' observation of a particularly arrogant/hateful attitude prevalent among the people (Luke 18:9).
 - iii. "The Laborers in the Vineyard" seems to stem from an attitude revealed by Peter in the previous chapter (Matthew 19:27); "we worked, where's our reward?!"
- b. As is typical of nearly every study in Scripture: context is king.

III. Widely Applicable:

- a. Some of the images Jesus chose to use are repeated in the gospels, but not in the same context or with the same meaning. One example:
 - i. The Lamp: Matthew 5:14-16 speaks of a lamp that is put under a basket. What is the lamp? Clearly from vs. 14 and vs. 16 Jesus is talking about us; Christians.
 - ii. The same illustration is used in Mark 4:21-23 (A lamp put under a basket) but in this context, Jesus is not talking about His people, He's referring to the gospel itself, the life changing message. That's made clearer from vs. 22-23.

IV. Purposely Engaging:

- a. Many of Jesus' parables force the listener to be introspective. The ideas behind many of the lessons Jesus presents demand an answer to the question, "Which one are you?". While this may not be the PRIMARY point of Jesus stories, it is certainly something Jesus wished for His hearers.
 - i. At the end of the parable of the Sower, one should ask, "Which soil am I?"
 - ii. At the end of the parable of the unforgiving servant, one should ask, "Have I

- been the ungrateful servant?"
- iii. "Am I a sheep or a goat?"
- iv. Etc.

Lessons From Matthew's Parables

The Sower: Model of Parables

- I. The parable of the Sower is perhaps the most well-known of all of Jesus' parables, and for good reason.
 - a. This parable serves as a type for all parables, and largely explains why certain among the crowds did not listen to Jesus' teaching.
 - b. Both in content and delivery Jesus teaches the purpose of parables by explaining the heart of man.
 - i. In his delivery, he simply tells a story about a farmer who spread seed which landed on various soils.
 1. One might come away from such an experience confused and possibly annoyed, yet Jesus offers no initial help in understanding his message. He simply says, (paraphrase) "If you have ears, use them."
 2. In doing this Jesus creates a purposeful division between his disciples and the common listener.
 3. A true disciple of Jesus will pursue truth more fervently from the source of truth, Jesus himself. Even if the teaching is challenging, confusing, or seemingly unattainable (John 6:66-69).
 - ii. The content of the parable is also extremely important in this lesson.
 1. Jesus' explanation of the parable of the Sower illustrates the exact reasons for which men don't obey the truth.
 - a. Whether it is lack of understanding, lack of strong rooting, or a choked heart, anyone who rejects Jesus' teaching has a reason.
 - b. On the other hand, a humble and submissive heart will: hear, understand, and produce!
 - c. While this story may be a familiar one, its message is timelessly important. If we, or anyone else, want to come to Jesus and be useful in His service we must have the heart for it.
 - i. Like almost all of Jesus teaching, He expects more than superficial service. Our lives must be changed to the core.

Parables Unique To Matthew

- I. Later in this outline we will chart the locations and arrangements of the different parables of Jesus. In this section we will discuss some of the specific lessons from parables unique to Matthew's gospel.
- II. Wheat and Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)
 - a. The story, again, is simple:
 - i. A man sowed good seed in his field, but his enemy sowed some weeds.

1. The workers want to know if they should uproot the weeds before harvest.
 2. The instruction given is, (paraphrased) “Wait until harvest, and then we’ll sort them out. The master doesn’t want to damage any of the wheat while weeding the field.
- b. The disciples, for the second time in this chapter are looking for some help from Jesus, and so Jesus explains this parable, which He doesn’t often do.
- i. The explanation Jesus gives is very interesting. What point is he trying to make?
 - ii. He gives almost a dictionary of each item in vs. 37-39
 1. Jesus is the good Sower.
 2. The field is the world.
 3. The good seed are sons of the kingdom.
 4. The weeds are the of sons of the evil one.
 5. The enemy is the devil.
 6. The harvest is the end of the age.
 7. The harvesters are angels.
 - iii. Then he gives the explanation of what happens in that process, and why:
 1. At the end of the age God will divide up the good from the evil
 2. Blessing for the righteous and punishment for the wicked.
 - iv. Now what’s the point of telling us that the kingdom of heaven is like this? What does it explain?
 1. Why there are still wicked people in the world.
 - a. You wouldn’t think there would be wicked people in the world if Jesus really is reigning as king. He shouldn’t tolerate that. In fact, that’s the reason many people give for not believing.
 - b. But if the evil in the world doesn’t mean God isn’t reigning, what does it mean?
 - i. There is an enemy planting some weeds!
 - c. But also... God doesn’t uproot them immediately because he doesn’t want to get some of the wheat as the weeds are pulled up.
 2. This makes a lot of sense. Because what would happen if in the moment anyone sinned God uprooted them?
 - a. We’d have a huge population problem.
 - b. It’s a good thing in my case that God didn’t do that, because I wouldn’t be here!
 - c. God patiently waiting to uproot the weeds is a blessing to us.
- c. This is not talking about the church and some sense in which we ought to withhold church discipline. Jesus makes that clear in vs. 38.
- i. This is where sticking with Jesus’ explanation is very helpful.
- III. The Hidden Treasure/Pearl of Great Value (Matthew 13:44-46)
- a. These two mini parables offer the same general point with different images.

- b. The first, shows a man who finds buried treasure, and upon finding it covers it up and sells all his possessions to obtain the field and the treasure therein.
- c. The second follows a pearl merchant who comes across a pearl infinitely more valuable than any he'd seen before. Like the previous man, he sells all that he has so he can obtain the priceless pearl.
- d. What lesson is Jesus trying to communicate with these stories?
 - i. Primarily Jesus is showing the extreme value of the kingdom of God.
 - 1. As is typical of many of Jesus' parables, these begin with, "The kingdom of heaven is like..."
 - ii. The kingdom of heaven is more valuable than anything previously attained in your life and more valuable than anything you *will* attain in your life, combined.
 - iii. No matter what the cost or how much you must sacrifice, do it!
 - 1. We can easily forget just how valuable eternity with God is--Intangible things are like that. If I can't see and touch it, how do I know what it's worth?
 - iv. Also consider the attitude mentioned: The man who sold his possessions for the field with treasure did it with joy.
 - 1. Can you imagine someone taking out all their possessions, liquidating all his assets, and buying an overpriced field?
 - 2. Once you understand what you're getting, the sacrifice makes sense.
 - v. When considering the second man you notice that he is slightly contrasted with the first.
 - 1. The second man is searching for something valuable. The first just seems to stumble upon it.
- e. As preachers we must realize there will be people who are seeking, and there will be people who are not.

IV. The Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)

- a. This story begins with Peter wanting to know the standard of forgiveness.
 - i. I assume Peter thinks he's being very generous with his answer of "7 times in a day".
 - 1. Jesus raises the bar and says 77 times (or seven times seventy).
 - 2. Jesus' point is not an exact numeric value but rather, there is an infinite number of times forgiveness should be offered.
 - ii. Jesus tells the story to illustrate why there is such an extreme standard of forgiveness.
 - iii. If we even enter a discussion about "how many times" we should forgive we're thinking like the world, and not God.
- b. This story is a particularly outrageous one.
 - i. Not only are the number figures given in this story astronomical, but the attitude and behavior of the man forgiven is nearly unfathomable as well.
 - ii. A master is seeking to collect on his debts, and one of his debtors owes him 10,000 talents. He begs for patience so he can repay.
 - 1. He could never repay.

2. There are varying ideas about how much exactly a talent was worth.
 - a. Josephus estimates that the collection of annual taxes from Idumea, Samaria and Judea were 600 talents (Josephus, Ant. 17.11.4)
- iii. To the great surprise of Jesus' listeners, the king forgives the entire debt.
 1. Thus illustrating the great forgiveness that God gives to us.
- iv. Now the man who is forgiven the debt found a man who owed him 100 denarii.
 1. Or 100 days wages
 2. Relatively nothing in comparison to his own debt. And also a possible debt to be repaid!
- v. Astonishingly, the first man responds in aggression, rage, and no mercy.
- c. The most forgiven people ought to be the most forgiving people.
 - i. Just like the king in Jesus' story is outraged at the lack of mercy, God will be outraged at the lack of mercy we show to others when we've been forgiven so much.
 - ii. When there are wrongs against us, if we're not willing to forgive, we look just like this man to God.
 1. Do we think that way? If not, it's likely that don't really appreciate and understand forgiveness.
- d. May God give us the hearts to understand how much we owed and how incredibly blessed we are to receive forgiveness from Him.
 - i. How dare we refuse to forgive from our hearts after receiving such a great and awesome forgiveness from God.
 - ii. We have difficulty forgiving when we've been deeply betrayed, but we ought not have a difficulty if we truly understand what we've done to God and what He's done for us.

V. The Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

- a. This story ends with the phrase "the first will be last, and the last first" in vs. 16. That's the same phrase used in Matthew 19:30.
 - i. It appears Jesus is continuing to answer some of the questions asked by the disciples in chapter 19 with this parable, specifically the attitude behind Peter's question:
 1. "We left everything for you, what will we get?" (Paraphrased)
 - ii. Jesus answers the questions but deals with the bargaining attitude behind Peter's question.
- b. He tells the story of a man who keeps returning to hire more and more workers.
 - i. The first group are promised a denarius as payment.
 - ii. The rest of the groups he says, "I'll pay you what's right".
 - iii. The work ranges from working all day to working only one hour.
- c. When the master pays them all he starts with the one-hour workers. He pays them all equally, one denarius.
 - i. The day-long workers feel cheated, for they worked longer! It's not right to be paid the same as someone who worked so little.

- ii. However, they were paid exactly what they agreed to.
- iii. So, the problem isn't really the salary... they're jealous of the other guys who did less work.
 - 1. These men see grace and mercy as injustice.
 - a. When we don't understand the grace and mercy of God, we see God's mercy to others as a great scandal. But the truth of the matter is, you can't calculate grace/mercy in accounting terms.
- d. Regarding Peter's question in chapter 19:27, Peter is not owed anything, God gives because He wants to be generous.
 - i. So also, we must realize and understand God's grace; not begrudging God because He's gracious to someone who I don't think deserves it.
 - ii. We can easily think we're owed God's grace, but brothers, we are not. Otherwise, it wouldn't be grace.

VI. The Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32)

- a. The structure is important:
 - i. Jesus begins by engaging His audience by saying, "What do you think?"
 - 1. It must be emphasized that this is the purpose of all parables: to get the hearer to think.
 - ii. He then presents a simple story that would have been relatable:
 - 1. One reckless son who repents and obeys.
 - 2. One agreeable son who doesn't follow through.
 - iii. Then He asks another question, "Which of the two did the will of the Father?"
 - 1. The obvious answer which the Jews must admit to is, "the first."
 - iv. Jesus then explains that this situation is precisely what is happening present day with the religious elites (who are the second son) and the sinners (who are the first).
- b. The Two Sons parable teaches a handful of lessons:
 - i. True repentance – it can be incredibly easy for a "godly" person to feel close to the LORD. The true test however is in the fruit.
 - 1. If we ever want to have a relationship with God we must change, and that change must mean something.
 - 2. Both in our teaching and our lives we must lead the way in true repentance. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for teaching well and not practicing (Matthew 23:2-3); would he give us the same rebuke?
 - ii. Self-Righteousness – arguably one of the deadliest of all attitudes possible among God's people. The self-righteous person feels no need to change because, in their eyes, they're perfect.
 - 1. Brothers, we ought never feel like we've fully arrived at perfect righteousness. We are being continually transformed in mind and heart into the image of Jesus.
 - 2. The moment we say, "I am righteous" is the moment we ought to consider 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

3. Perhaps for the preacher, this attitude can be even more tempting. Having a powerful vocal presence, but no actual substance in the life we live.

Properly Using Parables

- I. To discuss how to use parables properly, we must first discuss how NOT to use parables:
 - a. Parables often only have one or two points that are being communicated. Every single detail is **not** to be emphasized. For example:
 - b. Augustine's Allegory of "The Good Samaritan":
 - i. *A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; Adam himself is meant; Jerusalem is the heavenly city of peace, from whose blessedness Adam fell; Jericho means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies. Thieves are the devil and his angels. Who stripped him, namely, of his immortality; and beat him, by persuading him to sin; and left him half-dead, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called half-dead. The priest and the Levite who saw him and passed by, signify the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament which could profit nothing for salvation. Samaritan means Guardian, and therefore the Lord Himself is signified by this name. The binding of the wounds is the restraint of sin. Oil is the comfort of good hope; wine the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The beast is the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The being set upon the beast is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The inn is the Church, where travelers returning to their heavenly country are refreshed after pilgrimage. The morrow is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that which is to come. The innkeeper is the Apostle (Paul). The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him "to live by the gospel" – slightly abridged, as cited in Dodd (p. 1-2)*
 - c. Obviously, Augustine is overreaching with many of the details of the parable, and totally misses the entire point of the parable! The reason it was told: "Who proved to be a neighbor?" (Luke 10:36)
- II. There can obviously be many ways to misuse and abuse the parables, so what should be done to get the most out of Jesus' teaching?
 - a. When it comes to parables, a simple reading is often best.
 - i. Like with other Bible content, it can be easy to zero in on one specific verse or phrase and ignore the context.
 - ii. While one could argue Jesus is being cryptic in His use of parables, He is also being straightforward.
 - iii. Understanding the details of the story first will help in understanding the much deeper lesson being illustrated.
 1. Image trying to draw a portrait of a person after merely glancing at their appearance for a few seconds. We handicap ourselves if we don't read, reread, and read again Jesus' teachings.

-
- b. The explanations (when offered) of Jesus cannot be ignored.
 - i. I feel silly saying this, but after several studies with people I feel it is necessary.
 - ii. Jesus' parables belong to Him. He knows what He's saying, and He knows His meaning. If He tells you what He means, LISTEN.
 - c. See yourself in the story/principle revealed.
 - i. Asking questions like, "What would I do if were the all-day workers in the parable of the laborers" is vital.
 - ii. Jesus stories are not meant to just be interesting fables.
 - 1. They're meant to reveal and change us--To cut deep into our hearts and reveal our thoughts and intentions (Hebrews 4:12)
 - d. Avoid overreaching.
 - i. The parables often have one (possibly two) lesson(s) trying to be communicated.
 - ii. If we over dissect a story well miss the whole point of Jesus teaching (see Augustine's allegory above)
 - iii. However, we ought not straitjacket Jesus' stories. If we say the parable of the Prodigal Son is only for teaching about the need for humble repentance, we miss the lessons of God's love, warnings against bitterness/resentment, the vanity of worldliness, etc.
 - iv. May God give us wisdom and discernment for interpreting the parables.
- III. The parables of Jesus should accomplish the following in us:
- a. Create a humble heart.
 - b. "You are the man!" – 2 Samuel 12:7
 - c. Faith strengthening. Parables illustrate God's residual glory and nature implanted in creation itself (Romans 1:20).
- IV. Earnhart offers five rules for reading the parables (Earnhart, p.14-16):
- a. Study the parable in its historical context to determine why it was spoken.
 - b. Look for the principal truth(s) that the parable is intending to teach.
 - c. Don't try to make the parable "walk on all fours."
 - d. Don't try to establish a doctrinal position solely by a parable.
 - e. Always make a personal application of each parable.

Charting The Parables

Parable Locations

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Type
Salt Of The Earth	5:13	9:50 (?)	14:34-35		Righteous Living
Light Under A Basket	5:14-16	4:21-25	8:16-18 / 11:33		Righteous Living
Eye is lamp of the body	6:22-23		11:34-36		Righteous Living
The Log And The Speck	7:1-5		6:39-42		Righteous Living
Wide and Narrow Roads (Doors)	7:13-14		13:22-30		Judgement
Tree And It's Fruits	7:15-20 / 12:33-37		6:43-45		Principle
Wise and Foolish Builder	7:24-27		6:46-49		Principle/ Righteous Living
New cloth/old garment and new wine/old wineskins	9:14-17	2:21-22	5:36-39		Principle
Harvest and Few Laborers	9:37-38		10:2	4:34-38 (?)	Principle/ Righteous Living
Kingdom Divided Against Itself/binding the strong man	12:25-29	3:24-27	11:17-23		Principle
Return if the unclean Spirit	12:43-45		11:24-26		Righteous Living
The Sower	13:1-9, 18-23	4:1-8, 14-20	8:4-8, 11-15		Kingdom
The Wheat and Weeds	13:24-30, 36-43	4:26-29 (?)			Kingdom/ Judgment
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19		Kingdom
The Leaven (Of the Kingdom)	13:33		13:20-21		Kingdom
The Hidden Treasure	13:44				Kingdom
Pearl Of Great Value	13:45-46				Kingdom
The Fishing Net	13:47-50				Kingdom/ Judgement
New and Old Treasure	13:51-52				Kingdom
What Defiles A Person/Blind leading the blind	15:10-20	7:14-23			Righteous Living
The Leaven (Of Pharisees and Sadducees)	16:5-12	8:15	12:1-3		Principle
The Lost Sheep	18:10-14		15:3-7		Nature of God
The Unforgiving Servant	18:21-35				Righteous Living/ Judgement
Laborers In The Vineyard	20:1-16				Nature of God/ Judgement
The Two Sons	21:28-32				Principle/ Judgement

Tenants Of The Vineyard	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18		Judgement
The Wedding Feast (Banquet)	22:1-14		13:16-24		Judgement
The Fig Tree	24:32-33	13:28-29	21:29-33		Principle/ Judgement
The Ten Virgins	25:1-13				Judgement
The Talents (Minas)	25:14-30		Luke 19:11-27		Judgement
Sheep and Goats	25:41-46				Judgement
The Physician		2:17			Principle/Nature of God
Children in the Marketplace			7:31-35		Judgement
Two Debtors Forgven			7:41-50		Righteous Living
The Good Samaritan			10:30-37		Righteous Living
The Persistent Friend			11:5-10		Righteous Living
The Rich Fool			12:16-21		Righteous Living
Ready for the Master			12:35-48		Righteous Living/ Judgement
Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9		Judgement
The Wedding Feast (Seats of Honor)			14:7-11		Righteous Living/ Judgement
Building a Tower / Going to War			14:28-33		Principle/ Righteous Living
The Lost Coin			15:8-10		Nature of God
The Prodigal Son			15:11-32		Nature of God/ Righteous Living
The Dishonest Manager			16:1-13		Righteous Living
Rich Man And Lazarus			16:19-31		Judgement
Unworthy Servants			17:7-10		Principle/ Righteous Living
The Persistent Widow			18:1-8		Nature of God/ Righteous Living
Pharisee And Tax Collector			18:9-14		Righteous Living/ Judgement
Born Again / Wind				3:3-8	Principle
Living Water				4:7-14 / 7:37-39	Principle/Nature of God
The Bread Of Life				6:35-59	Principle/Nature of God
Light Of The World				8:12 / 9:5	Principle/Nature of God
The Good Shepherd / Door				10:1-18	Principle/Nature of God
Grain of Wheat Dies				12:24-25	Principle
The True Vine				15:1-11	Principle/Nature of God

Shared Parables

Parables	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Salt Of Earth	✓	✓	✓	
Light Under A Basket	✓	✓	✓	
Eye is Lamp	✓		✓	
Log And Speck	✓		✓	
Wide and Narrow	✓		✓	
Tree And Fruits	✓		✓	
Wise And Foolish Builder	✓		✓	
New and Old Cloth/ Wine	✓	✓	✓	
Harvest and Laborers	✓		✓	✓
Kingdom Divided	✓	✓	✓	
Return of Unclean Spirit	✓		✓	
The Sower	✓	✓	✓	
Mustard Seed	✓	✓	✓	
Leaven Of Kingdom	✓		✓	
What Defiles A Person	✓	✓	✓	
Leaven Of Pharisees / Sadducees	✓	✓	✓	
Lost Sheep	✓		✓	
Wicked Tenants	✓	✓	✓	
The Banquet / Wedding feast	✓		✓	
Fig Tree	✓	✓	✓	
Talents / Minas	✓		✓	

Unique Parables

Parables	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Wheat and Weeds	✓			
Hidden Treasure	✓			
Pearl Of Great Value	✓			
Fishing Net	✓			
New and Old Treasure	✓			
Unforgiving Servant	✓			
Laborers In Vineyard	✓			
Two Sons	✓			
Ten Virgins	✓			
Sheep And Goats	✓			
The Physician		✓		
Children in the Market			✓	
Two Debtors			✓	
Good Samaritan			✓	
Persistent Friend			✓	
Rich Fool			✓	
Ready For The Master			✓	
Barren Fig Tree			✓	
Seats of Honor			✓	
Building a Tower / Going to War			✓	
Lost Coin			✓	
Prodigal Son			✓	
Dishonest Manager			✓	
Rich Man and Lazarus			✓	
Unworthy Servants			✓	
Persistent Widow			✓	
Pharisee and Tax Collector			✓	
Born Again / Wind				✓
Living Water				✓
Bread Of Life				✓
Light Of The World				✓
Good Shepherd / Door				✓
Grain Of Wheat Dies				✓
The True Vine				✓

Number Of Parables Per Gospel

Gospel	# of Parables
Matthew	31
Mark	12
Luke	35
John	8

Appendices

Appendix A

Parable and Notes from Cloyce Sutton II, presented at 2022 SITS Conference

The Parable of the Pediatrician and the Pornographer

In a certain city there were two men who were guilty of the same crime. Each was charged with and put on trial for vehicular manslaughter: a prominent, much-loved pediatrician and a porn-shop owner. Each ran a stoplight in early morning, hit another car and killed its driver.

Now the pediatrician was coming home late one night from a fund raiser, and was a bit drowsy, and ran a red light. He t-boned another car and killed its driver, an older woman who was driving to an all-night pharmacy to get a prescription for her ailing husband.

The pediatrician's trial was highly publicized. During the trial, the pediatrician sat calmly with a certain serenity and aloofness. He presented his own closing arguments, and said:

Ladies & gentlemen: Thank you for your patience throughout this long and tedious trial. I've spent my life in this community and tried to be a force for good. My roots in this city go back three generations. I've raised my family here. My children and grandchildren live, work and worship among you. I've treated thousands of your own children. I've never charged anyone who couldn't afford it. I speak regularly to the young people in our town. I tell them to finish school, be active in the community, go to church. I warn them to avoid drugs and alcohol and tobacco. I don't want them living pointless, wasted lives. I don't want them ending up as prostitutes, or drug dealers, or porn peddlers! I don't want to see your children influenced by people like that! I hope that one careless moment won't erase a lifetime of good. I trust your verdict will be fair.

The next week, the same jury heard the case of the porn-shop owner. The pornographer was on his way home at 3:00 A.M., when he ran a red light, and struck a car being driven by a 15-yr-old boy. The boy had "borrowed" his older brother's car and was returning home after renting adult movies at the porn peddler's shop. He had alcohol and marijuana in his bloodstream, and a fake ID in his wallet.

During his trial, the pornographer cried the whole time. He rarely looked up, tears were constantly streaming down his face, and he frequently sobbed loudly. He repeatedly cried out, "What have I

done? What have I done?” He likewise spoke at the end of his trial. He stood as far away from everyone as possible, and never looked up. He said:

I'm sorry for what I did. I know I'm going to prison where I belong. I deserve nothing and I ask for nothing. I've wasted my whole life and haven't done anything good. I sold trash to people because the money was good. But I killed a boy I sold pornography to. I'm ashamed of what I've done. I know God will judge me and I don't really expect forgiveness from him or you. I know I don't deserve it. All I can say is that someday maybe you'll find it in your heart to forgive me. I'm sorry! I'm so very sorry!

Question: had you been on that jury, what verdict would you have rendered for each man?

He who has ears to hear, let him hear the parable of the pediatrician & the pornographer.

Notes:

1. My inspiration for this “parable” was from an article by James-Michael Smith on the Methodist Examiner website. See the bibliography for details.
2. One of the difficult challenges with parables is helping the modern reader or audience hear the parable in the same way as a first-century audience. I think it’s an especially difficult issue with Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18.9-14).
3. For modern audiences, the moment we hear the word “Pharisee,” we immediately picture an ancient, religiously conservative, self-righteous, legalistic bigot. However, I’m not convinced that Jesus’ original audience would have viewed Pharisees in the same way. From my studies, I’m convinced that a first-century audience would have viewed the Pharisee in a more favorable way, like the pediatrician in the modern parable. Both are respected figures, both point to their long history of good works, and both point to the differences between themselves and others in their respective communities.
4. I use this modern parable as a sermon introduction to Luke’s parable as a way of keeping my audience off-guard. I don’t announce the subject or text ahead of time, and I go straight into the modern parable.
5. In terms of application, I end my sermon with this: What if Jesus spoke this parable today? What if he said it in this way?
 - a. Two men led opening & closing prayers at the Sunday morning worship service at the So-And-So Church of Christ.

The opening prayer was by an elder of the church, and he said, “I thank you that we’re not like those denominations, or those liberals, or those atheists, or those tree huggers, or those Democrats. We take the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week; we use the Lord’s money only in ways that are authorized; we speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent; we don’t use pianos in worship.”

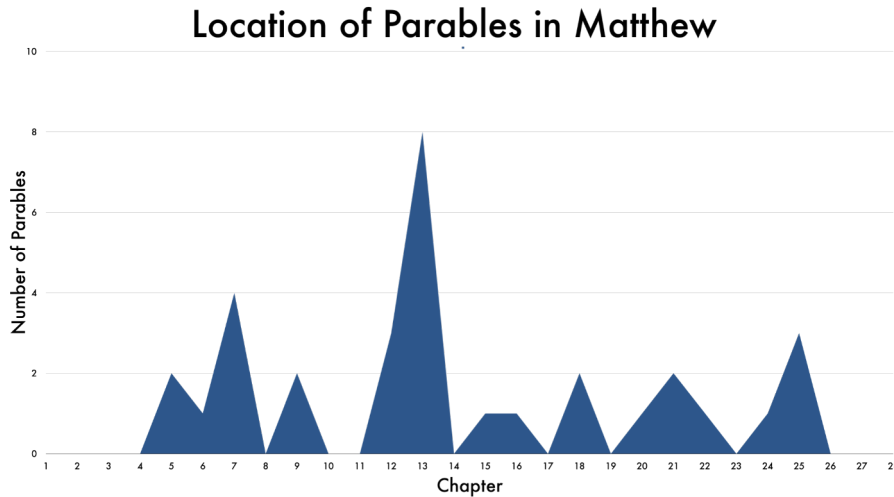
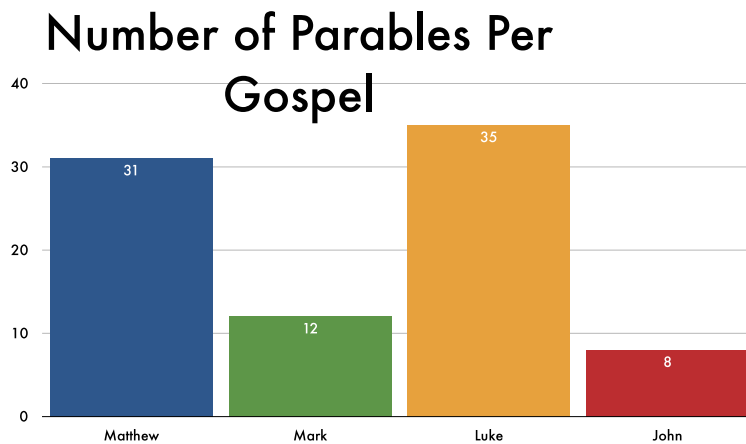
The closing prayer was led by a husband who was struggling with pornography, who stuttered and said, “God be merciful. We need help. Amen.”

- a. And suppose Jesus said that the last man was justified before the first one.
- b. Or instead of the first prayer being led by an elder, suppose the parable had a gospel preacher, or a deacon, or a Bible class teacher?
- c. Or instead of the second prayer being led a husband struggling with pornography, suppose the parable had a teenager struggling with drinking, or a man struggling with homosexual desires?

6. Please understand that Jesus wasn't condemning the Pharisee's good works, nor was he approving the tax collector's sinful life. He was pointing to a fundamental awareness (or lack of awareness) that each man had about his need for God's mercy.

Appendix B – Additional Charts

Type	# of Parables
Kingdom (Nature)	8
Righteous Living	21
Judgement	17
Principle	18
Nature of God	10



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Jesus the Christ & the Son of God and Peter the Rock & Stumbling Block

Scott Smelser

Text: Matthew 16:13-17:13
Citations are ESV unless noted otherwise

I.) INTRO

A. Mt.16:13 -17:13 focusing on 3 narratives:

1. the identity discussion at Caesarea Philippi
2. the call for self denial
3. the transfiguration

B. Emphasis on 4 take-aways:

1. the power of questions in teaching
2. the deficits of a common argument on Matt. 16.18
3. the fundamental need of self denial
4. the fulfillment and directive of Deut. 18:15.

II.) THE CONVERSATION AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI

[Matt. 16:13-16 ESV]

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

A. THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

Before looking at the answers, take note that Jesus opened this discussion with two questions. Jesus, who already knew peoples' thoughts and didn't need information, asked people questions - a lot. Often just rhetorically, as in the sermon on the mount, but also in discussions where he engages others in dialogue. How many questions does Jesus ask in the gospels? By my count (and not including synoptic duplication), 175. One interesting type is where Jesus employs a question which prompts the listener to see or admit a point themselves.

What were you arguing about on the way? (Mark 9:33 CSB)

Which of the two did the will of the Father? (Mt.21:31)

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor...? (Lk.10:36)

Whose likeness and inscription is this? (Mt.22:20)

Consider the denarius dialogue for an example. With one question, the crowd hears the Pharisees themselves say "Caesar's." Would a lecture on taxation have had the same kind of effect? Also: which is easier to ignore - a statement, or a question? Questions call for answers. They engage the mind, they make us think. And even when no answer is forthcoming (eg. "What were you arguing about...?"), then even the lack of an answer speaks loudly.

Yet if you're like me, too often when studying with people, we've told them what to think, when

many times if we'd have asked a question - and let them see it for themselves, it would have been more effective. I've been working at doing better on this. But sometimes I'm impatient. I've got an hour or so to study with someone. I have a lot of points I need to make, and a lot of verses to cover- and slowing down to wait until they see it themselves would ... slow me down. So I pushed on. And maybe they got it. But will they get it better that way? Or will they get it better if they see it for themselves?

Here's an analogy: An insurance salesman tells you that he can reduce your premium and your deductible and give you more reliable coverage. Do you immediately cancel your old policy and sign up? No. You probably don't. He told you what to think, but that doesn't mean you're convinced. But what if he opens the question and lets you compare the premiums, deductibles, and ratings yourself- aren't you more likely to commit when you see it for yourself?

Does this mean sometimes we probably ought to slow down and wait while someone reads the text and finds the answer for themselves? I think so. And when they convince themselves, won't it sink in deeper, and wouldn't that be worth it? This is a lesson I need to keep remembering. Is it a reminder you might need as well?

B. 2 QUESTIONS & 2 ANSWERS:

1. Q #1

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

All proposed figures are prophets, all are deceased. "John the Baptist" was the presumption of Herod (Mk. 6:14). "Elijah" relates to Malachi 4:5, and comes up again with the transfiguration. "Jeremiah or one of the prophets" is more curious. Why Jeremiah in particular? Perhaps it relates to a tradition recorded in 2 Maccabees 2:1-8, which relates an account that Jeremiah took the ark from Jerusalem and hid it away until a revelation of it in the future. But regardless of the reasoning behind these answers, they were all incorrect. Next:

2. Q #2

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The fisherman who once seemed dubious of Jesus' advice on fishing, now identifies Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Christ," of course, is the Greek translation of Simon's confession of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Jn. 1:41), the Anointed One, the prophesied Son of David inheriting the throne (as Mary was told (Lk. 1:32), but a much higher throne at the Father's right hand (Psalm 110). This is not the first record of Jesus being identified as the Christ. Recall the revelations to the shepherds Lk. 2.11 and to Simeon Lk.2.26; and the recognition by Andrew in Jn. 1:41; etc.). But Jesus does not want this proclamation public at this time (note the prohibition in vs. 20:

"Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ."

But here we are two millenia later, and what other individual has had as great an impact upon the world, upon history, and upon ourselves, than Jesus of Nazareth? And on the day of judgment, what relationship will matter more than our relationship in him? Because far beyond being a

Jewish carpenter from an unpromising backwater town, he was the Lord and the Savior, and as Peter says, “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

C. JESUS’ RESPONDS:

1. Commendation, roles, and responsibilities

Jesus’ question to the apostles had been “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter’s answer of course focused entirely on Jesus and his identity. But in Jesus’ response, note that he says several things about Simon. He calls him by his name, calls him by his patronym, calls him by the name Jesus gave him, and 7x in 2 verses Jesus employs the 2nd person as he speaks to his apostle.

And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Note the symmetries, contrasts, and wordplays in the text:

WHO DO PEOPLE SAY / WHO DO YOU SAY
 YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD / YOU ARE THE SON OF JONAH
 YOU ARE THE CHRIST / YOU ARE PETROS
 YOU ARE PETROS / AND ON THIS PETRA
 YOU ARE PETROS / YOU ARE A STUMBLING BLOCK

2. The names of Simon

Simon [or the fuller original Simeon (cf. Acts 15:14 & 2 Ptr. 1:1 in Grk)] was his given name. When his brother Andrew introduced Simon to Jesus, Jesus named him **Κηφᾶς** (Kephās / our: Cephas). Keep in mind as we go through this study that the language Jesus used to name Simon was Aramaic, not Greek. We find repeated direct references to Jesus’ Aramaic in the Gospels (John 1:42; Mark 5:41; Mark 7:34; and Mark 15:34), and when the Gospels were written in Greek, they were translations from the Aramaic. Point being, if you went back in time and heard them speaking, you’d be hearing them speak Aramaic (inclusive naturally of a lot of Hebrew also). Thus in John 1:38-42:

*Andrew calls Jesus “**Rabbi**,” [which John records and then translates into Greek: **didaskale** (i.e., **teacher**)]. Then Andrew, finding Simon, says to him: “We have found the **Messiah**” [which John records and then translates into Greek: **Christos** (i.e., **anointed**)]. And bringing Simon to Jesus, “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called **Cephas**’” [which John records and then translates into Greek: **Petros** (i.e., **Rock**)] as noted in the ESV footnote: “**Cephas** and **Peter** are from the word for **rock** in Aramaic and Greek, respectively”.*

Hence, Young’s Literal Translation reads: “**Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas,**” (which is interpreted, A rock.) [Jhn 1:42 YLT]. Similarly, as Kittle’s Theological Dict. says: “In order to bring out the power of the nickname as the authors and early readers of the NT felt it, we ought perhaps to follow the NT practice and reproduce the name as

‘Simon Rock.’”

So the unlearned fisherman becomes a fisher of men, and an apostle that will bind and loose, and have the keys to the Kingdom and open the gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles. And the “sinful man” that urged Jesus to depart, will serve as and grow into the surname that Jesus gave him: **Κηφᾶς** (Rock). A lot of duty, service, and responsibility given to a self-proclaimed sinful fisherman.

D. ASSUMPTIONS & ARGUMENTS REGARDING JESUS’ REPLY:**1. CLAIMS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

The Vatican assumes an establishment of papal authority upon this text. Just as they inflate and exploit a proper appreciation for Mary (also called blessed, by the way) to turn her into a sinless Mother of God bodily assumed into heaven, a Perpetual Virgin, and the Queen of Heaven; here they exploit and inflate a proper appreciation of Simon into “the Holy Father” [a title forbidden by the Lord himself (Matt. 23:9)], the Supreme Pontiff, and the first Pope in a long line of continuous popes from Peter to Francis, all serving as the Head of the church on earth. And it is this very text before us that is so often claimed to support that.

I’m reminded of a premillennialist who claimed that massive gold deposits would be discovered in Israel shortly before the 2nd coming. His proof was Gen.2:11-12): “the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good.” What was in the text? Gold. What was not in the text? Everything else: massive deposits discovered in Israel before the 2nd coming. Two slices of bread doesn’t make a BLT. Without the BLT, two slices of bread = two slices of bread.

Similarly here. Yes, Simon is Peter (Kephass = Rock). Yes, Peter would bind and loose (along with the other apostles as well; Matt. 18:18). Yes he will have the keys and will open the gospel to the Jews in Acts 2, and to the Gentiles in Acts 10. But what’s not in the text? Being Pope. Being the Holy Father. Being the Supreme Pontiff. Being the first in a papal line from Peter to Francis. Those are not there.

2. DEBATE OVER “THIS ROCK”

Into this discussion comes the question of what is meant by the statement:

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.”

3 views:

Simon Peter is the rock and the Pope.

Simon Peter is neither the rock nor a Pope.

Simon Peter is the rock, but he is not a POPE

Regarding the second view (not “this rock”), we will be examining two common arguments:

a.) Argument one: PETROS / PETRA

“Peter” (petros) and “rock” (petra) are two different Greek words. The rock upon which Jesus would build his church is Greek word PETRA, meaning a large mass of rock. Simon’s name is **Petros**, a detached piece of rock, a small stone or pebble. Simon Peter is not “this rock” (petra).

b.) Argument two: “NO OTHER FOUNDATION”

In addition to the *petra* / *petros* being different words, the church could not be built on Peter or anyone other than Jesus, for Paul said: “**no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**” [1Cor. 3:11 NKJV].

Common conclusion: “This rock” (*petra*/massive) cannot be Simon Peter (*petros* / detached smaller stone or pebble). But Simon Peter had just confessed Jesus as the Christ, and that is the *petra* upon which the church is built; either (a.) Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ, or alternatively but similarly, (b.) Jesus Christ, who had just been confessed by Peter.

c). EXAMINING THE RELIABILITY OF THE ABOVE ARGUMENTS

For the next few minutes I want to examine those arguments and see if they may be misrepresenting something simple, and plain, and biblical. After the lecture, feel free to address the issue, one way or the other, in the Q&A. But if you see compelling evidence, first linguistically, and more importantly biblically, I encourage you to search the Scriptures to evaluate whether things are so, or not.

(1.) QUESTIONS ON PETROS / PETRA [πέτρος/πέτρα]

QUESTION #1:

What do Thayer, B.A.R., DNTT, and Kittell say about *Petros* & *Petra*?

QUESTION #2:

Before being translated into Greek, did “**Kephas**” (the actual Aramaic name Jesus verbally gave to Simon in Aramaic), carry the same nuances and distinctions mentioned above on **Petros**?

QUESTION #3:

Understanding that **petra** was the best Grk. translation for the phrase “upon this rock” (compare the same **petra** usage in Mt. 7:24 “built his house on the rock”); is there another reason (other than size), that could explain why Simon’s surname is translated into the masculine word **petros** (used in the NT only in reference to Simon Peter), instead of the common (but also feminine word), **petra**?

(2.) QUESTIONS ON “NO OTHER FOUNDATION”:

Bearing in mind the fact that parts of Jesus’ statement to Simon are also stated elsewhere to the other apostles collectively:

(i.e.; “whatever you [sing.] bind...loose” to Simon in Matt. 16;

and “whatever you [plural] bind... loose” to the apostles collectively in Matt. 18:18),

consider and compare the following:

QUESTION #1:

If 1 Cor. 3:16 (“no other foundation”) prohibits texts in other contexts from describing the church as being built on an apostolic foundation, then what are we to make of Paul’s explicit statement in Ephesians that the church was “built on the foundation of the apostles”(2:20)?

QUESTION #2:

What are the contexts of Matt. 16 and 1 Cor. 3? Are they both about the universal church, or is one about the planting and building of a local church?

QUESTION # 3: Illustrating the fact that different texts and contexts can use different figures:

In Matt. 16 (church universal), who was the builder?

In 1 Cor. 3, (church local), who was the builder?

In light of the arguments made on Matt. 16, all of these are significant questions.

(3.) REVIEWING THE ANSWERS on PETROS / PETRA:

ANSWERING Q. #1 ON PETROS/PETRA:

What do Thayer, BAG, DNTT, BAG, and KITTLE say?

Summary: none affirm the argument for the Petra/Petros distinction to be decisive. B.A.G. is non-committal on this text and identifies “this petra” to be either Peter or Peter’s affirmation. Thayer applies “this petra” as a metaphor for the man (Peter). Kittle as usual gives the most exhaustive information and explains why “this petra” is Peter. Here are the references:

THAYER’S LEXICON :

petra: “a rock, ledge, cliff”

petros: “an appellative prop. name, signifying ‘a stone,’ ‘a rock,’ ‘a ledge,’ or ‘cliff’”

Not a huge distinction there (though he offers less info than some others). But as to the usage in this text (on this **petra**), he specifically says:

“c. metaph. *A man like a rock* ... Mt. xvi.18,” recognizing Petra as a reference to Peter.

He does mention the argument to the contrary, and says:

“[Some interpp. regard the distinction (generally observed in classic Greek... between **πέτρα**, the massive living rock, and **πέτρος**, a detached but large fragment, as important for the correct understanding of this passage; others explain the different genders here as due first to the personal then to the material reference...]”

B.A.G. (Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich)

“πέτρα ...

1. *rock-* a. lit. ... b. In a play on words w. the name Πέτρος ... The apostle so named, or the affirmation he had just made, is the rock upon which Christ will build his church...

2. *stone* (in an OT quot. where petros is used in parallelism w. Lithos) ... Ro. 9:33, 1 Pt 2:8) (both Is 8:14)...”

“Πέτρος”... [listed only as the proper name]... “(ὁ πέτρος =stone ... Π. as a name can be scarcely be pre-Christian ... Fr. the beginning it was prob. thought of as the Gk. equivalent of the Aramaic ...Κηφᾶς ...) Peter...”

πέτρα and πέτρος

NIDNTT Colin Brown ed. :

“petra means rock, a mass of rock, boulder, and stone as a material; ... petros, likewise attested from the earliest times, means a (broken off) piece of rock, stone ... A strict distinction of meaning cannot however be maintained: petros can mean, rock, and petra, stone. (cf. Homer, *Od.* 9,243; Hesiod, *Theog.* 675; Soph., *OC* 1595...)”

KITTLE / TDNT :

“The fem. **πέτρα** is used predominantly in secular Gk. for a large and solid “rock.”... The masc. **πέτρος** is used more for isolated rocks or small stones, including flints and pebbles for slings... Since there is such a great difference in content, the emphasis should be noted, though *in practice one cannot differentiate too strictly between πέτρα and πέτρος; they are often used interchangeably.*” [bold italics added]

And specifically on Matt. 16:18-

“The obvious pun ... suggests a material identity between πέτρα and πέτρος, the more so as it is impossible to differentiate strictly between the meanings of the two words...

On the other hand, only the fairly assured Aramaic original of the saying enables us to assert with confidence the formal and material identity between πέτρα and πέτρος : πέτρα = Κηφᾶς = πέτρος”

Bottom line: When an argument that claims proof in the Greek is not seen as convincing to numerous Greek scholars, it should cause pause before being promoted.

ANSWERING Q. #2 ON PETROS/PETRA: MNG. of KEPHAS?

Before being translated into Greek, did “KEPHAS” (the name Jesus verbally gave to Simon), carry the same nuances referenced in “PETROS”?

What does Kepha mean?

“**rock**?...Cephas, Aram. surname of Simon” **B.A.G. 2nd ed., p.431**

“(Chald. ... **a rock**), Cephas... the surname of Simon” **Thayer’s Lexicon, p.346**

“**Kephas, kay-fas**’; of Chald. or. [comp. 3710]; **the Rock**; Cephas (i.e. Kepha), a surname of Peter: -Cephas” **Strong’s Conc.**

ANSWERING Q #3 ON PETROS/PETRA: WHY “PETROS”?

Understanding that the common word **petra** was the best Grk. word for ‘rock’ in “upon this rock” (compare the same word petra in Mt. 7:24 “built his house on the rock”); could there be a different reason -other than size - that would explain why Simon’s surname is translated into the masculine word **petros** (used in the NT only in reference to Simon Peter), instead of the common (but also feminine word), **petra**?

Answer: Gender. One would not translate the nickname “**Kephas**” (an Aramaic *masculine noun*) into **Petra** (a Greek *feminine noun*). **Petros** is the *masculine noun* for rock, and is the right translation for **Kephas** as a male name. Calling Simon “Petra” instead of “Petros” would be somewhat akin to calling Sylvester Stallone “Roxy” instead of “Rocky” (though different

derivation). Petros is not a common word in the Bible (neither in the NT nor in the LXX), except for its use (as here) of Simon's surname given by Jesus. Petros is used in the NT repeatedly (over 150x), of, and only of, the masculine surname given to Simon Bar-Jonah. And since Simon wasn't woke, and his pronouns were still *αυτός* / *αυτόν* :), his Greek name is Petros, not Petra.

(4.) REVIEWING THE ANSWERS ON “NO OTHER FOUNDATION”: ANSWERING QUESTION #1: WHAT ABOUT EPH. 2:20?

If “no other foundation” in 1 Cor. 3:16 prohibits texts in *other* contexts from describing the church as being built on Peter (or any of the apostles), then what are we to make of Paul's explicit statement in Ephesians that the church was in fact “**built on the foundation of the apostles**”(2:20)?

In Eph. 2:19-21 Paul describes the church universal as the house of God, with Jesus being the chief cornerstone, and with the apostles & prophets being the foundation it was built on: “**the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone**, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” [Eph 2:19-21 ESV].

Let it be remembered that some statements to Peter in Matt. 16 are also repeated collectively to the other apostles elsewhere: (eg.: “whatever you [sing.] bind... loose; 16:19 / whatever you [pl.] bind... loose”; 18:19). Likewise, Peter is one of the apostles that serve as a foundation that the church is built on. Nor are these the only texts which portray the apostles (including Peter) as foundational. Note the foundation description of the New Jerusalem: “the wall of the city had twelve **foundations**, and on them were the **twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**” (Rev. 21:14).

In denying that Peter is the Pope, we need not, nor should we, deny the foundational roles (in the church universal) of Peter and his fellow apostles.

ANSWERING Q #2: What are the contexts of Matt. 16 and 1 Cor. 3?

In **Matt. 16** Jesus is the builder of the church universal. **1 Cor. 3** is about the work that Paul and others did in building the local work at Corinth.

Paul gives two figures. In the farming image: Paul planted, Apollos watered, God gave the increase. In the building image: Paul, “as a wise master builder” laid the foundation of Jesus, but he warns others to take care how they build on it (in the local church at Corinth), whether with straw and stubble, or based on human sophia. When Paul started the work, Paul based it on Jesus Christ (not human sophia); “And I, when I came to you brothers, did not come ... with lofty words of wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” [1Co 2:2 ESV].

Unfortunately, some afterwards digressed into human allegiance (I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, etc.), and a craving for sophia (wisdom; cf. 3:16-20). So Paul reminds them: “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos...? ... we are God's fellow workers; you are... God's building.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, **as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation**, and another builds on it. But let each one **take heed how he builds on it**. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is..." [1 Cor. 3:5-13 NKJV].

Then Paul warns those in the church there that are enamored with human sophia: "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him... Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men." [1Co 3:17-21 ESV].

Paul built that Corinthian church on the foundation of Jesus, and he warned the local teachers there to beware how they were now building on it, for if they destroyed that church, they would be destroyed by God.

Notice here the difference in perspective. When Jesus came to build the church universal, Jesus began it with the apostles. But when an apostle (Paul) goes out to build a local church, he begins it with Jesus. This is not a contradiction. It is a different perspective in a different context.

QUESTION # 3: Illustrating the fact that different texts and contexts can use different figures, notice the following:

In Matt. 16 (context: universal church), who was the builder of the church?

In 1 Cor. 3, (context: building the local church at Corinth), who was the builder of the church?

Matt. 16:18; Jesus: "I will build my church"

1Cor. 3:10-11; Paul: "as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it."

It would be pointless to argue from 1 Cor. 3 that Jesus is not the builder, because Paul is. It would be pointless to argue from Matt. that Paul is not a builder, because Jesus is. Let each text and context make its point. Otherwise you can get a real mess: Was Jesus the good shepherd of the sheep? Or was Jesus the lamb of God? These aren't contradictions, these are multiple figures.

Bottom line:

Eph. 2:20 states that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles. Peter was one of those apostles. He is not foundational because he is a Pope. He, and the other apostles, are foundational, because Jesus commissioned them to be his witnesses, his ambassadors, his apostles, taking his Word to the world. As the Eph. passage proceeds to show (3:3-5): the revelation was given the apostles and (NT) prophets through the Spirit, and when they teach and write it down, we can read and understand it. Without them, we would not know of Jesus Christ, we would not know the Gospel, we would not know the Lord's Word. This does not place them over Christ, they are commissioned under him. This does not make any of them a Holy Father (be not ye called Father, for all ye are brethren). But beware of overstated Greek arguments that

blur plain and biblical truths.

E.) FURTHER DISCUSSION

“From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." [Matt. 16:21-23 ESV]

In a few short verses, Simon goes from Rock to stumbling block. I appreciate the candid picture we have of Peter. It gives us hope and reassurance that everyone messes up. And that's one reason we like Peter. But if we look at Simon Peter's failures, stop there, and pat ourselves on the back, we are not being fair to Peter, and we are cheating ourselves. Simon Peter grew. The same Jewish council that caused Peter to be a lying coward is the same Jewish council that Peter boldly stood up to in both Acts 4 and Acts 5, where he would not back down and would not be intimidated. Peter grew into the man that wrote: "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith," [1Pe 5:8-9 ESV]. Peter had not always been that sober-minded and watchful, and had not always been that solid. But he grew. So when we look at him, let's be fair to him and challenging to ourselves. We have all messed up, like Peter did. The question is, do we repent and grow, like Peter did?

III. THE ESSENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

“Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." [Matt. 16:24ff].”

This is one of the most central instructions in the Gospels. It is the flip side of the first and second greatest commandments. On the positive side is what to exalt: love God with all your heart and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. On the other side is what to reject: selfishness. You cannot honor God as you should nor treat your neighbor as you should while living in selfishness. Self must be dethroned and replaced with submission to the Lord. It is the essence of repentance. It is the difference between the old man and the new man. Consider how central selfishness is to sin. Eve- exaltation of self instead of submission. Cain- the same. Korah- the same. King Saul - the same. David- the same. Judas- the same. You and I- the same. Selfishness is at the root of rebellion to God. Sin sometimes gets dismissed as “mistakes,” or failure to “be perfect.” Selfish rebellion is not just a mistake, or a lack of perfection. Selfishness

is rebellion. It involves putting our will above God's.

Consider: How arrogant would it be if one to say, "I'm the most important person in this town"? Even more arrogant, "I'm the most important person in this state." More: "this country." More: "the world." But what would be more arrogant than saying "I'm more important than God"? None of us would ever say that. But have we acted that way?

Jesus said "Not my will, but thine be done." But which one of us has not done the following: you knew what God almighty wanted you to do. You knew what you wanted to do. And you decided that what YOU wanted was more important to you than what the Creator of the universe wanted. That's not a minor mistake. That's wicked, and that's rebellion. And to follow Christ, we must not only deny the old self, we must crucify him.

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

And in Luke, the word is included: Daily. Take up your cross "daily." It's not a one and done. The old man, dead and buried, tends to scratch his way out of the tomb. When he shows up, throw a few more nails into him and keep him at bay.

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." [Lk. 9:23].

The difference between being a disciple and not being a disciple boils down to the point of this text. The selfish person puts their will (whether in one area or all areas) above the Lord. Maybe the Lord isn't even in their top ten, or their top 100 concerns. Or maybe they have been keeping a lot of commandments, but lack one thing - like the rich young ruler. Either way, to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, he makes it clear what reversal of wills must take place:

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

And if we, like the rich young ruler, refuse to do that, the question is: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

IV. THE TRANSFIGURATION ON THE MOUNT

[Mat 17:1 ESV] And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. [2] And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. [3] And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. [4] And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." [5] He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." [6] When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. [7] But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." [8] And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. [9] And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." [10] And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" [11] He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. [12] But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will

certainly suffer at their hands." [13] Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Moses the famous lawgiver, and Elijah the famous prophet, appear with Jesus transfigured, the ultimate prophet and lawgiver. Jesus is on the mountain, radiant, as the face of Moses had been years before, on another mountain. And Peter - not knowing what to do (as Mark informs us)- offers to put up 3 tents for the 3 of them. But the heavenly voice focuses on \one of the three and says, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." It's the same basic point as Heb. 1:1; "God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," [Heb 1:1-2 ESV]. And the directive, "listen to him," is an echo of Dt. 18:15: **"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen"** [Deut. 18:15 ESV]

After the resurrection and ascension, Peter will cite this very text as fulfilled in Jesus (Acts 3:22-23). And the "like unto me" brings many shadows and similarities to mind. Who as a child was threatened with death by a king? Who gave up the realm of royalty? Who came to help his people? Who delivered them from bondage? Who was the lawgiver? Who interceded for the people? Who went up on the mount and his face was made to shine?

And Moses said:

"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen" [Deut. 18:15 ESV]

And now in the text before us, on the mount of transfiguration, with Moses there (the giver of the Law), and Elijah (of the prophets), and as Peter offers to serve all three luminaries with a tabernacle (tent) each, the voice from heaven echoes the promise of Deut. 18:15:

"This is my beloved Son ... listen to him."

He came. He taught. He died for our sins, and conquered the grave. Then he ascended and sent the Spirit to remind his apostles of his words, and guide them into further truth. He built his church. He is the chief cornerstone, and his apostles and prophets delivered to us his Word and his Gospel. Let us listen to Him. And let us call and move others to do the same.

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Addendum

EXTRA NOTES:

Vine's: If you look at Vine's, he supports the common *petra petros* argument. Under "ROCK" Vine's states: "in Matthew 16:18...of Christ and the testimony concerning Him; here the distinction between *petra*, concerning the Lord Himself, and *Petros*, the Apostle, is clear". But bear in mind that Vine's Expository Dictionary is not the best source for strictly lexical information. The author advances his own doctrinal beliefs beyond the definition of terms. For example, note his positions on "tongues" and "wash away"(in Acts 22:16).

TONGUES: "There is no evidence of the continuance of this gift after apostolic times ...The completion of the Holy Scriptures has provided the churches with all that is necessary..." I don't disagree Vine, but that's beyond the scope of the Greek word.

WASH: "the command to Saul of Tarsus to 'wash away'... was not in itself the actual remission of his sins, which had taken place at his conversion". In this case I do disagree with Vine, but again his views are front and center here, not the accurate representation of the Grk words.

EXTRA NOTES: GREEK WORDS IN THE NT That mean rock or stone:

LITHOS: STONE (57x) examples:

from these **stones** to raise up children for Abraham. [Mat 3:9 ESV]

stones to become loaves of bread." [Mat 4:3 ESV]

asks him for bread, will give him a **stone**? [Mat 7:9 ESV]

The **stone** that the builders rejected [Mat 21:42 ESV]

not be left here one **stone** upon another [Mat 24:2 ESV]

And he rolled a great **stone** to the entrance of the tomb [Mat 27:60 ESV]

PETRA: (14x)

like a wise man who built his house on the **rock**. [Mat 7:24 ESV]

And the earth shook, and the **rocks** were split. [Matt. 27:51 ESV]

and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the **rock**. [Mat 27: 60 ESV]

And some fell on the **rock**, and as it grew up, it withered away. [Luk 8:6 ESV]

PETROS: (In the NT, used only of Simon Peter: 157x),

"You shall be called Cephas" (which means **Peter**)." [Jhn 1:42 ESV]

+ 156 more times of Simon Peter.

PSEPHON (3x):

Cast my **vote** against them [Acts 26:10]

Given a white stone [Rev. 2.17]

EXTRA NOTES:

Binding and Loosing: Rabbinical term for "forbidding and permitting." <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3307-binding-and-loosing> 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem..."

Jeremy Hodges

Text: Matthew 23-25

I. Introduction

A. Warning and Disclaimers:

1. This may be unnecessary, but the method of interpretation of these chapters should not be confused with *full preterism*, or *realized eschatology*. In churches of Christ, this is colloquially termed "The AD 70 Doctrine" often presented in bold letters and an imposing typeface. Having said that, due to my studies of these chapters and others in scripture, my method of interpretation can sometimes be called lumped in with *partial preterism*, or *inaugurated eschatology*. I guess I'm not superstitious, but I'm a little stitious. Rather than being concerned about labels, I tend to think of the approach I am espousing as being a result of respecting the original context.
2. Secondly, in my studies, I found limits in the value of poring over the Rabbinical Literature, even with what I have included herein. Some of Jesus' words are helped by having more first-century Jewish context, but this is far from a silver bullet in interpreting these chapters. For example, the appearance of "father" as a term of respect (cf. Matthew 23:9) in Rabbinic culture is notably sparse, so we are limited by time and history from being able to establish all of Jesus' denunciations from Jewish sources.
3. The same can be said for Jewish historical accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem. It might be tempting to prove a point by using sources like Josephus, but that must be done with care and humility, as Josephus was a human and therefore held biases and imperfections. This is not to say that there is no value to secular histories, but that must be measured.

B. Respect for the Original Context.

1. At the risk of stating the obvious, these chapters must be read in the context of *the Gospel according to Matthew*, which is widely understood to be the most Jewish-centric of all four of the gospels. This goes beyond some of the Jewish inside-baseball that Jesus addresses, but it concerns a culture that was steeped in Old Testament promises concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, but through the lens of Pharisaical Judaism viewed against the backdrop Roman occupation in Judea. These contextual layers should not ever invite us to discount what Jesus teaches in these chapters, but should bring another dimension to them and help us appreciate them all the more.
2. We can read these chapters as they appear in *Matthew* in contrast with how much of the same language is presented in *Luke*. This is not to say that *Matthew* and *Luke* are not both accurately representing the words of Jesus, but the purpose of the gospels are not the same, and this is also represented in how they record similar statements.
3. Due to the fact that Jesus spoke these words to a Jewish people who existed in the first century, we must read them with a background of the culture of the Synagogue in which the Pharisaical domination of bible teaching had grossly distorted the values God presented in the Mosaic law. From the very beginning of *Matthew*, there has

been a theme of antagonism between Jesus and the Jewish religious establishment, not just personally, but in representations of God's eternal values. In many ways, these words of our Lord recorded by Matthew are the climax of that ideological antagonism.

4. This is not to say that there is no room for modern application of these concepts, and in fact there may be no culture more in need of these warnings than ours. However, to make the application the most acutely, we must first understand how they would have sounded to the original intended audience. When we can hear these words and how they were meant to affect the original hearers, then we can effectively apply them to us and our churches today, as we strive to be the church that Jesus started soon after these warnings were made.

II. Matthew 23

A. Humility Preamble to the Disciples. (1-12)

1. Jesus admits the value of the Scribes and Pharisees as teachers of the Law, but draws a contrast between their words and their actions.
 - a. "The seat of Moses" is well attested in Rabbinic literature, and sometimes in reference to the seat at the head of the Sanhedrin. The roots of the concept are found in the Law (see: Exodus 18:13-16), but through abuse and misapplication Jesus noted that the Pharisees had not been faithful stewards of their responsibility.
 - b. Far from a call to rebellion, Jesus instructed His disciples to follow the teachings they provided from the Mosaic Law, but to behave in ways that were righteous, where the scribes and the Pharisees were hypocritical. This is just a continuation of Jesus' message from the beginning (see: Matthew 5:17-20).
 - c. The specific action condemned by Jesus is tying up "heavy burdens" on others through an application of Legal requirements, but refusing to even lift a finger to help (cf. Luke 11:45-46). The core of the Pharisaical mindset was seen in their using the Law as a way to have other people more enslaved to regulation, and themselves perpetually justified. Jesus' kingdom was going to be the opposite (see: Galatians 6:1-5).
2. Jesus focuses on the obsession with external modes of worship that were done for the sole purpose of gaining attention from human beings. Again, this hearkens back to His original encouragements to righteous instead of hypocritical (see: Matthew 6:1-17).
 - a. The first external sign of piety and worship were the Phylacteries, which were not commanded by God, but were a misuse of God's commands (Exodus 13:9; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18), and read back into the Law as if they were commanded.
 - i. The objects themselves are small boxes containing sections of *Torah* worn on the head and on the arms, tied around with leather straps. These boxes were to be in place during most worship practices observed by Jewish males.
 - ii. It is difficult to know when this practice began, because it is assumed to be the case in the earliest Talmudic literature we have access to. Note that Jesus does not condemn the practice itself, but using the widened straps to garner

attention from other people.

- b. The second of the particular modes that Jesus points out are the tassels (צִיצִית - *šīšīt* #6734 or מִילִיָּם - *gəḏilīm* #1434 in Hebrew; κράσπεδον - *kraspedon* #2899 in Greek) that would be at the four corners of an observant Jewish male's garment (see: Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12; Zechariah 8:23 [LXX]) that were to serve as a reminder that they were under the direction of the Mosaic law. It is certain that Jesus (as an observant Jew) would have also worn these tassels (see: Matthew 9:20; 14:36; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:44), therefore it was not the wearing of them that was the problem. The problem was using them to gain the attention and respect of fellow humans.
3. As opposed to respectful titles as was common in Jewish circles, along with the associated prestige, Jesus' disciples were instructed to be humble.
 - a. Rabbi:
 - i. A term for Jewish teacher that developed during the Pharisaical period of Judaism that appeared after Hillel and Shammai, and doesn't really come into official use until the first century. According to later writings, Gamaliel the elder was the first to bear this title.
 - The term itself just means "great" but was assigned to those people who were respected experts in the Law.
 - Justification for the practice is found in the *Talmud* by looking at the ordination of judges and elders, as well as Moses laying his hands on Joshua.
 - Rashi warned against learning the Law for the purpose of attaining the title of "Rabbi," but that it should be done out of a love for God (remarking on Deuteronomy 11:13), but then admits that a diligent learner would eventually gain the title and respect.
 - b. Teacher:
 - i. Similar title to Rabbi, and some writers in Talmud conflate the two.
 - *"A disciple is forbidden to call his teacher by his name, even when the latter is not present. This rule only applies if the name is unusual, so that any one hearing it knows who is meant. In his presence, the pupil must never mention his teacher's name, even if he desires to call another person who bears the same name; the same is the rule with his father's name. In referring to them even after their death, he should use a descriptive title, ('my honoured father', or 'my honoured teacher'). A disciple may not greet his teacher or return his greeting in the same manner as people are wont to greet their companions and return their greetings. But he should bow to his teacher and address him with reverence and deference 'Peace be unto thee, my teacher'. If the teacher greeted him first, he should respond 'Peace to thee, my teacher and master'."* [Mishneh Torah 5.5]
 - c. Father:
 - i. There is little evidence if the use of "father" as a title for teacher in Rabbinic literature, although some late *Tanakh* commentaries associate it with the time of the Herodian temple. It seems that it was almost completely replaced

by "Rabbi."

d. Leader:

- i. Biblical sourced title for those in positions of authority and respect (Exodus 22:27), but came to be applied to those with knowledge and influence in the Rabbinic world.
 - ii. *"It is only due to the importance of Torah study that I have become a leader of the Jewish people, and I therefore have a special obligation to rejoice on this day."* [Pesachim 68b]
 - iii. Many times used for the leader of the Synagogue. (cf. Acts 18:8, 17)
- e. At the core of Jesus' message was a value that was completely at odds with the Pharisaical mindset of the day, and it invited a complete rejection of fleshly values. This call to humility was to be seen as a functional reversal of fleshly position.
- i. Jesus was not, however, contradicting God's Law when He called for a "spiritual revolution," but was returning to the core message of the Law, just as He had promised in the beginning of His ministry (cf. Matthew 5:17).
 - ii. God's promise of the reversal of fleshly position was notable in the Old Testament (cf. I Samuel 2:1-10; Psalm 113), and specifically in passages that were a denunciation of Israel's unfaithfulness, with a promise for a different future (cf. Isaiah 2:11, 17).
 - iii. Other gospel writers noted this theme in Jesus' ministry (cf. Luke 1:52; 14:11; 18:14), and it was a refrain carried out by two significant leaders of the church who had been close to Jesus (cf. James 4:10; I Peter 5:6).

B. 7-8 Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees. (13-33)

1. "Woe" is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew "oi (אוי - 'ōy #188)" to indicate the sadness of a pitiful situation. There are other instances of a list of "woes" that exist in scripture and often serve as a preamble to a message of destruction (eg. Isaiah 5:8-30; Habakkuk 2:6-20). The sad situation of God's people was detailed by Jesus as an explanation for their impending destruction at the hands of God's chosen agent, Rome.
2. The "Scribes and Pharisees" were often presented as a pair, as they were often in league, and as the religiously "conservative" side of the aisle the Pharisees often thought in similar ways to the official hand-copyists of the Law. *Matthew* specifically pits Jesus against this duo at regular and significant intervals, often to underscore different ways of applying the Law (see: Matthew 5:20; 12:38-42; 15:1-14, cf. Mark 2:16; 7:1-13; Luke 5:21, 30; 6:7; 11:53; 15:2).
3. Another term that has already had quite a bit of presence in *Matthew* is "hypocrite (ὕποκριτής - *hupokritēs* #5273, lit. "play-actor)" which Jesus applied to those who were more focused on the appearance of religion than they were the true point of a relationship with God (see: Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; 24:51).
4. The "woes" themselves are worth a study on their own, especially in the light of Rabbinical literature, however, they will only receive brief treatment here. The actions of the Pharisees that Jesus' disciples were not to imitate are addressed in turn, as the situation they had created in Jerusalem warranted God's impending judgment.

As reality respects plain language, Jesus did not shy away from upbraiding the corrupt religious system that was in place when He walked the earth.

- a. Shutting off the Kingdom of Heaven:
 - i. Jesus is addressing the fact that the Pharisees weren't trying to enter the kingdom, and further, they were using their religious influence to prevent others from going in. Whether this was meant to specifically talk about the enmity that the Pharisees showered toward Him or His teachings or just ruining people's understanding and appreciation for God's rule, the truth is the same.
 - ii. It is worth remembering that Jesus has been working through His whole ministry to announce the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Pharisees are being accused for preventing people from entering. The 31 appearances of this phrase, "Kingdom of heaven" are all found in *Matthew*.
- b. [Devouring Widows' Houses]:
 - i. This verse doesn't exist in all early MSS, and is absent from important ones, but is present in many of them, sometimes in different places. In any case, it is present in Luke 20:45-47 as penultimate charge against the Jewish system before He pronounces judgment on Jerusalem.
 - ii. It is hard to know what exact practice is being described here, but it is evident that the Pharisees had legal means to take advantage of widows, and put the control of their estates under their own control and line their pockets. Widows, throughout the Law, were the very picture of the most vulnerable people in the land and the most in need of protection.
 - iii. The length of the Pharisees' prayers is well-attested in Rabbinic literature, and Josephus records them praying for three hours at a time (cf. *Matthew* 6:5-6).
- c. Converting Proselytes for the Worse:
 - i. Jesus does not condemn the practice of working hard to convert outsiders, but the subsequent bad teaching that makes them even worse "sons of hell" than the Pharisees. There is much concerning the process and rules regarding proselytes in the Talmud (*Tractate Gerim* 1.1-7), but not regarding their subsequent behavior, save that they are generally not held in high esteem. However, Josephus relates in *Antiquities* 20.38-48 the account of the Royal House of Adiabene, in which vassals of Parthia are made proselytes for all the benefits to the Jewish people, but continue to live lives of gross immorality.
 - ii. We can today understand that those who are converted to a false faith will often multiply the base errors of that faith. We see the way that many denominations make groups of converts in far-away lands, and then hear the sad tales of corruption and manipulation that follow.
- d. Oaths:
 - i. It may not surprise us based on Jesus' words that the *Talmud* has an entire section (*Nedarim*) dedicated to determining which vows are valid and which are not, and many other places discuss this topic at length (e.g. *Shevuot* 24a-26b). They had used religious traditions to construct a ways to maintain the

- pretense of religiousness, but fail in keeping solemn oaths. Effectually, they had codified dishonesty.
- ii. Jesus has already spoken about the evil of making inconstant vows, and encouraged His disciples to only speak the truth as if every statement was equally valid (Matthew 5:33-37, cf. James 5:12). He was not correcting the practice of making vows at all (see: Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:1-2; Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; 23:21; Psalm 76:11; Ecclesiastes 5:4, cf. Acts 18:18), but encouraging truthfulness in every word.
 - iii. Three times in one "woe" does Jesus refer to the Pharisees as "blind" and specifically once as "blind guides," picking up on a theme He has brought out previously with the same group of antagonists (see: Matthew 15:14). He will return to this same characterization twice in this same context (vss. 24 and 26), bringing out their lack of self-awareness, despite their leadership positions.
- e. Gnats and Camels:
- i. The *Mishna* goes into excruciating detail concerning which seeds and plants the Jews were required to tithe, exactly as Jesus seems to indicate. Most of the requirements were admittedly of Rabbinic origin, as the Law did not give specific regulation, just a blanket command (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 14:22-27).
 - ii. Being an observant Jew, Jesus was not condemning the practice of tithing, but on focusing on minute particulars of the law, but ignoring the "original intent." The careful attention to the particulars isn't being condemned, but the intentional ignorance of the "weightier" matters of justice, and mercy, and faithfulness.
 - iii. The Pharisees meticulously avoided the smallest imaginable transgression in regards to tithing, but were openly transgressing God's spiritual and ethical requirements. Therefore, the figure of the gnat and the camel is illustrative, as both would have rendered the person ceremonially unclean, although one was significantly larger than the other. Jesus has already addressed the Pharisees annulling the weightier commands of the law for the sake of tradition (Matthew 15:1-10).
- f. Do the Dishes:
- i. Almost hearkening back to a previous argument with the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus addresses the problem of only focusing on the exterior elements of religion, without changing what really mattered, which was the inside of the person (Matthew 15:11-20, cf. Mark 7:1-8). No Pharisaically minded Jew would ever fail to clean the inside of a dish, but Jesus makes the point that they are doing just that with a physical-only religion. Being changed from the inside out accomplishes what God has always sought from His people (John 3:1-15).
- g. Whitewashed Tombs:
- i. There is a good amount of Rabbinical writing concerning the placement of markers for tombs or graves that are not otherwise delineated (*Mishnah Niddah* 7:5). This was to avoid possible defilement from corpses, which is certainly what Jesus is referencing with the whitewash (see also: *Mishnah*

Moed Katan 1.2, Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 1:1).

- ii. The point Jesus makes is connected to the previous woe, in that they have made themselves beautiful (like blanching stones might be beautiful), but the reality is that what was inside would cause defilement.
- h. Adorned Tombs:
 - i. The older Rabbinical writings are not as explicit concerning the decorations at the graves of the prophets and patriarchs, but from more recent history, we can see that the practice is an old tradition (however, see: *Tractate Semachot* 14.8-10, and Rashi on II Kings 23:17-19). Showing respect for the graves of the respected prophets also ignored Israel's long history of persecution of those very same men sent from God.
 - ii. Jesus' use of "brood of vipers" is not exclusive to Him (see: Matthew 3:7), or this context (cf. Matthew 12:34). Further, it is not a concept exclusive to the New Testament, but was a description of the danger that God's people posed when they had abandoned His values (cf. Isaiah 59:1-8, esp vs. 5).
- 5. Luke's version (Luke 11:37-54) of the "woes" is similar in many respects to Matthew's but not identical, which underlines their differing purposes. They are also placed in different sections, which helps us see that Matthew intentionally connects the woes to the warning concerning Jerusalem's impending destruction. Luke, on the other hand, sets the woes in the center of an extended warning of conflict between the disciples and the religious establishment.

C. Jerusalem's Bloody Tradition. (34-36)

1. Jesus explained that the Pharisees' self-interest led them to rejecting God's correction, and this wasn't a new problem, even though they insisted they were different. Beautifying the graves of the prophets was ironic behavior because they were still ignoring God's authorized messengers, and all of their claims to listening to God's words were put to lie by their rejection of Jesus. Israel had a long history of ignoring God's commands through destroying the ones communicating it. The same pattern that was to be repeated in the case of the Messiah.
2. Because of the Jewish arrogance against God's prophets, Jesus promised that the generation to whom He spoke would have even more opportunity to follow in their ancestral footsteps. To prove that they were of a kind with their father in persecution of the righteous messengers of God's word, they would behave in the same way toward Jesus' authorized messengers.
3. It is worth noting that Jesus' examples cover from *Genesis* to *II Chronicles*, which in the Hebrew bible's accounting would be from the first book to the last. Additionally, these are the first martyrs recorded in scripture versus the last. Righteous Abel (see: Genesis 4:1-8) was killed by a jealous Cain because of his approval by God. He didn't even have to say anything!
4. There is some discrepancy regarding the second name that Jesus references, and indeed it can be a difficult tangle to unwind. The name that is in *Matthew's* accounting is Zechariah son of Berechiah (see: Zechariah 1:1), who was a prophet who absolutely denounced Israel's actions, but we have no record of him being martyred in such a memorable fashion. However, we have a record in scripture of another prophet Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada (see: II Chronicles 24:20-27) being killed in the manner described by Jesus for standing up against unfaithful Israel. Due

to the detail recounted, most scholars agree that this second Zechariah is the most probable identity. However, how do we account for the difference in lineage?

5. Dismissing the possibility that our Lord was simply mistaken, or that the manuscripts that we have available contain such errors, there are several ways to see Jesus' statements. Some see a reference to a later Jewish martyr named Zechariah recounted by Josephus (*Wars*, 5.5.4), but Jesus specifically speaks in the past tense. Although we do not have it recorded, some assume that Zechariah son of Berechiah was also killed in a similar manner, because coincidences do happen. However, possibly the easiest solution is that Zechariah's father may have had more than one name, and Berechiah and Jehoiada mean almost the same thing, as is evidenced in much of the Rabbinical writings (see: Akiva's commentary on Isaiah 8:2).
6. Because the Jewish nation would reject the emissaries of the Messiah as they had persecuted the prophets of old, the punishment for all of Israel's bloody martyrdom would fall upon the people of that time. Jesus had previously spoken about the unbelief of the generation to whom He spoke (Matthew 11:16; 12:41-42), and now He speaks of the doom they will face as a result (cf. Matthew 24:34).

D. Jesus' Sad Warning. (37-39)

1. As if there could be any question about the intended audience of Jesus' comments, He specifically, and repeatedly calls out to Jerusalem. His words are not cold rejection or heated anger, but tender sadness (cf. Luke 13:31-35; 19:41-44) over the faithlessness of the people, and the eventual results. The figure of Jesus' desiring to protect Israel like a hen is sharpened by the many instances of similar metaphors in scripture (Ruth 2:12; Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4) and only makes sense when considering that Jesus is one with the Father. Jesus takes no joy in communicating a promise of judgment on the people He came to save.
2. Jesus promised that their "house" would be left to them, and it would be "desolate" connecting to the prophecy in Ezekiel 10-11 that promise God's rejection and forsaking of the temple, and was borne out ultimately in its destruction (see: I Kings 9; Jeremiah 12:7-13; 22:1-5). By using the word "house" and assigning it to Jerusalem, as opposed to God, Jesus continues to make it clear and Jerusalem and the Temple are the focus of His promises of judgment and wrath from God.
3. Jesus' reference to Psalm 118:19-26 is not a reference to the same attitude as during His triumphant entry into Jerusalem (see: Matthew 21:6-11), as it was understood to be Messianic, but had been misapplied. This prophecy would be ultimately fulfilled in Jesus' being shown to be the chief cornerstone that had been rejected by the builders (cf. Matthew 21:33-46). This would be understood as synonymous with God's wrath being visited on His unfaithful nation, and judgment in favor of His Son.

III. Matthew 24

A. Prophecy of Temple Destruction. (1-3)

1. The discussion in this chapter is a natural connection to the previous chapter with the promise that God would leave His house to the Jews, and leave it desolate. Jesus has been in the temple teaching (Matthew 21:23), and now he is coming out of the temple, and the edifice is the opportunity for the discussion.

2. All three synoptic gospels begin this part of Jesus' final discourse the with disciples' focus on the temple building (Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36), although some part of Jesus' teaching recorded by Matthew here are present in other narratives (cf. Luke 13:1-9; 17:20-37). This is important, because Matthew's inclusion of them here, specifically applies them to the conversation at hand.
3. The disciples' questions pertaining to the temple's exterior are natural, given what Jesus just said about the house being desolate. We know from many occasions that the Jews were very jealous of the temple structure (Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:13-21; Acts 6:13-14; 21:27-30).
 - a. The Rabbinic literature is also quite impressed with the appearance of the Herodian Temple:
 - i. *"The Sages say: One who has not seen Herod's building has never seen a beautiful building in his life. The Gemara asks: With what did he build it? Rabba said: With stones of white and green marble. There are those who say that he built it with stones of blue, white, and green marble. Alternate rows of stones set out an edge a bit and drew in an edge a bit, so that they would better receive and hold the plaster. He considered covering it with gold, but the Rabbis said to him: Leave it, and do not cover it, since it is more beautiful this way, as it looks like the waves of the sea."* [Bava Batra 4a.6]
4. For all that pride in the building's exterior, Jesus makes it plain that those beautiful stones would not remain intact or even in place due to God's judgment. As it was God's working that placed those stones (cf. Haggai 2:15), it was by His will that they would be taken down.
5. The disciples' question about "when" might seem like an odd response, but may be an intentional echo of the prophet's question in Daniel 12 of "how long (see: Daniel 12:6, 8)?" This feels even more likely, as the disciples connect the message of destruction based on the previous denunciation with two seeming *non sequiturs*, both sharing a connection with prophecies in *Daniel*. The Son of Man (see: Daniel 7:13) making His royal visit and the Consummation of the Age (cf. Daniel 9:27; 11:36; 12:4, 13) are almost presented as one idea.
6. Jesus addresses the disciples' question concerning His "coming (*παρουσία* - *parousia* #3952)" three times in the subsequent verses (cf. vss. 27, 37, 39). While this word (especially the transliteration from the Greek) is often assigned to only one meaning, in the *New Testament*, context determines use (cf. I Corinthians 15:23; 16:17; II Corinthians 7:6-7; 10:10). To determine how Jesus meant to answer the disciples' question, we will work to take cues from the context at hand.
7. The corollary event about which the disciples were concerned was the "end / consummation (*συντέλεια* - *sunteleia* #4930) of the age / world (*αἰών* - *aiōn* #165)." If the previous phrase in this couplet was fraught with interpretive difficulty, this phrase (in English) looms even larger. Thankfully, the appearance of this phrase exactly is largely limited to *Matthew* (13:36-45, 47-52; 28:20), and the only *New Testament* appearance found outside the epistle helps us with interpretation (cf. Hebrews 9:26). Given the way the phrase is used by the Hebrew writer, "consummation of the age" is preferable to "end of the world" for helping us understand what the disciples sought to understand.

B. Jesus' Description of the Beginning of the Birth Pangs. (4-14)

1. The first part of Jesus' answer to the apostles' question concerning time is actually a warning so that they are not fooled.
 - a. The first warning is concerning false messiahs seeking to mislead, a theme that Jesus continues in verse 11 concerning false prophets. We know that this is a legitimate danger in the first century, and due to the frightening events of the time, these false messiahs (Acts 5:36-39; 21:38) and prophets (Matthew 7:15-20; II Peter 2:1-3) made inroads with the expectant Jews. This is further corroborated by Josephus writing about the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem (*Antiquities* 20.8.5-6, 10, Wars 2.13.5-6, 6.5.2-3).
 - b. Another warning was not to be frightened by "wars" or "rumors of wars" which would swirl about, because those were not the "end (τέλος - *telos* #5056)" but were to be understood as "birth pangs" along with national conflicts and natural disasters such as famines (one of which we read about in *Acts*)." War, earthquakes, and famine are familiar pictures of God's wrath in the *Old Testament*, therefore the appearance of "birth pangs" language is natural, given how often that picture is connected with judgment (Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; 66:6-9; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 49:24; 50:43; Ezekiel 7:7; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9, cf. I Thessalonians 5:3).
 2. Jesus had warned His disciples about the hardship they would face at the hands of unbelievers (Matthew 10:5-42), and judgment had been a theme of those warnings. Now, His warning concerning judgment would also contain a theme of tribulation and persecution. The events that led up to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple of YHWH in it would also include the persecution of the disciples of Jesus. We read about this occurring in the years following Jesus' words (Acts 6-7; 8:1-3; 9:1-6; 11:19; 12:1-5), and read hints of the same in the epistles (James 5:7-11; I Peter 4:7-19).
 3. Another "sign of the times" (cf. Matthew 16:1-4) that Jesus points to is the lack of love, loyalty, and lawfulness among the people who were supposed to be God's covenant nation. It can be hard to connect these descriptions with Israel, but that ignores what we can read about in the history, both inspired and not. God's judgment was warranted, as the people's behavior continued to slide toward the wickedness and hatefulness of the very nations against which they continued to strive.
 4. Despite all the dangers from fear, being misled, and a sin-sick culture, Jesus encouraged the disciples to endure to the end (cf. Matthew 10:16-23). This language is highly reminiscent of the letters that Jesus charged John to write to the seven congregations in Asia (cf. Revelation 2-3). To lose faith before the great demonstration of Jesus' true rule, and God's necessary judgment would be a sad failure indeed (cf. Matthew 13:21).
 5. In Jesus' warning, He characterizes the gospel being preached to the whole world as being connected with this impending judgment. From a perspective, the "Good news" of the Kingdom of Heaven was always preached against a backdrop of impending judgment (Matthew 3:7-12). This quality of the gospel was the subject of prophecy (Acts 2:14-21, cf. Joel 2:28-32), and the "good news" of the gospel was always salvation in the face of judgment (cf. I Peter 3:18-22). Therefore, to the disciples, the end would not come until the gospel had reached the whole world.
 6. How are we to square this last statement by Jesus with what seems to be a warning
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about things that would happen in the first century? Do we delay these warnings until some indeterminate time in the future? If we understand the promise that the gospel would be brought to the "whole world" in the same way it was understood in the book of *Acts* (seeing 1:8 as an informal outline of the book), then the gospel reaching the Gentiles, and Rome in particular would be a fulfillment of Jesus' promise (cf. Romans 1:8).

C. Let the Reader Understand. (15-28)

1. What may feel incredibly cryptic to modern audiences quite divorced from a first-century Jewish context would have been much more clear to the disciples. When Jesus speaks to His followers about "the abomination of desolation" that references *Daniel* (9:27; 11:31; 12:11), it would be evident that He is referencing Antiochus IV Epiphanes' desecration of the temple in 167 BC, and then making application of that event. The Septuagint scriptures being read by the faithful saints in the first century would have made Daniel's prophecy and the desecration identical (see: *I Maccabees* 1:54; 4:41-61, cf. *Antiquities* 12.7.6). The "reader" (also addressed in Mark 13:14) who would understand would be the one who had been paying attention to Daniel's prophecies concerning the institution of the Kingdom of Heaven and the eventual fate of the temple at the time of the arrival of the Son of Man. Jesus used the language of the past to speak about events in their near future.
2. Upon witnessing history being repeated, Jesus instructed His disciples to flee Jerusalem. Perhaps anecdotally, both Eusebius (*Church History* 3.5.3) and Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* 29.7.7-8, 30.2.7, *On Weights and Measures* 15) recorded those who professed Jesus fleeing to Pella (Perea, across the Jordan) immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. The Greek language of *Matthew* uses a triple negation (οὐδ' οὐ μὴ) in Jesus' words to underline singularity of the tribulation that would take place. This is not only a true prophecy about the persecution in the first century against the saints, but it is also very close to the prophecy that Daniel made about the events before the end of the age (see: *Daniel* 12:1). Therefore, Jesus' warning would pertain to the hardships the saints suffered at the hands of the Jews, and the subsequent hardships faced by the people in Judea at the hands of Rome. Because of the severity of this situation, anything that could impede escape would be a danger and a tragedy.
4. Jesus repeats his warning about being misled, and all of those who would take advantage of the frightening situation an an impostor Messiah. It would be absolutely unmistakable when Jesus made His presence known. It would be easy to assume, at this point, that He is speaking of future return to earth, but we must remember to contextualize these statements as an answer to the questions raised by the disciples in the language that they used. Additionally, the language Jesus uses later will help us understand what "coming (παρουσία - *parousia* #3952)" he refers to.
5. It can be easy to be distracted by the presence of "lightning" in this passage, but the presence and judgment of God is often associated with lightning (*Exodus* 19:16; *Deuteronomy* 33:2; *II Samuel* 22:15; *Ezekiel* 21:15), and Jesus may be specifically referencing a promise of restoration and salvation of the elect from their enemies (cf. *Zechariah* 9:14). Additional elements present in this text and the one in *Zechariah* are a trumpet being blown, and a strong wind from a direction (cf. *Matthew* 24:31).
6. As easy as it might be to get lost in the clouds with the lightning language, Jesus brings the conversation back to the earth with a explicit statement on the location of

all the things He has been describing. At first, this might be a cryptic statement, until we understand that Jesus' focus is on location, not providing the disciples a lecture on ornithology (cf. Luke 17:37). At least on the surface, Jesus' clearest message is that the things He was describing would occur in the same city where His dead body had lain (cf. Revelation 11:8-9).

7. There may be, however, a second meaning that Jesus intends. The "vultures" may be more than just signs of death or the location of carrion. It is true that this carrion-eating bird with impressive wingspan is unclean (cf. Exodus 19:4; Leviticus 11:13; Deuteronomy 14:12), but it was often representative of swift and deadly conquering armies (see: Deuteronomy 28:49; Jeremiah 4:13; Lamentations 4:19; Hosea 8:1; Habakkuk 1:8). Further, the word for "vulture (ἀετός - *aetos* #105)" can also indicate "eagle (Revelation 4:7; 8:13; 12:14)." American context distinctions between eagles and vultures are not worldwide, and especially would not hold up in a Jewish/Judean context. A common association for the average first-century Jew of the "vulture" or "eagle" would be the ever-present Roman standards. The same standards that would fill the streets of Jerusalem not 40 years thence as agents of God's righteous wrath.

D. Sign of the Son of Man. (29-31)

1. Due to much of the imaginative work done on the part of filmmakers, and students with premillennial leanings, is perhaps difficult to divorce much of this language from descriptions of the actual end of the world. However, much of the language that Jesus uses in this context is directly taken from prophecies of physical judgments against nations, specifically Israel, and applied to an impending event. In fact, the very first gospel sermon was preached against a backdrop of impending judgment using similar language (see: Acts 2:14-21, cf. Joel 2:28-32). Therefore, it would absolutely make sense for Jesus to speak about a coming doom on unfaithful Jerusalem using this kind of vernacular (cf. Isaiah 13:6-16; 34:4; Ezekiel 32:3-8). Later prophecies of impending (or recently accomplished) judgment make similar references (see: Revelation 6:12-17; 8:12).
2. Only Matthew uses the word "tribes (φυλή - *phulē* #5443)" in this context, and with limited exception, this is a Jewish-exclusive term. This is an evident allusion to the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10-14 which certainly had some fulfillment in the crucifixion (John 19:37), but still had judgment application because it concerned those who had rejected the Messiah and brought about His death (cf. Revelation 1:7).
3. Those who look for an immediate physical fulfillment to Jesus' words, or a greatly delayed universal fulfillment may point to the "coming on the clouds" language, imaging that Jesus was promising to do exactly that. This, however, ignores the original context of the words (Daniel 7:9-14 being more likely than Isaiah 19:1), and the vantage point of the prophet when He wrote them. Daniel was in the throne-room of the Ancient of Days when the Son of Man was "coming on the clouds" as He was being judged worthy to receive the kingdom. Therefore, "the Son of man coming on the clouds" is not an earth-centric statement, but heavenly, and is always associated with His victory over His foes (cf. Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7).
4. Another section of the language that can be difficult if we over-literalize is the work of the angels gathering the elect, which if we look carefully, is an amalgam of quotations (see: Isaiah 11:11-16; 27:12-13; Zechariah 2:6-12, cf. Deuteronomy 30:1-4) that pertain to establishing the Messianic kingdom. Jesus has employed this language before in *Matthew* in contexts of establishing the kingdom at the

consummation of the age. The parable of the tares (see: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43), and the parable of the dragnet (see: Matthew 13:47-50) both made the point that establishing Kingdom of Heaven would naturally require a separation of the righteous from the hypocrites and impostors. This would be a work of God's judgment (cf. Revelation 14:15).

E. The Parable of the Fig Tree. (32-35)

1. It may seem at first that Jesus' reference to the "parable from the fig tree" is out of place in this context (cf. Luke 13:1-9 and Matthew 21:18-19), but Jesus' focus seems to be specifically about seeing the signs and making a determination of what is happening. We do not have to be experts in near-eastern horticulture to understand the strength of Jesus' words. He is plain in His meaning. Observing the appearance of certain plants can help us understand what time of year it is, and observing the things that Jesus was describing to His disciples could give them a way to have their original question answered.
2. Jesus had previously chided the Pharisees for failing to take note of the observable signs, and taking the appropriate measures (Matthew 16:1-4).
3. To underline the immediacy of the things Jesus was communicating, He made it even clearer that the signs were to indicate that He (the Son of Man) was "at the door." This carries not only an indication of proximity, but urgency, inviting an appropriate response (cf. James 5:9; Revelation 3:20).
4. In perhaps the clearest language possible, Jesus makes it plain to His hearers, and Matthew to his readership, that the people alive at that time, delineated as "this generation" would not pass away the things Jesus described came true. More than just another indication of time-frame, Jesus is making an application of God's judgment against the unfaithful generation of Jews who had rejected Jesus' saving message since the early days of His ministry (cf. Matthew 11:16; 12:41-42; 23:36). What Jesus was speaking about was going to happen in the lifetime of those to whom he spoke, and they would be nothing short of justice.
5. Jumping off from the "pass away" language, Matthew returns to a statement from the earliest part of Jesus' preaching ministry, completing a teaching arc present in the gospel. "Heaven and earth," Jesus warned, would pass away, but His words would not (cf. Matthew 5:18). While this may tempt us to universalize Jesus' warnings here (as many to also in II Peter 3:10 and Revelation 21:1), it is important to recognize that they fit into a larger language context about "heaven and earth" and the new covenant that His death would inaugurate.
6. From the beginning of the Mosaic Covenant, the "heavens and the earth" were called as witnesses (see: Deuteronomy 4:9-31; 30:15-20; 31:24-29), and were called to testify against Israel when they had violated the covenant with their God (cf. Isaiah 1:1-4; Psalm 50:1-6). God's promise was to remove the old "heavens and earth (cf. Jeremiah 4:23-28)" and create new witnesses (Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22-24) to a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 33:14-26). Therefore, Jesus' promise is that His words would not only be the basis for the New Covenant, but would endure past the completion and removal of the Old Covenant.

F. Days of Noah. (36-41)

1. In seemingly contradictory language, Jesus turns from giving a great deal of

information, to saying that it is impossible to give information. This has led many to seek to create an artificial break from the previous verses, although no such break is warranted. The difficulty of the statements is not a reason to invent a new context, since so much of the language is identical to the previous, and is still connected to the disciples' original question.

2. In speaking of "that day or hour," Jesus did not say there were not going to be ways to observe the signs, just that He would not (and could not) not give an exact time or day. He had provided ample ways for the disciples to know how and when to anticipate the events He described, but stopped short of a way to mark their calendars. However, that was not an excuse to be lax, as His following warnings make clear.
3. The language of "days of Noah" is clear promise of impending judgment that the majority will ignore to their own peril, but the righteous will be provided salvation. The obvious reference is to the original Genesis account (Genesis 6-8), but the language had been employed to make similar points later. Jesus may be making a direct reference and contrast to Isaiah 54:9-17, in which the "day of Noah" referred to God's promises of protection, as opposed to impending judgment. Luke's account makes Jesus' meaning very clear (Luke 17:20-37) that the "days of Noah" language was connected to the kingdom of God coming amid judgment on the unrighteous, and is equated with the doom of Sodom and Lot's wife who looked back.
4. The events surrounding Noah regarding judgment on the many and salvation of the few continue to be a theme in the *New Testament*, as the gospel continued to make its way in the the whole world (cf. I Peter 3:18-22; II Peter 3:5-6).
5. Without delving into the various "rapture" interpretations of the following verses, Jesus describes the swiftness of the destruction in such a way that it would feel like random application. There would be some survivors, but those who were killed would be right next to them. This section, while being difficult, provides at least one interpretative anchor. Unless we believe in the rapture, this section cannot apply to Jesus' second coming.

G. Thief in the Night. (42-44)

1. Because Jesus gave no firm date or timeline, a perpetual sense of readiness was expected of the disciples. To ignore the need for vigilance would only result in being caught up in the sure calamity that Jesus promised. So vivid is this language, that this set of figures (cf. Luke 12:35-48) became a short-hand for impending, but sudden, judgment. This is true when immediate physical judgment is meant (Revelation 3:3; 16:15), or when the application is less clear (I Thessalonians 5:2-11; II Peter 3:10-16).
2. It may have been very unsatisfying for the the disciples to get such a final answer from Jesus about the timing of the events they expected. Jesus did not give them a time, but He explained what to look out for, explained that it would be within that generation, and then told them be remain ready at all times. While it is certain that these warnings were for a time in their near future, there are easily-made applications for saints in any era.

H. Faithful Slaves. (45-51)

1. The parable of the slaves serves as a transition to the next chapter that offers three more parables concerning readiness in expecting judgment. Those next three parables follow the same general format of the parable of the slaves:

- a. Readiness for unseen or unexpected oversight.
 - b. Use of assigned resources.
 - c. Resources toward fellows.
2. This set of parables would help the disciples maintain an appropriate focus as they anticipated the completion of the age and Jesus' demonstration of judgment.
 3. *Luke's* parallel presentation of similar parables is in a slightly different context (Luke 12:35-48), and the details of the parables are not identical although the message is the same. It is worth noting that *Luke's* presentation also encourages paying attention to the signs that the kingdom was going to be fundamentally different from Pharisaical Judaism (Luke 12:49-56).
 4. The final warning uses language that has been present in previous sections in the gospel, describing the fate of those who do not heed it. The "weeping and gnashing of teeth" language in other places is often used to underline the separation of the citizens of the true Kingdom of Heaven from those who felt entitled to it, but were not worthy of it (Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30).

IV. Matthew 25

A. Parables Introduction:

1. As mentioned previously, these parables serve as an explosion of the final warning immediately preceding it. They are presented in much the same structure and make many of the same points. The greatest difficulty, however, is relegating these warnings to the same first-century context as the previous chapter. While there is no obvious break in context, the judgment language presented in the final parables would be more naturally connected to eternal judgment, and perhaps this is intentional.
2. The concept of dual-fulfillment is not difficult for us to understand when applied to *Old Testament* prophecy. So many of the promises of restoration both apply to Judah's blessings in the short term, as well as the ultimate blessing in the foundation of the church (See: Hosea 1:10-11, cf. I Peter 2:9-10). Additionally, many of God's promises of judgment had applications at the time, as well as later promises and warnings (see: Joel 2:28-32, cf. Acts 2:16-21). Therefore, seeing Jesus' promises of judgment as having a fulfillment that would be more immediate, and a second fulfillment in the eternal following a final judgment.

B. Parable 1 - Foolish and Wise Virgins. (1-13)

1. Much has been made of the cultural context surrounding this parable that is not required for understanding Jesus' meaning. Whether or not we have exact details concerning first century Jewish wedding practices, Jesus provides ample information to make His meaning plain.
2. The concept of being prepared for a great feast is an image found in the *Old Testament* (Isaiah 25:6-12), as well as the anticipation of the bridegroom (Isaiah 61:10-62:5), but associating the bridegroom with the Messiah is almost exclusive to the *New Testament* (Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; Revelation 19:7-8).
3. The immediate context of the parable should help us keep from trying to turn it into an allegory, despite the fact that it is not strictly called a "parable." Matthew's use of

"compared (ὁμοιῶ - *homoioō* #3666)" is present in many cases where a parable is the intended method of interpretation (Matthew 13:24; 18:23; 22:2) when Jesus is explaining the nature of the kingdom.

4. The final words of this first parable should make the connection to previous chapter and warnings plain, since the "day or hour" was a major concern of the disciples, but a question that Jesus did not answer exactly (cf. Matthew 24:36, 38, 42, 44, 50).
5. There are similar parables recorded in the gospels that specifically highlight the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous with a door being shut (Matthew 7:15-23; Luke 13:22-35). Woe to those who are not known by the Bridegroom.

C. Parable 2 - Parable of the Talents. (14-30)

1. A little bit of cultural context can help us grasp some of the finer details of this parable, especially given our modern understanding of the concept of "talent" being a special gift, as opposed to a first-century concept of a large sum of money. In the first century, a "talent" was roughly equal to 6,000 *denarii*, which was the expected wages for a day-laborer. Therefore, modern estimates would put just one talent between half and three-quarters of a million dollars, USD.
 - a. The immediate context of the parable is easy to understand, especially following the previous concerning oversight of necessary resources. In this parable, the resources are not the property of the servants, but are entrusted to the servants by the master. Therefore, there was not only a readiness for the master's appearance being encouraged, but also an understanding that there would be an accounting of the resources that had been entrusted by the master.
 - b. The other gospel that contains a parallel to this parable (Luke 19:11-27) applies it in a very different context, and even brings out different points (cf. Matthew 13:12). Therefore, Matthew's placement of this parable in this context is meant to underline Jesus' message concerning readiness for judgment. It not just a question of when, but what would be the basis for judgment.
 - c. Parable 3 - Sheep and the Goats. (31-46)
 - d. Perhaps the most well-known of the final three parables is perhaps the one that is the greatest departure from the tone of the previous two chapters, and as noted above, perhaps that is intentional.
 - e. The content of the parable itself is a natural progression from the previous two, since they are all concerning judgment. The first parable warned that the judgment would come at a time that was unexpected. The second parable specified that the judgment would be how assigned resources were used. This parable addresses that the resources were to be used to help those who were suffering under the terrible tribulation that Jesus warned His disciples was coming.
 - f. There are several *Old Testament* allusions that can perhaps keep us from over-literalizing this parable, and remind us that these pictures do not appear out of nowhere. The larger biblical context of many of Jesus' word-pictures employed here are more in line with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom than a final judgment scene.
 - g. The vision of the Son of Man sitting on His throne has many connected pictures concerning the Messianic kingdom coming into power (see: Daniel 7:13-14;

Zechariah 6:11-15).

- h. The promise of the Messianic kingdom had also been associated with the separation of the sheep and the goats (see: Ezekiel 34:11-24), and this seems to be an intentional allusion that would have been noticed by Jesus' hearers. Jesus' work as a Shepherd a significant part of the prophecies concerning His ministry (see: Ezekiel 37:24-28, cf. Jeremiah 23:1-8; Zechariah 11:4-17).
- i. Another promise associated with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom would be the judgment of the nations according to God's eternal values by His authorized Agent (cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-12; 16:5; 51:4-8). The coming of the Messianic kingdom was not only judgment of Israel according to God's will, but of all people, as the method of judgment was according to righteousness and meted out by Christ the Cornerstone (see: Isaiah 28:14-17).
- j. The inheritance language is associated with those who are fit for the kingdom in many passages with various implications. Some instances are obviously meant to be understood in an eternal context (I Corinthians 15:50), some more immediate (Colossians 1:9-14), and many that seem to blur the lines (I Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; James 2:5).
- k. The eternal qualities of the life (Matthew 19:16, 29) and fire (Matthew 18:8) are not perfect solutions, as they are used in contexts throughout *Matthew* that maintain a tension between the immediate and the final.
- l. Because loyal behavior and kindness toward the needy is the basis for judgment in the parable, it bears similarity to many others in the *New Testament*, both in *Matthew* (Matthew 7:15-23), and other gospels (Luke 16:19-31).

D. Parables Summary:

1. Within the context of *Matthew*, and even more specifically in the context of this final discourse by Jesus, we should seek to be consistent in our interpretation of these final parables, while also allowing for a "telescoped" fulfillment in the immediate judgment, as well as the final. All three of these final parables, as stated previously, serve as explorations of the concepts first put forward in the parable of the faithful or unfaithful servants in Matthew 24:42-51.
 - a. The first parable (The Virgins) in Matthew 25 deals with readiness for unseen or unexpected oversight, while the second (The Talents) more specifically handles the judgment's assessment of use of assigned resources, while the third (Sheep and Goats) specifies that the judgment would determine how the resources had been applied toward their fellows.

V. Application:

- A. If we can perhaps respect the impact these chapters would have had on the disciples who heard them from Jesus, or perhaps read them first in Matthew's gospel, then we are responsible for having "ears to hear" so we might have hearts to obey. God's people have often faced similar problems throughout the millennia, and God's corrections continue to have impact in every generation. Woe to us if we believe we are immune to similar weaknesses or insulated from similar warnings.
 1. Let us not be the kinds of teachers that exercise our authority to speak the truth about

God's word, but behave in ways that demonstrate a celebration of the flesh. Let us never turn our humble service into an opportunity for pride or prestige, but cultivate the humility that waits on God's exaltation.

2. Let us never have a focus on the details of God's word to the exclusion of His eternal values. Woe to us if we allow our familiarity with God's word to become contempt so that we become contemptible. Woe to us if we corrupt others through our pretense and religiosity. Woe to us if we persecute those who proclaim the truth when it inconveniences us or demands we repent.
3. Let us never value the "edifice" of the church to the point that we ignore the spiritual rot within. Human beings are often fond of tactile and measurable demonstrations of success, and when we make those our goal in the church, we end up resembling the world. God's judgment is never idle, and we ignore it to our own peril.
4. Let us never see any delay in God's judgment, or the Son of Man's demonstrations of rule as an excuse to be lax or unprepared. The same glorious Son of Man who sits on the throne also walks among the lampstands. He cares what we do with the resources He has given us to steward. His values of justice and mercy and faithfulness will be the standard of His judgment, whenever it is visited.
5. Let us always strive to enter the wedding feast of the Lamb, and be known by Him who opens the door. Let us always strive to be good and faithful slaves so that we may enter into the joy of our Master. Let us always strive to be invited to His right hand, so that we may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

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"Crown Him!" to "Crucify Him!"

Carl D. Ballard

Text: Matthew 20:29-34; 21:1-27, 42-46; 22:15-45; 26:1-75; 27:1-66; 28:1-20

Introduction: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” [cp Matthew 16:13-16]

It is no strange phenomenon that the truth “weighs” the hearts of those who hear it spoken [see Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 16:2; 21:2], so that there remain in its wake some who are still working to reason through its claims, some who flatly reject it because it does not line up with “their truth” and what they already believe, and a few who are ready to accept it and be transformed by it. No wonder, then, that the One who came “FULL of grace and TRUTH” [John 1:4, cp v17, emphasis mine] and who called Himself “the way, and the TRUTH, and the life” [John 14:6, emphasis mine] should also leave men working to understand just who He is and just what His claims must mean.

I. The Confused

A. Several possibilities

1. John the Baptist

a. Herod [Matthew 14:1-2]

- i. Jesus (and the apostles) have been doing miracles; Herod in his superstition reasons that only *supernatural* causes could power such works, telling his servants, “He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.” [Matthew 14:2]
- ii. Herod, because of a guilty conscience, rightly determines what the majority of the Jewish leaders will not accept because of their hardened consciences; namely, that the *only* explanation for these “works” is the power of the supernatural – that is, as Nicodemus so astutely observed, “no one can do these signs . . . *unless God is with him.*” [John 3:1-2; cp John 7:31; 9:30-33; 10:25, 37-38; etc]
- iii. Unfortunately, it was the “works of Jesus, even more than His words” that were so shocking to Herod (*Hendriksen, 586*); the works that were meant to point people to the source of the words excited Herod’s imagination, but did not produce in him a heart that would listen to God

b. Others? (“*some* say”)

- i. Perhaps this is simply a convention of language, as there is no conclusive evidence I have found that anyone other than Herod Antipas himself (and perhaps those among his servants and family) held to this belief.
- ii. Claiming that John the Baptist is doing these works is one way of “dodging” a claim that Jesus may be the Christ [cp John 9:18-23; (*Boles, 342-343*)]

2. Elijah

- a. Malachi, the final prophet of the Old Testament period, spoke of God

sending "Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes." [Malachi 4:5]

- i. Elijah the prophet never "died", but was taken to heaven in a fiery chariot after his labors against the wicked king Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. [2 Kings 2:1-2]
 - ii. Because of Elijah's unusual situation, some believed that Malachi was speaking of a *literal* return of the prophet in order to herald the coming of the "day of the Lord"
 - iii. The angel that announced the birth of John the Baptist to John's father, Zechariah, clearly applied this prophecy to John the Baptist in a *figurative* sense, saying John would "turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and...go before him *in the spirit and power of Elijah*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children..." [Luke 1:16-17, emphasis mine; cp Malachi 4:5]
 - iv. Jesus taught clearly that the "Elijah" that was to come had in fact already come in the person of John the Baptist [Matthew 11:13-14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13]
- b. Claiming that Elijah is doing these works is yet another artful way of "dodging" a claim that Jesus is the Christ; the one who claims that this may be Elijah retains an air of appearing to others to have a very "spiritual" focus and a good knowledge of the Scriptures [cp John 7:40-52; (*Boles, 342-343*)]
3. "Jeremiah or one of the prophets"
- a. "Jeremiah"
 - i. Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem is reminiscent of the tone of Jeremiah, the "weeping" prophet [compare Luke 13:34 and Lamentations 1:16, 21; etc]
 - ii. "Did they imagine that, in the person of Jesus, Jeremiah had returned in order to bring back the tent, the ark, and the altar of incense, which, according to a legend recorded in II Macc. 2:4-8, that prophet had hid in a cave?" (*Hendriksen, 642*)
 - b. Someone like a prophet
 - i. Except for John the Baptist, there had been no prophet in Israel since the days of Malachi, nearly 450 years before. In the excitement surrounding John's message that the Messiah was near, perhaps there was a sentiment that God's Spirit was stirring, and more prophets could be expected? [cp Matthew 7:15-20; 1 John 4:1; etc]
 - ii. A "prophet of old" that has "risen"? [Luke 9:19; their use here may indicate the belief in a "resurrected" (from the dead!) prophet or simply may mean they believe that God has "raised up" a prophet again from among them (cp Deuteronomy 18:15)]
4. "*The Prophet*"
- a. Deuteronomy 18:15-19 speaks of God's process of "raising up" those who

will speak for Him (“prophets”) “from among” them

- i. The use of the singular form – “*a* prophet” and “to *him* you shall listen”, for example – led to the interpretation that this text ultimately referred to a *specific* prophet, that is, to the promised anointed one, the Messiah
- ii. That this text properly refers to the Messiah (and to *Jesus*, specifically) is evident from its use and application by the inspired writers of the New Testament [see in connection with this concept Matthew 17:1-7 and Mark 9:2-7 (“listen *to Him*”; cp Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19); Acts 3:17-26; Acts 7:37, 51-53; etc]
- b. The NKJV translation of Mark 6:15 makes it seem clear that this particular concept of a specific promised prophet is what some were thinking about Jesus: ‘Others said, ‘It is Elijah.’ And others said, ‘It is *the Prophet*, or like one of the prophets.’” [Mark 6:15, NKJV, emphasis mine]
- c. The crowd that was fed with bread in the wilderness in John 6:14 clearly seems to be thinking of a singular, specific prophet that God was expected to send: “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, ‘This is indeed *the Prophet* who is to come into the world!’” [John 6:14, emphasis mine]

CROWD

B. Even those “in favor” of Jesus have often been divided

1. Peter and the apostles did not even mention the “negative” things that the religious leaders had been starting to say openly about Jesus (see III. “The Convinced”, below)
2. The crowds enjoyed His presence and the amazing things He could do, but some began to think that His teaching was offensive and “hard” (see John 6:60-67), and some even began to say He had a demon! [John 7:20]
3. At one point His own family began to think He was “out of His mind” [Mark 3:21]
4. There was “scholarly” division about His origin [John 7:40-52; etc]

CROWDS

II. The Convicted

A. “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” [Matthew 16:16]

1. When Jesus asks who *they* (the apostles) say that He is, Peter is quick to respond properly and with conviction
2. Jesus also quickly commends Peter’s understanding, saying “...flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.” [Matthew 16:17]
 - a. Peter had come by his conviction because he was comparing what He saw and heard in Jesus with what God had revealed about His Christ [cp John 1:40-42; 6:44-45; etc]
 - b. Such conviction does not indicate necessarily that there is FULL understanding of all that was stated [cp Matthew 16:21-23!]
 - c. Such conviction is not a GUARANTEE against later stumbling (contrast Peter’s certainty in Matthew 26:33-35 with his later denial in Matthew 26:29-75, just as Jesus had foretold)

d. Such conviction is NECESSARY if there is to be real repentance and conversion (see 2 Peter 1:16-19; 1 John 1:1-2:1; etc)

B. "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." [Matthew 9:34; Matthew 12:24]

1. The Pharisees

CROWDS

a. They did not like the crowds marveling at the power Jesus was displaying (as He cast out demons!), especially as He was going all through Galilee "teaching in *their* synagogues" [Matthew 9:35, emphasis mine]

CROWD

b. Matthew reveals that when "all the people" (in Galilee) were asking, "Can this be the Son of David?", the Pharisees responded by saying, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." [Matthew 12:23-24]

c. The Pharisees had convinced themselves (a *form* of conviction!) and were trying to convince others that Jesus Himself was demon-possessed (see John 7:10-20; 47-49; 8:48-53; Luke 11:14-15; etc)

2. The scribes

a. Mark speaks of "the scribes who came down from Jerusalem" [Mark 3:22]

i. Perhaps they had been sent from Jerusalem by the Pharisees to "observe" Jesus? [cp Mark 3:2]

ii. It is possible that the Pharisees and those who were sent by them had heard the demons addressing Jesus by name, giving them the idea of accusing Him of being "guilty by association" (see Mark 1:23-24, 34; 5:7-8; Luke 4:34; 8:27-28; Matthew 8:28-29; etc)

iii. It is quite possible that they had never even heard His teaching or seen His miracles, but were only conveying the teaching of the Pharisees to correct the ignorance of these "accursed" people who do not "know the law" [cp John 7:47-52; etc]

iv. Mark indicates that this was not an isolated accusation, but that "they *were saying*, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" [Mark 3:30, emphasis mine; cp Matthew 12:31-32]

v. Jesus sternly warns them to consider more carefully what they are saying, exhorting them to avoid blaspheming "against the Holy Spirit" [Mark 3:28-29; Matthew 12:31]

Body: "And when He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, 'Who is this?'" [Matthew 21:10]

During the final week of Jesus' life, the crowd(s) in Matthew 20-27 must wrestle with the truth of Jesus' claims about Himself in the light of all He continues to do and to teach. At the same time, they are confronted with the hostility of the respected religious leaders who claim that Jesus is a false Messiah and who exert a fearful pressure over them through stringent laws and threats of expulsion from the synagogues "if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ" [John 9:22, 34].

I. "Son of David" [Matthew 20:29-34; 21:1-11, 12-16; (15:21-22); 22:41-46]

-
- A. This is the One about whom Matthew is writing
1. A clearly attested lineage from Abraham through David
 - a. Matthew 1:1, 17, 20
 - b. “descended from David according to the flesh” [Romans 1:3]
 2. The fulfillment of prophecy
 - a. an “offspring” of Eve [Genesis 3:15; cp Galatians 4:4]
 - i. literally, a “seed”
 - ii. the serpent was told this seed would “bruise your head”
 - b. the “son” of Abraham
 - i. “...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” [Genesis 12:3]
 - ii. “...your very own son shall be your heir” [Genesis 15:4]
 - iii. “...Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.” [Genesis 17:19; cp v21; 21:1-5]
 - iv. “...your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” [Genesis 22:18; cp Galatians 3:16]
 - c. the “offspring” of David
 - i. “...I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” [2 Samuel 7:12-13, cp vv16-17]
 - ii. “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” [Psalm 110:1; see also Acts 2:34-35]
 - iii. “The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.’” [Psalm 132:11; cp v12]
 - iv. “...I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” [Isaiah 55:3; see also Acts 13:34]
- B. The blind could “see” what the religious leaders would not [Matthew 20:29-34]
1. Earlier, two blind men had been the first to recognize Him as “Son of David” [Matthew 9:27]
 - a. Matthew records the earliest account in all the gospels of this title being used to address Jesus
 - CROWDS** b. while “the crowds marveled” at what this “Son of David” was doing, the Pharisees were practically calling Him a “Son of Beelzebul” [Matthew 9:34; cp Mark 3:22; John 8:43-49; etc]
 - CROWD** 2. These two blind men call out to Him as “a great multitude” of pilgrims arrives at the city of Jerusalem on the Friday (8 Nisan) before Passover
-

- a. one of them is Bartimaeus [cp Mark 10:46]
- b. as the blind men had done earlier, they ask Him to “have mercy”
- c. the crowd tries to quiet them, but they call out more and Jesus attends to their need

CROWD

- 3. The fact that the blind could “see” Him was an indictment against those religious leaders who refused to see who He was [cp John 9:39-41; see Isaiah 6:9-10]

CROWDS C. The crowds present as Jesus entered Jerusalem (Sunday, 10 Nisan) on a colt began to proclaim Him with “Hosannas” as “Son of David” [Matthew 21:1-11]

CROWD

- 1. “**Most** of the crowd” spread out their cloaks or placed palm branches on the road before Him [Matthew 21:8]
 - a. perhaps this was done in recognition of the prophecy of Zechariah concerning the king on a colt [Matthew 21:4-5; Zechariah 9:9]
 - b. a similar act was done in Israel when the officials accepted Jehu as king following his anointing by Elisha [2 Kings 9:11-13]

CROWD

- 2. One crowd “went before Him” [Matthew 21:9]
 - a. perhaps some who had already arrived in Jerusalem, but hearing that the One who had raised Lazarus was coming, went out to meet Him [cp John 12:12-13; (Hendriksen, 761)]
 - b. perhaps some wanted to precede Him, “announcing” His coming

CROWD

- 3. One crowd “followed Him” [Matthew 21:9]
 - a. these would include His apostles and other disciples (including many women [cp Matthew 27:55-56; Luke 8:1-3], others from Bethany, and any of the “multitude” of pilgrims who were also following this route into Jerusalem from Perea to the East

CROWD

- 4. Earlier in Galilee, “all the people were amazed, and said, Can this be the Son of David?” after seeing Him cast a demon out of a blind and mute man. [Matthew 12:22-23]
 - a. again, as they had done before, the Pharisees said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” [Matthew 12:24; see Body, I. “Son of David”, B. “The blind could ‘see’...”, 1. “Earlier, two blind men...”, b. “While the crowds marveled...” above]
- 5. “Hosanna!” is a fitting exclamation for the occasion, as it is likely taken directly from Psalm 118:25-26, the last of the “Hallel” songs that these pilgrims may have been singing as they neared Jerusalem for the Feast (Hendriksen, 766; Edersheim, 175-176)
 - a. “Hosanna!” means, “save, pray”; a similar shout was made when Solomon was crowned: “...and all the people said, ‘Long live (literally, “God save”) King Solomon.’” [1 Kings 1:39; (Boles, 412)]
 - b. the addition of “Son of David is an admission that He is the Messiah” (Boles, 412)
 - i. the *desire* that Jesus should be the awaited Messiah does not indicate

they had an *understanding* of all that claim entails; even the apostles did not understand [Acts 1:6]

CROWDS

- ii. perhaps it was a bit of a let-down for the crowds who had seen Him and accompanied Him when they began to see just how much their respected leaders were against Him
- D. The next day (Monday, 11 Nisan) there were "...children crying out in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'" [Matthew 21:12-16]
1. Some of these had certainly been among the pilgrims who were declaring this the day before [cp Luke 2:41-50; Jesus many years earlier!]
 2. Perhaps they had been seeing what Jesus did in cleansing the temple and in healing the blind and the lame [Matthew 21:12-14]
 3. While the children were celebrating Jesus, the chief priests and scribes became indignant [Matthew 21:15-16]
 - a. they asked Jesus if He realized just what the children were saying about Him [Matthew 21:16]
 - b. rather than tell the children to stop saying such things (declaring that He is, in fact, the Messiah!), He accepted their praise and then quoted Scripture to the religious leaders [Matthew 21:16]
 - i. even the Scripture He quoted (Psalm 8:2, from the LXX) indicates that the children's praise of Him was CORRECT and "prepared" by Jehovah!
 - ii. in accepting their praise, Jesus is declaring "in a veiled manner... what he is going to declare openly" (*Hendriksen, 772*)
- E. Some months earlier, when Jesus had retired to the region of Tyre and Sidon, a "...Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David'" [Matthew 15:21-22]
1. Jesus could not be kept "hidden" from those who sought Him in truth, even if the Jewish religious leaders had veiled their own eyes and hearts [cp Isaiah 6:10; see also 2 Corinthians 3:12-16]
 2. Not surprisingly, even some "Greeks" were among those who had gone up to worship in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, and they desired "to see Jesus" [John 12:20-21]
 - a. the fearful estimation of the Pharisees was correct: the world had indeed "gone after him." [John 12:19]
 - b. sadly, those who should have been most anxious to see Him (cp the excitement of Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael in John 1:40-49) and who should have had the clearest "vision" of Him, were not interested in seeing Him at all!
 - c. the "Greek" heritage of both the "Canaanite woman" and those who had gone up to the feast stands in stark contrast with the "legitimate" heritage of these religious leaders who would put so much value into tracing their genealogies (note the admonition against such in 1 Timothy 1:4 and Titus 3:9!); their lineage meant nothing when it came to recognizing the

promised Son and heir!

F. On the next day (Tuesday, 12 Nisan), following a barrage of “trick” questions from the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and some of their disciples and scribes, Jesus Himself poses a question to them: “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” [Matthew 22:42]

1. “They said to him, ‘The son of David’.” [Matthew 22:42]

- a. the Pharisees, “gathered together” (Matthew 22:41) KNOW the RIGHT answer; their statement shows that they have correctly understood what the Scripture taught of Him in some aspects
- b. interestingly, their answer also shows that they know without a doubt what the crowds are declaring about Him, and what He has ACCEPTED in not rejecting those declarations!
- c. it is one thing to KNOW the “right answers” or “right positions” of the Scripture; it is another thing entirely to KNOW the One who revealed the Scripture and to seek Him in truth! The religious leaders have failed in coming to KNOW God and His Son [see Jesus’ argument in John 5:39-40; etc]

2. They are unable to answer Jesus’ second question: “If David then calls him Lord, how is he is son?” [Matthew 22:43-46]

- a. the RIGHT ANSWER to this question would show that David’s Son (the Messiah!) must also truly be “Emmanuel, **God** with us”
- b. “The words, ‘If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son?’ do not mean, ‘The Messiah cannot be David’s Son,’ but must mean, ‘cannot be David’s son *merely* in the sense of his descendant.’ He is far more than that. He is the root as well as the offspring of David. (Rev. 22:16; cf. Isa. 11:1, 10).” (*Hendriksen, 812*)
 - i. Jesus had already confounded the Pharisees regarding this issue of His eternal nature when He declared, “...before Abraham was, I AM” [John 8:58]; to which they replied by taking up stones to stone Him! [John 8:59]

3. Jesus’ question to the Pharisees is the last use of the title “Son of David” in the gospel accounts [Matthew 22:42-45; cp Mark 12:35-37]

- a. since the religious leaders show they understand who the Christ is to be, but are unwilling to call Him this now, they will no longer have opportunity to “see Him” until they say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” [Matthew 23:39]

II. “This is The Prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.” [Matthew 21:11]

A. “...the whole city (of Jerusalem) was stirred up” by His glorious arrival, so that those in the city were asking who He was

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B. “The crowds” gave the answer! The NASB renders this as “the crowds *were saying*” as though this was a continuous refrain to everyone who would ask

1. “This is the Prophet Jesus”

- a. for more on the concept of “*the* prophet”, refer in this publication to

- Introduction, I. The Confused, A. Several Possibilities, 4. “The Prophet” (see above)
- CROWD**
- b. many had already claimed this about Him
 - i. “the people in general [Mark 6:15; Luke 7:16; John 6:14; 7:40]”
 - ii. “the woman of Samaria [John 4:19]
 - iii. Jesus, “in reference to Himself [Matthew 13:57; Luke 13:33; John 4:44]” (*Hendriksen, 767*)
 - c. later, this will be clearly taught of Him as the gospel is spread
 - i. “by Peter [Acts 3:22-23, quoting Deuteronomy 18:15]”
 - ii. “by Stephen [Acts 7:37, also quoting Deuteronomy 18:15]” (*Hendriksen, 767*)
 - d. the Pharisees refused to accept this about Him [Luke 7:39; cp John 9:13-14; etc; (*Hendriksen, 767*)]
2. “...from Nazareth of Galilee”
- a. perhaps this was said with some pride by those who “knew” Him from their cities and knew He was “one of them”? (contrast Nathanael’s dismissive question in John 1:46; cp John 7:52)
 - b. Jesus had performed the bulk of His miracles and done much of His teaching in Galilee (cp His rebuke of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum – cities of Galilee – in Matthew 11:20-24)
 - c. this is certainly not the one *most* had expected [John 7:41-44]
- C. “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” [Matthew 21:23-46]
1. Unwilling to receive Jesus as a prophet with honor, the religious leaders of His day “fill up...the measure” of their fathers by persecuting Him (cp Matthew 23:29-36; Acts 7:51-53)
- CROWD**
- a. the “chief priests and the elders of the people” (if in full force, likely more than thirty people! (*Boles, 42*)) gathered around Jesus to question Him about where He got His authority for “these things” He was doing [Matthew 21:23]
 - i. they are likely referring to the “cleansing” of the temple from the day before, in which He expelled all who were conducting business, which affairs were under direction of the High Priest (*Hendriksen, 768*)
 - ii. their meaning is that He did not get His authority from any of them, so what did He think He was doing?
 - iii. remember that Jesus had already indicated the source of His authority when He declared: “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” [Matthew 21:13; as God’s Son, this temple is clearly HIS house, but they are unwilling to admit that!]
 - b. when Jesus answers their question by asking them a question in return, they

are unwilling to answer in truth [Matthew 21:24-27]

- i. his question is simple and its answer is simple: “The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?” [Matthew 21:25; like Jesus, John taught the people openly – and he had received no training nor letters of authority from the chief priests and elders]
- ii. rather than answer directly, they first discuss the matter among themselves. They are not looking for truth, but for whatever answer will make them look best. But Jesus has only given them two possible answers, neither of which is “satisfactory” for their “position”:
 - a) if they answer, “from heaven”, Jesus will ask them why they did not believe (they did not submit to his baptism; cp Luke 7:30) [Matthew 21:25]
 - b) if they answer, “from man”, then they are afraid the crowd will turn against them, because “they all hold that John was a prophet” [Matthew 21:26]
- iii. their answer, “we do not know”, is a “political” answer: they “know” but do not want to answer.
- iv. Jesus tells them He will not give them an answer either! Truth is, if they had answered His question properly, they would already HAVE their answer! [Matthew 21:27]

CROWD

2. Jesus “turns the tables” on them, teaching two parables that have definite answers – these “politicians” cannot simply respond “we do not know”
 - a. the parable of the two sons [Matthew 21:28-32]
 - i. when Jesus asks them to interpret the parable properly, they do so *easily* [Matthew 21:31]
 - ii. because they know the answer to this parable, Jesus then applies it to them, for not having the same integrity as “the tax collectors and the prostitutes” who believed John the Baptist [Matthew 21:32; note the direct tie-in to what they had been discussing in Matthew 21:24-27]
 - b. the parable of the Tenants [Matthew 21:33-46]
 - i. when Jesus asks them to interpret this parable properly, they are even moved with indignation in pronouncing the proper judgment [Matthew 21:41]
 - ii. because they know the answer to this parable, Jesus then applies it to them for being in exactly the same situation as the evil tenants in the story, who “rejected” the heir of the vineyard, just as these have “rejected” the One that God has sent to be the “cornerstone” [Matthew 21:42-44; a veiled reference to the construction of the temple, the Father’s house, which was the subject that initiated this conversation in Matthew 21:23!]
3. The chief priests and the elders are clearly the ones who are acting with no authority from God in what they are doing!
 - a. when His teaching called out their hypocrisy, they desired to arrest Him,

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but “they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet” [Matthew 21:46; note the exact parallel with what they had reasoned about John in Matthew 21:26]

- b. Matthew specifically says that this particular group was made up of “the chief priests and the Pharisees” [Matthew 21:45; it is these among the greater group of “the chief priests and the elders” (see Matthew 21:23) who rightly “perceived that he was speaking about them”]

III. “Teacher” [Matthew 22:16, 24, 36; 23:7, 8; 26:18, 25, 49]

A. The use of “Teacher” (from the Greek, “didaskalos”)

1. By those who were “testing” Him in the temple on Tuesday, 12 Nisan

a. Pharisees and Herodians [Matthew 22:15-22]

- i. since Jesus had soundly rebuked the hypocrisy of “the chief priests and the Pharisees” [Matthew 21:45; see II, 3., b., above], it seems the Pharisees plotted and then sent along “their disciples”, perhaps expecting Jesus would be “more sympathetic toward these younger men” and perhaps fall more easily into their trap (*Hendriksen, 800*)
- ii. called Him “teacher” as an attempt to “honor” Him into choosing a side [cp Matthew 21:16-18]; He saw through their flattery and called them “hypocrites” [v18]
- iii. they “marveled” at His answer, but “they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said” [cp Luke 20:26]

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b. Sadducees [Matthew 22:23-33]

- i. likely seeing how Jesus had shut down the questioning of the Herodians and the Pharisees, the Sadducees brought to Him one of their “proofs” that resurrection is untenable
- ii. they also called Him “teacher”, perhaps with a bit more derision, since they clearly believed Him to be teaching a false doctrine [cp Matthew 22:23; they “say there is no resurrection”; see also Acts 23:8; Acts 4:1-2; etc]
- iii. this time, as Jesus shot down their argument with solid Bible exegesis, “when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching” [Matthew 21:33]

CROWD

c. Pharisees (again)

- i. “...when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees” [Matthew 22:34]; it is amazing (and sad!) to watch this game of “one-upmanship” as all the religious leaders try their hand at defeating the Master!
- ii. this time they sent one of their “lawyers” (Mark 12:28-34 describes him as a “scribe”) specifically “to test him” [Matthew 22:34-35]
- iii. this man, though one of them, seems to address Jesus with a bit more respect, calling him “teacher” as he begins his famous question about “which is the great commandment in the Law” [Matthew 22:36; Jesus’ treatment of this man in Mark 12:28-34 seems to indicate that

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- he was more honest than the men who had encouraged him to “test” the “teacher”; see also Luke 20:39]
- CROWD?** iv. after Jesus so handily dealt with all comers, “no one dared to ask him any more questions” [cp Mark 12:34; see also Luke 20:40]
- CROWD** v. this conversation (and the ones that preceded it) was not held in secret, for “the great throng heard him gladly” [cp Mark 12:37; see also Luke 21:38]
2. This title had been used frequently by others in referring to Jesus before these “tricky” questions at the temple
- a. by the apostles, with respect
- i. all the apostles on the boat in a storm [Mark 4:38]
 - ii. John, after rebuking a man who was casting out a demon [Mark 9:38]
 - iii. James and John, asking to sit at Jesus’ right and left in His kingdom [Mark 10:35]
 - iv. several of the “disciples” (apostles) when Jesus teaches about destruction of the temple [Mark 13:1; Luke 21:7]
- b. by others, with respect
- i. Nicodemus, seeking Jesus at night [John 3:2]
 - ii. a scribe, wishing to follow Him [Matthew 8:19]
 - iii. Simon, the Pharisee, having invited Jesus to his home [Luke 7:40]
 - CROWD** iv. Jairus’ servants (indicating this ruler of the synagogue had taught them to respect Jesus) [Mark 5:35; Luke 8:49]
 - CROWD** v. the father of a demon-possessed boy [Mark 9:17; Luke 9:38]
 - vi. the “rich young ruler”, calling Him specifically a “good teacher” [Matthew 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18]
 - vii. Martha and Mary at Lazarus’ tomb [John 11:28]
- c. by some, with certain disdain
- i. Pharisees, accusing Him to His disciples [Matthew 9:11]
 - ii. the scribes and Pharisees together, asking Him for a sign [Matthew 12:38]
 - iii. the collectors of the temple tax in Capernaum, accusing Jesus in their question to Peter [Matthew 17:24]
 - iv. a lawyer who “tested” Jesus and then desired to “justify himself” [Luke 10:25; see v29 also]
 - v. a lawyer who felt “insulted” at Jesus’ teaching about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees [Luke 11:45]
 - CROWD** vi. a “covetous” man “in the crowd”, asking Jesus to settle a dispute about an inheritance [Luke 12:13]
 - CROWD** vii. some of the Pharisees in the crowd during Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem,
-

telling Him to rebuke His disciples who were welcoming Him as “the king who comes in the name of the Lord” [Luke 19:39]

3. Jesus used this title of Himself on certain occasions
 - a. when teaching His apostles humility [Mark 10:24-25; Luke 6:40]
 - b. He knew a certain disciple would know Him by this title, and would have a room ready for Him to eat the Passover with His apostles [Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11]
 - c. when speaking of the apostles’ title for Him [John 13:13-14]
 4. This title was also occasionally used of others in the gospels
 - a. tax collectors used this title for John when they went out to his baptism [Luke 3:12]
 - b. Jesus used this title for Nicodemus [John 3:10]
- B. The use of “Rabbi” (from the Greek, “rhabbi”; transliterated from the Aramaic)
1. By the apostles, with respect
 - a. by John and Andrew, wishing to know where Jesus was staying [John 1:38]
 - b. by Peter, on a couple of occasions
 - i. at the transfiguration [Mark 9:5; (Matthew 17:4 uses the term “Lord” and Luke 9:33 uses “Master”)]
 - ii. at the cursing of the fig tree [Mark 11:21]
 2. By His disciples, with respect
 - a. by Nathanael, upon meeting Him and being convinced [John 1:49]
 - b. by some of His disciples at the well in Samaria [John 4:31]
 - c. by some of His disciples, asking about a blind man [John 9:2]
 - d. by some of His disciples, worried that He was planning to go back to Jerusalem, where many wanted Him dead [John 11:8]
 3. By others, with respect
 - a. by Nicodemus, seeking Jesus at night [John 3:2]
 - b. by the crowds, following Jesus after He fed them [John 6:25]
 - c. by Bartimaeus, seeking to be healed by Jesus [Mark 10:51; many versions translate the word “Rabboni” (see III, B., 6., below)]
 4. By Judas, with hypocrisy
 - a. at the Lord’s Supper, when Jesus announced that it would be one of His apostles that would betray Him, all of them asked, “Is it I, Lord?”, except for Judas, who asked, “Is it I, *Rabbi*?” [Matthew 26:25; it is only Matthew’s gospel that records this telling detail!; (see Matthew 26:22 and Mark 14:19 for the others’ responses)]
 - b. at the arrest in Gethsemane, Judas had given a “signal” to those who would apprehend Jesus – namely, he would say, “Greetings, *Rabbi*!”, and then

CROWD

kiss Him. [Matthew 26:49; Mark 14:45]

5. Used once in reference to John the Baptist [John 3:26]
6. Rabboni (from the Greek, “rhabbouni”; transliterated from the Aramaic)
 - a. by Bartimaeus, seeking to be healed by Jesus [Mark 10:51 in the following major versions: NKJV, CSB, NASB, LSB, ASV, YLT, DBY, HNV (as “Rabbani”); other translations of the same word include: “Lord” (KJV, WEB), “My Rabbi” (NLT), “Rabbi” (ESV, NET), and “Master” (RSV); (*“Mark 10 (NKJV, et al) - So Jesus answered and said.” Blue Letter Bible. Web. 3 Apr, 2023*)]
 - b. by Mary Magdalene, at Jesus’ tomb, when she finally recognizes who He is [John 20:16; interestingly, John explains that she used an Aramaic expression, and then gives its meaning as “teacher”]
7. For considerations as to why the religious leadership chose not address Jesus using the term “Rabbi”, see III., C. 1. b. iii., c., below

C. Jesus’ use, in response to those who tried to “flatter” Him by using the term

CROWD

1. On Tuesday, 12 Nisan, of Jesus’ last Passover week, following the series of questions regarding His authority and the attempts to “entangle him in his words” [Matthew 22:15, et al], Jesus publicly addressed “the crowd and...his disciples” who were present in the temple [Matthew 23:1; cp 24:1, “Jesus left the temple...”]
 - a. Luke 20:45 indicates that Jesus’ instruction was specifically for His disciples, but that He said these things “in the hearing of all the people” – He wanted the crowds to hear these things as well!
 - b. “The scribes and the Pharisees...” [Matthew 23:1-7]
 - i. “...sit on Moses’ seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you...” [Matthew 23:2-3]
 - a) as they are teaching the law of Moses, then obey the teaching [cp Exodus 19:5; Leviticus 18:4; etc]
 - b) “...but not the works they do, for they preach, but do not practice” [Matthew 23:3]; do not emulate them, because they are hypocrites!
 - ii. “...they tie up heavy burdens... but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger” [Matthew 23:4]; they want others to abide in the “weightier matters” of the law (cp Matthew 23:23), while they themselves are “at ease in Zion” (cp Amos 6:1-6)
 - iii. “They do all their deeds to be seen by others” [Matthew 23:5-7]:
 - a) “...they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long” [Matthew 23:5; an attempt to appear more “righteous” before others, as if “broader” and “longer” were equal to “more spiritual”; (*Guzik, David. “Study Guide for Matthew 23.” Blue Letter Bible. 6/2022. Web. 3 Apr, 2023.*)]
 - b) “...they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues” [Matthew 23:6; all of the recognition and honor

- that others give them is their motivation, rather than a desire to please God]
- c) "...and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others" [Matthew 23:7; hearing their titles of honor used especially in public by others brought them real joy! Seeing "Rabbi" as a badge of honor, the religious leaders did not "honor" Jesus by ever calling Him this!]
- c. "But you are not to be called rabbi..." [Matthew 23:8-12]
- i. in contrast to what the scribes and the Pharisees "love" [Matthew 23:6-7]
 - ii. "...for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers" [Matthew 23:8; the following versions add "the Christ" after "teacher": KJV, NKJV, YLT, WEB; the HNV has "the Messiah"]
 - a) Jesus' point is that they all are disciples of God (or of Himself), even if they happen to fill the role of teaching God's will to others, as the scribes and Pharisees do when "in Moses' seat" (cp Matthew 23:2-3)
 - b) that they are all "brothers" indicates that none of them is exalted above any other despite which role God gives them to perform; they are servants
 - c) ironically, this is the only time Jesus uses the term "teacher" (Greek, "didaskalos") that the scribes and the Pharisees had been using in their attempts to discredit Him; they were unwilling to yield to God as their "teacher" or to recognize in truth that Jesus was God's "teacher" (and they were not!!!)
 - iii. similarly, "...call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" [Matthew 23:9; this essentially furthers the concept that all are "brothers", and the Father whose instruction they should revere and obey is only God!]
 - iv. "Neither be called instructors..." [Matthew 23:10; here Jesus uses an entirely different word, "kathēgētēs" in the Greek, whose root ("hegeomai") brings a connotation of leadership or governance. Again, the point is that there is only one who should fulfill this role – the Christ!]
 - v. "The greatest among you shall be your servant..." [Matthew 23:11-12; while the Jewish religious leaders saw the titles of "teacher", "rabbi", "father", and "instructor" as badges of honor, Jesus taught that they were really descriptions of *service*, and that the one who would be most honored by God ("exalted") would be the one who humbled himself to the *service* rather than the one who exalted himself by means of the title. Oh, may we humble ourselves to learn this lesson!]
2. On an earlier occasion, Luke records that Jesus accepted an invitation to dine at the home of a Pharisee who had heard Him teaching the crowds (likely in Galilee). The Pharisee was "astonished" to see that Jesus "did not first wash

before dinner" [Luke 11:38], so Jesus began to teach:

- a. "Now you Pharisees..." [Luke 11:39-44]
 - i. "...cleanse the outside of the cup" [Luke 11:39-41; they were very worried about externals and appearances, but had neglected to concern themselves with cleansing their hearts!]
 - ii. "...you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God" [Luke 11:42; they were not wrong to tithe these minimal plants, but they were so worried about the minimal details that they missed the bigger picture of justice and love that the details of the law were intended to teach!]
 - iii. "...you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces" [Luke 11:43-44; they accept praise from men as though they were righteous, when in reality they are "like unmarked graves" which cause people to become defiled without even realizing it! (cp Numbers 19:16; this is the reason the gravesites were typically "whitewashed" so that they could easily be seen. See also Matthew 23:27; Acts 23:3); (*Hendriksen, 834*)]
 - b. "Woe to you lawyers also..." [Luke 11:45-52]
 - i. one of the lawyers who was also invited to the Pharisee's home to dine with Jesus also felt "insulted" by the rebuke He was giving – the message was hitting "close to home"
 - ii. "...you load people with burdens" [Luke 11:46; cp Matthew 23:4 (see III., C., b., ii., above)]
 - iii. "...you build the tombs of the prophets" [Luke 11:47-51; cp Matthew 23:29-36]
 - iv. "...you have taken away the key of knowledge" [Luke 11:52; because of their false doctrines, they not only are not entering the kingdom of heaven, but they have also hindered others from doing so! (cp Matthew 23:13-15)]
3. Jesus clearly was not "flattered" by nor "swayed" by the use of titles; He came to serve, so that even when "everyone" was "looking for" Him after He had spent all afternoon casting out demons and curing the people of Capernaum, He simply replied, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." [Mark 1:37-38]

CROWDS 4. Note that Jesus ends this discourse to the crowds with His ominous lament over Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets..." [Matthew 23:37-39; rather than accept those who God has sent as His sanctioned teachers, they honor one another and lift each other up, "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (cp Matthew 15:9; Isaiah 29:13)]

IV. "Son of Man" [Matthew 20:28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45, 64]

A. Jesus of Himself

1. Of the 78 times the phrase "Son of Man" is used in the gospels, all but one of them are spoken by Jesus regarding Himself (*Hendriksen, 407*)

CROWD

- a. the single text where others besides Jesus use the phrase, it is the crowd in Jerusalem after His triumphal entry – at the very end of His ministry of teaching about Himself – who asks, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” [John 12:34]
 - b. Hendriksen suggests, “By using this title in speaking to *the Jews*, Jesus was able to reveal Himself gradually, not all at once. ...It is entirely possible that at first many of those who were in Christ’s audience took the designation to mean no more than *man*, as in Ezekiel. Gradually, however, as Jesus continued to describe what he was doing, facing, and planning *as Son of man*, they began to wonder...” (*Hendriksen, 407; emphasis by the original author*)
2. In the context of our study, Matthew 20-28
 - a. after the request of James and John to sit at his right and left hand in the kingdom [Matthew 20:28; if the “Son of Man” has come to serve rather than be served, how much more His apostles?]
 - b. repeatedly during His discourse on the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem, Jesus refers to the “coming of the Son of Man” in judgment [Matthew 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44]
 - c. in picturing the great judgment scene where the sheep and the goats are separated before the King, Jesus speaks of “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him...” [Matthew 25:31]
 - d. when Jesus speaks of His impending betrayal and crucifixion [Matthew 26:2, 24, 45; in Luke 22:48, at the moment of His betrayal Jesus said, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”]
 - e. at His trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, Jesus responds when they ask if He is the Christ by affirming, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” [Matthew 26:64]
 3. Prior to the context of our study, during His ministry before the triumphal entry [Matthew 8-19]
 - a. perhaps the earliest Jesus uses this title is in his conversations with Nathanael (John 1:51) and with Nicodemus (John 3:13-14); these are more private settings

CROWD

- b. in a very public setting, as the scribe declares that he will follow Jesus anywhere, He responds, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” [Matthew 8:20; as to the public nature of this conversation, note v18]

CROWDS

- c. in the very crowded home in Capernaum, Jesus asserts His power over sin by first forgiving a paralyzed man and then saying, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... Rise, take up your bed and go home.” [Matthew 9:6]
- d. speaking of the time when His apostles will be preaching in the midst of persecution, He tells them, “...you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes” [Matthew 10:23]

CROWDS

- e. after John's disciples had come with some questions for Jesus, He begins to address "the crowds concerning John" [Matthew 11:7]; during His discourse He says, "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard...'" [Matthew 11:18-19]
- f. after being accused by the Pharisees of allowing His disciples to do "what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath" [Matthew 12:2], Jesus teaches them that "...the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath" [Matthew 12:8]

CROWD

- g. in publicly warning the Pharisees about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, Jesus declares, "...whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." [Matthew 12:32; note that "all the people" were present and "amazed" at Jesus (Matthew 12:23)]
- h. when some of the scribes and Pharisees requested a sign from Jesus, He declared: "...no sign will be given...except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." [Matthew 12:39-40]
- i. in a private explanation of "the parable of the weeds of the field", Jesus twice speaks of "the Son of Man": He is "the one who sows the good seed" and also the one who "will send his angels" to do the "reaping" [Matthew 13:37, 41]
- j. when questioning the apostles privately about who men say He is, Jesus calls Himself "the Son of Man" [Matthew 16:13]

CROWD

- k. in the context of correcting Peter's desire that Jesus not suffer the shame and the humiliation of rejection by the Jewish leaders and the death of the cross, Jesus calls ALL of His followers to "take up" their cross and follow Him, declaring: "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father..." and "...there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." [Matthew 16:27-28; cp also v24; Mark 8:34 makes it very clear that Jesus addressed the crowd along with His disciples here]
- l. in the more private context of His transfiguration before Peter, James, and John, Jesus twice referred to Himself as the "Son of Man" [Matthew 17:9, 12]
- m. speaking again to His disciples about His coming rejection, Jesus tells them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men..." [Matthew 17:22]
- n. encouraging His disciples after the "rich young ruler" went away sorrowful, Jesus told them, "...in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones..." [Matthew 19:28]
- o. for the third and final time as Jesus announced His coming arrest and crucifixion, He clarified some of the details, saying, "...the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will

condemn him to death.” [Matthew 20:18]

B. In Prophecy

1. Without a doubt, Jesus uses the term as a clear reference to the prophetic vision of Daniel 7:1-18
 - a. note how exact Jesus is when He uses the language of Daniel in several of His declarations to be “Son of Man”:
 - i. Daniel 7:13-14 says, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, *with the clouds of heaven* there came one like a *son of man*, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And *to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom*, that *all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him*; his dominion is an everlasting *dominion, which shall not pass away*, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”
 - ii. at his trial before Caiaphas and all the Sanhedrin, Jesus declared: “...from now on you will see the *Son of Man* seated at the right hand of Power and *coming on the clouds of heaven*.” [Matthew 26:64; (Hendriksen, 405)]
 - iii. while exhorting His disciples to “take up” their cross, He speaks of the Son of Man coming “with his angels *in the glory of his Father*” (a glory given to Him by the Ancient of Days) and of the Son of Man “coming *in his kingdom*” [Matthew 16:27, 28]
 - iv. consider also that He spoke of the Son of Man sitting “on his *glorious throne*” [Matthew 19:28]
 - v. consider also that following His resurrection Jesus states, “*All* authority in heaven and on earth *has been given to me*” [Matthew 28:18; while perhaps this does not at first appear to be directly linked to the Daniel 7 prophecy, note that the scope of this authority enables Him to receive disciples from “all nations” (cp “all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him”; Daniel 7:14); Matthew 28:19]
 - b. Revelation 5 appears clearly to show the fulfillment of the vision that was prophesied by Daniel, as “every *tribe and language and people and nation*” by the Lamb (former “Son of Man”) have now become “*a kingdom* and priests to our God”, while both God and the Lamb receive “blessing and honor and *glory and might forever and ever*” [Revelation 5:9, 11, 13; cp Daniel 7:14; note also the use of “one like a son of man” (the exact language of Daniel 7:13!) in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14]
2. The phrase “son of man” also occurs extensively throughout the Old Testament with varying degrees of meaning
 - a. a simple reference to being human [Numbers 23:19; Job 16:21; 25:6; 35:8; Psalm 8:4; 80:17; 146:3; Isaiah 51:12; 56:2; Jeremiah 50:40; 51:43; Dan 8:17]
 - b. a title given to Ezekiel by God as an apparent means of keeping him humble in his prophetic ministry [cp Ezekiel 2:1-3:15; this use is consistent throughout the book of Ezekiel]

- c. interestingly, both Psalm 144:3 and Daniel 7:13 use a different term for “man” in their phrasing
 - i. the difference is between son of “adam” (Strong’s H120; this is the term used in the vast majority of cases) and son of “enos” (Strong’s H582; the use in Psalm 144:3) and son of “enes” (Strong’s H606; the use in Daniel 7:13)
 - ii. Daniel 7:13 as has been shown above is clearly messianic
 - iii. Psalm 144:3 is *similar* to Psalm 8:4-6, which is cited by the writer of Hebrews in 2:6-8, referring to Jesus (cp v9)

Conclusion: “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” [Matthew 27:54]

While those who wrestled with the TRUTH as He challenged their comfort and their convictions marveled at what to make of Jesus, God Himself had the final resounding word. For those who were objective, even disinterested observers, the events at the cross drew them to a quick conclusion as to who He must have been. For others, who had believed but were shaken by the cruelty of the hour, it would take seeing Him again before their faith became sight. And those who had outright rejected Him would soon have to grapple with the aftermath of those days: some, “cut to the heart” upon hearing that God had vindicated Him through resurrection, would cry out, “what shall we do?”, and would experience the blessing of salvation (Acts 2:22-41); others, also “cut to the heart”, would stone the messengers of salvation (cp Acts 7:51-60), rejecting once for all that Jesus could possibly be the One whom Peter had confessed as “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” [Matthew 16:18]

I. “Son of God” [Matthew 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54]

A. The dismissive challenge in His final hours

- 1. Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, at wits’ end because they are unable to find cohesive charges against Jesus, finally place Him under oath and ask Him outright: “tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God” [Matthew 26:63]
 - a. His truthful admission is all that they need to “convict” Him; it is remarkable that these who did not want to take Him “during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people” [Matthew 26:5] have fallen into His plan to be delivered up as the Paschal lamb (cp Matthew 26:2)
 - b. they were unable to produce enough false testimony to convict Him, so He offers them the truth that will carry out God’s will
- 2. Those who began to gather at the foot of the cross – including “the chief priests, with the scribes and elders” – taunted Him, saying: “You who would destroy the temple and build it again in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross”, and, “He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” [Matthew 27:40, 43, cp v41]
 - a. clearly, Satan had not finished tempting Jesus to give up the cross!

CROWD

- i. note the similar language to the temptations in the wilderness at the outset of Jesus' ministry: "If you are the Son of God..." [Matthew 4:3, 5; clearly, these men speak the language of their father, the devil! (cp John 8:42-44)]
- ii. note the similar context to Peter's "temptation" of Jesus in suggesting that the cross would not be necessary for His exaltation; of course, this is why Jesus rebuked Him in the strongest terms, saying, "Get behind me, Satan!" These at the foot of the cross, guided by Satan, were "not setting [their] mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." [Matthew 16:23]

B. Recognized by unlikely witnesses

1. Even before Jesus' death, one of those who was condemned along with Him, upon observing His godly manner and character in the midst of overwhelming an undeserved cruelty, became a "witness" as he repented of his prior involvement in hurling insults, and asked Him, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [Luke 23:42]
2. Three of the four gospels record the Centurion(s) as being the first to "confess" Jesus as the "Son of God" upon His death
 - a. in Matthew 27:54, the centurion and those with him declared, "Truly this was the Son of God!"
 - b. in Mark 15:39, "...when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God!'"
 - c. and in Luke 23:47, "...when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, 'Certainly, this man was innocent!'"
 - d. while it is unlikely these Gentiles fully understood what they were saying, it is clear that they could see in Jesus what the Jewish religious leaders and most of the people were unwilling to see
 - e. certainly these men would have heard all that Jesus was saying from the cross, including His forgiveness of those who had put Him there and who continued to provoke and torture Him

C. Proven by the resurrection

1. Luke, a Gentile physician (cp Colossians 4:14) convinced by the evidence and the message he received of a man who had risen from the dead, set about to provide an "orderly account" of this gospel for his friend Theophilus (see Luke 1:3). Early in his message, Luke establishes the spiritual lineage of Jesus Christ, "the Son of God" [Luke 3:23-38]
 - a. Luke himself also records later in Acts 1:3 that Jesus "presented himself alive to [the apostles] after his suffering *by many proofs*, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."
2. Paul, an early detractor of the claims made by Jesus and His followers, once he is convinced by the Scriptures (and by Jesus Himself!) that the message of His resurrection is true, sets out to share that message with as many as will listen (cp Romans 1:15-17). In his treatise on the universal need for the gospel in the book

of Romans, Paul states, that he is “set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning *his Son*, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was *declared to be the Son of God* in power according to the Spirit of holiness *by his resurrection from the dead*, Jesus Christ our Lord...” [Romans 1:1-4]

D. Finally accepted by the priests

1. In a final act of grace even while He was suffering on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” [Luke 23:34]
 - a. while the immediate context seems to indicate Jesus’ prayer was primarily for the Roman soldiers who were ignorant of most of what Jesus had done and taught, we certainly see the immensity of God’s gracious response on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when “about 3,000 souls” responded to the gospel [Acts 2:41]
 - b. a little later we see a more direct fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer when the centurion Cornelius and many of his family and friends receive the gospel and obey it! [Acts 10:30-33, 44-48]
 - c. between these two events, however, is a bit of what may seem to be even more amazing news. “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and *a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*” [Acts 6:7, emphasis mine]
 - i. the very men who so often surrounded Jesus with threats and who sought to “entangle” Him in His words could not resist the power of the TRUTH as He was revealed to them by the power of God!
 - ii. confessing Jesus as “*the* Prophet”, as “the Son of David”, as “Teacher” or “Rabbi”, as “Son of Man”, as “Son of God” and as “Lord and Christ”, they began to serve Him in truth as “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” [Revelation 1:6; cp 1 Peter 2:5, 9]

Whether or not we can be certain about what could have moved a confused and pressured crowd of would-be believers from cries of “Hosanna!” to cries of “Crucify Him!”, there is one thing we can be certain of: what took place was “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” [Acts 2:23] Jesus Christ is the Son of God and “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and EVERY tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” [Philippians 2:9-11, emphasis mine] Amen!

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