

Overview of The Gospels

There are four books in the Bible which are referred to as the Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are named after the human authors and tell about the life of Jesus from different viewpoints. Matthew wrote his version to the Jews to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal king. Mark wrote to the Christians in Rome to present the person, work and teachings of Jesus. Luke was not a Jew and he wrote to the Gentiles. His purpose was to present Jesus as the perfect human and the perfect Savior. John wrote his gospel to new Christians and non-Christians. His purpose was to prove conclusively that Jesus is the Son of God and that all who believe in him will have eternal life.

Three of the Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels. Synoptic comes from a Greek word meaning together or common. These books are Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and they report many common stories. The book of John has much material which is only found in John.

Matthew

Matthew was a tax collector which was a despised occupation. Tax collectors lived on the money they could force out of the people. Matthew becoming one of the disciples of Jesus proves that anybody can become a Christian and be used by God for His kingdom work.

We should note that the New Testament builds on the Old Testament.

I. The King and His Kingdom

1. Matthew 1:1-17 gives us the genealogy of Jesus. Verse 1 reminds us that He is a descendent of both Abraham and King David. This is important because this fulfills earlier promises from God.

A. Remember Genesis 12:3 where God promises Abraham that all peoples shall be blessed through his descendants. This blessing is to be delivered through Jesus. Later in 2 Samuel 7:11-14 God promised David that David's throne will be established forever and again it is through King Jesus. Psalm 132:11 and Jeremiah 23:5 reminded the people of this promise from God.

B. Women are not usually mentioned in genealogies but here we read about five women who remind us that God often does the unexpected.

i. Matthew, in verse 3, reminds us of Tamar and the ugly story involving Judah (Genesis 38:1-30). Remember, Jesus is a descendent of the tribe of Judah.

ii. Verse 5 talks about Rahab who was a prostitute.

iii. Ruth is also mentioned in verse 5 as an ancestor of Jesus. Remember she was from Moab, one of Israel's enemies. See Deuteronomy 23:3-5 to read how God put the people of this nation under a special curse.

iv. Matthew, in verse 6, tells us that Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, is in the bloodline of Jesus. Remember she was King David's partner in adultery and murder.

v. The last lady Matthew mentions is Mary the mother of Jesus.

2. Next read chapter 1:18-23 to see the birth of Jesus foretold. Mary, His mother, is pregnant and she is a virgin. This fulfills Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah 7:14.

A. Virgin birth is a supernatural birth. Jesus has The Holy Spirit as His father and Mary, a human, as His mother. He was fully man and fully God. He was able to never sin because He was God and He was able to satisfy God's wrath of He was also human. Many critics of Christianity deny the truth of the virgin birth. Without the virgin birth of Jesus there is no Christianity.

B. Even the name of Jesus is significant. It comes from the Old Testament names of Jeshua or Joshua which means "Jehovah is salvation."

3. Chapter 2 has a story only found in Matthew and is the story of the wise men. Many people such as the wise men seek to worship Jesus but others, such as King Herod, hate Him and seek to destroy him.

A. Matthew 2:7-23 reports how God protected Jesus by warning Joseph and they fled to Egypt for safety, and then God led them back to Israel when it was safe.

4. In Matthew 3, thirty years have passed and John the Baptist is born. The work of John the Baptist is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (see Isaiah 40:1-5 and Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6). His mission was to announce the coming of the Messiah. Read Matthew 3:1-3. To prepare the world for the arrival of its savior.

A. The message of John the Baptist is that the Messiah is coming and the people must look forward to it with repentant hearts. Matthew reports that John's message has three parts.

i. First part verse 2 warns that the kingdom of God is at hand. This means the Messiah is soon to come so get prepared.

ii. Second part verse 11 tells that the messiah who is coming is a powerful king.

iii. Third part verse 2 gives the command to repent. We must repent because our lives are sinful and we need to change to be saved. To repent we must confess our sins and be sorry for them. We must also seek to change and quit doing our sins. Repentance means we must look to the Messiah who can reconcile us with God. It is only through faith in Jesus that we can have peace with God and be saved.

B. The baptism of John the Baptist was a sign that the person had repented of his sins and looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. It was preparing the people for the coming of Jesus.

C. The baptism of Jesus identified Jesus with the Jews and proclaimed that He came to take the sinner's place under God's judgment. The baptism of Jesus was the beginning of His public ministry.

C. Verses 16-17. Report that the entire trinity was present indicating how very important the ministry of Jesus is. God here gives His approval to the work of Jesus.

5. Chapter four reports a story found in all the Synoptic Gospels. Matthew 4:1-11 records that Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit where He fasted forty days. After this, He was tested. Satan tried to tempt Jesus to sin in three different ways.

A. Satan tempted Jesus with food as He must have been very hungry. He tempted Jesus to test God by saving him. Satan also tempted Jesus to worship him. Jesus resisted all temptations by trusting God and He did not sin.

Lessons for us: It is not a sin to be tested; to be tempted. It is only a sin when you give in to the temptation and commit a sin. Jesus said no to all of Satan's temptations and remained without sin. We must also learn to turn to God to help us when we are tempted by using scripture and by praying.

6. Jesus begins His public ministry after John the Baptist is arrested. Matthew 4:17 reports His message was a call to repentance which is the same message John the Baptist preached. This is the basic message of Jesus. Acts 2:38

He also started calling his disciples. Verse 18 reports the first two as Simon Peter and Andrew two fishermen. Verse 19 reports why He called them: He called them to make them fishers of men which means they were called to help catch people into the kingdom of God. Verse 19 Jesus orders "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

A. Let's talk about this command "Follow me" These two words are used 13 times in the gospels. They are so important because they teach important truths about what it means to be one of Christ's disciples.

i. Obedience When you become a Christian you begin a life of obedience. To what? God as we know Him by studying the Bible.

ii. Repentance A Christian truly is sorry for his sin and seeks to turn away from it. A Christian hates his sin.

iii. Submission We must submit to Jesus and do the work He calls us to do.

iv. Trust--We must trust Him and Him alone. This trust allows to fearlessly do the things He has called us to do. The following is a true story:

A group of Pakistani Christian men knew the risk when they entered an Islamic festival where fanatical Muslim leaders preached Jihad and attendees renewed their religious zeal.

Quietly they began conversations about Jesus who is considered a holy prophet in Islam, but they don't believe Jesus is God. By the end of the evening they had distributed several hundred flyers telling the truth that Jesus Christ is God, and they had exchanged phone numbers with people who wanted to learn more. These men are sharing the gospel in a hostile and restricted nation at great risk. As they minister in these difficult places, they need our prayers. Will you commit to stand with them in prayer as they share Christ? Would you do what they did?

v. Perseverance Following is not something you do once and then forget about. We must follow Jesus all the time, every day until we die. Psalm [119:112](#) I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

7. Chapters 5-7 contain what is known as The Sermon On The Mount. We read that Jesus went up to a mountain with a large crowd and He sat down and preached a perfect sermon. This is very important teaching, and should be taught to all churches.

A. Read chapter 5:2-12. These are called The Beatitudes which means blessings; Read and discuss each of these.

i. Verse 3 tells us that the poor in spirit are blessed. This means that it is blessed to understand your deep spiritual poverty before God so that you can be blessed by God.

ii. We read in verse 4 that those who mourn are blessed. The mourning is over sin. We are comforted by the gospel message which tells of the forgiveness of our sins. As time passes my sins make me more and more sorry.

iii. We are blessed verse 5 says for being meek. Another word for meek would be gentle or humble. This does not mean to be a coward, remember Numbers 12:3 tells us that Moses was the

meekest person on earth. This verse comes from Psalm 37:11 and it means to accept what God gives each one of us and enjoy what God gives us. We are not to cause trouble by fighting for more. We realize that all our blessings are gifts from God so we need to be humble and not proud.

iv. Verse 6 says blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. These people are blessed because they want to live in ways that please God. This is only possible for the person who belongs to Jesus. Our desire is to be righteous the same as Jesus is.

v. Verse 7 tells us that the merciful are blessed. This is because mercy is what we receive when we are saved. This is an inner quality and we are blessed when we extend mercy to others. Matthew 18:21-35 is a parable about extending mercy to others. We see the principle that we expect mercy from God and other people so we must give mercy to others. See Matt 6:12 for confirmation of this. Remember forgiveness, mercy, and reconciliation are at the heart of Christianity.

vi. Blessed are the pure in heart. This goes back to Psalm 24:3-4. We are blessed because the Christians have pure hearts and so we are brought into the kingdom.

vii. Verse 9 refers to being blessed when we are peacemakers. This can be when we share the gospel that allows a person to come to peace with God. It also refers to us being blessed when we work toward reconciliation between people especially Christians.

viii. Verse 10 this is tough but we are blessed when we are persecuted because of righteousness. Note that Jesus is not promising health, wealth and prosperity. Verses 11 and 12 say we are rewarded because of our relationship with Christ when we are persecuted because of this relationship. We are blessed because we are identified with Jesus in righteousness. We may suffer because of our relationship with Jesus, but verse 12 tells us it will be worthwhile because we will be rewarded in heaven forever. Currently millions of Christians are being persecuted around the world.

B. Verses 13-16 are the well-known salt and light verses. We are salt when we help preserve the earth from falling into greater darkness by spreading the gospel and telling others about Jesus. We are light when we spread the light of the Gospel to all peoples, and we show the world that being a Christian is a good way to live. Our Christian testimony is so very important.

i. How can we lose our saltiness? We lose it when we fail to reflect the light of Jesus or in other words when we do not do what Jesus asks us to do.

ii. We are salt and light when we obey and serve Him faithfully. We are light when we share the gospel with others.

C. Matthew 5:17-20

i. Verse 17 The Old Testament is still valid in pointing toward Jesus and He Jesus will fulfill the law by His perfect obedience to the law.

ii. Verses 18-19 Jesus is making sure we understand the Old Testament is authority until it is fulfilled. He is emphasizing that the Bible is our authority.

D. In Matthew 5:20 He lays out the rule for salvation, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." We meet this requirement not by our outer appearance but by being internally made righteous through our faith in Jesus. We can't make ourselves righteous only Jesus can. The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus day put on a

good outward appearance but inside they were morally corrupt. For example, they made rules and then they figured out how to break the laws just as the Jews do today.

E. The rest of the chapter verses 21-47 teach us what a righteousness that exceeds the Pharisees and scribes looks like.

i. Verses 21-26 talks about murder which is the sixth commandment. We learn that being angry with a brother is sin. We learn that we are guilty of murder by our thoughts and not just by our actions. Beware of a mistranslation in verse 22 in some translations such as King James Version. The correct translation says there is no good reason to hate a brother.

ii. This is so serious that according to verses 23-26 we are not even to worship when we are not at peace with each other. Always remember that no person has ever done as much to hurt you as your sins have done to hurt God. If we expect God to reconcile and forgive us then we must reconcile and forgive each other and quickly make peace with our brother.

iii. Jesus next talks about the sin of adultery in verses 27-30. Verses 28-29 are not to be taken literally. We are not to physically cut off our body parts to keep from this sin. We must look to Matthew 18:7-9 to properly understand what Jesus is saying here. Verse 7 gives us the correct answer that we are to cutoff the temptation that is causing us to sin. If alcohol is the problem than stay away from it. If unmarried sex is the problem then avoid situations that tempt you such as pornography or being alone with a person of the opposite sex. Stay away from whatever tempts you to sin. Plan ahead of time to avoid sin and plan ahead not to sin when tempted.

iv. The next sin is found in verses 31-32 and concerns divorce. God in the Old Testament makes it clear that He hates all divorce. Later in chapter 19 we will discuss more about when divorce is permitted.

v. Verses 33-37 is very simply teaching that we are to in very simple words tell the truth. Yes means yes. Our world is full of liars. We Christians must always tell the truth,

vi. Verses 38-47 have a common theme of being peacemakers and loving each other even our enemies. Instead of focusing on revenge we must focus on forgiveness. Remember Christ died for our sins while we were still enemies. Romans 5:10. Examples we would have no tribal wars.

vii. Verse 48 has an impossible command for us. While we can't become perfect until death, but we should try to live perfect lives. As time goes by we Christians should live lives that more and more show that we are Christians. We are to have a good Christian testimony. Christianity is all about forgiveness.

8. Chapter five told us the standards of righteousness which are the rules we are to live by. Now in chapter six Jesus tells us how these standards are to look as we live our lives. Another way of saying this is we are now taught how Christians are to behave which we call their testimony. We are to show Jesus to the world. It is more important to show the world that we Christians are different by our actions than our words.

A. In chapter 6:1-6 Matthew tells us that we are to do good things privately such as giving money to charity and praying. He assumes Christians will give to charity and that we will pray, but we are not to do them in such a way that people will see us doing these good things and say how good we are. We are not politicians seeking votes, rather we are seeking to please God and we don't tell others what we are doing; we show them by our actions. God already knows everything we do. Remember that God is to get all the glory.

B. He tells us a good way to pray. We are not to say the same things over and over. Jesus gives us a good model of a way to pray in chapter 6:9-13. While it is good to pray the way these verses teach us, we also must pray with other words at times.

Lord's Prayer Chapter 6:9-13

Prayers can be short and long. This is a model of a way we should pray and not actually the Lord's Prayer which we find in John 17

- i. This prayer has six petitions. The first three concern God's honor, His kingdom and His will; the last three concern human needs. We should copy this prayer and put our concerns after God's.
- ii. The first petition we honor God. We must understand that it is a great privilege to be able to talk with God.
- iii. The second petition "your kingdom come" means we want to see God ruled everywhere and worshipped by all people.
- iv. The next petition asks that God's will be done. We are saying that we trust you God and in every situation we want your will to be done. We say this even if it means that we will suffer or even die.
- v. We now ask for something for ourselves. We ask for our daily bread which means the necessities of life such as food, clothing school fees, etc. We must always remember that everything good comes from God according to James 1:17. The only reason you have enough to eat is because God provided the food for you. Remember to always thank God for whatever you receive.
- vi. Forgive us our debts as we forgive others. Just as a Christians seeks and receives forgiveness, so also a Christian must have a forgiving heart.
- vii. Lead us not into temptation means that we need God's help to resist temptation. We are not strong enough to fight off Satan by ourselves.

ACTS is a good model to guide our prayers.

A=Acknowledge. We start by praising God..

C =Contrition (sorry). We tell God about our sorrow for our sins

T = Thank. We thank God.

S=supplication (we ask God for things) This is the part of our prayer where we ask God to give us and other people things.

C. Repeating what we saw in the Lord's Prayer, Verse 14 tells us that our attitude about forgiveness should be that we always want to forgive. Remember that God has forgiven us more than we can forgive others because we have offended God more than we can offend any person.

D. Verses 16-18 contain a lesson about fasting. Note verse 16 says when you fast and not if. This means we are supposed to fast. Once again, we are to do this act privately unless we are asked to fast by our church or another Christian group.

i. Repeating, chapter six teaches us that we are to do good things and, whenever possible, we are to do them secretly. We are not to do them to build a good reputation among men. We are not to do them so

that people will say how good we are. We are to do them because we are trying to obey and please God. How much you pray and how much you give is to be a secret between you and God. It is important that we realize it is God who makes it possible for us to do good things and God is to get all the credit and glory.

E. We don't tell people that we are Christians; instead we live our lives in such a way that we show people that we are Christians. When people learn by our deeds instead of our mouths that we are Christians this is good.

9. Chapter 6:19-7:12 discuss several ways we are to live as Christians in this world

A. Verses 19-24 talk about money and possessions. There is nothing bad about having a lot of money rather it is our attitude about money and possessions that is often the problem. Many pastors are afraid to teach about money but Jesus often taught about money and possessions. Jesus gives us four things to think about with money and possessions.

i. verses 19-20 Material things do not last, but the things we do for God are permanent. You can't take it with you although many people think you can. ATA teachers are all volunteers waiting for heaven for any rewards. Sometimes people are buried with their wealth such as their fancy car which is so stupid.

ii. Verse 21 possessions will often cause us to focus on earth instead of God.

iii. Verses 22-24 focusing on money will cloud our vision and cause us to miss the really important things in life such as our family. Rich people on their deathbeds sometimes say they wish they had more time to spend with their families but they don't say they wish they had more time to make more money.

iv. Verse 24 says we can't serve both God and money. We often end up putting money ahead of God. Here is an illustration of this idea. A pastor once told me that he badly needed a job and so he promised God his first paycheck if he got a job. He then got a good job and decided it was too much money to give to God so the pastor kept all the money.

B. Verses 25-34 talks about worrying which is a big problem for most people. Worry shows that we don't trust God. Often worry is about possessions which we just talked about. We must trust God to provide what we truly need. Our ministry has to trust God for all of us to eat. Here are two reasons we should not worry.

i. Just like with money, you can't serve God and worry at the same time. To serve God we must trust Him and we are not trusting God when we worry so this means worry is a sin.

ii. We are putting God second in our lives and putting worry first.

C. How do we overcome worry?

i. Recognize that Satan loves to cause us to worry. Our best weapon is to pray and turn the problem over to God. Pray and tell God your problem, ask God to protect you from Satan and tell God you are turning the problem over to Him. Then refuse to think about the problem anymore.

ii Trust God and don't worry. Remember the promise of Romans 8:28. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Following is a true story---A man was told by his doctors that he had a disease which was going to kill him in a short time. The man wanted to live but he trusted God and told God it was all right if he died. He accepted that if God allowed him to die then it was good for him to die. The man never worried. Remember Romans 8:28 and James 1:2.

D. Chapter 7:1-6 has teaching about judging others, about asking God for things and a lesson about a tree and its fruit. The idea about judging is much misunderstood. Many read verse one to say that we should

never judge. Well it is impossible to not judge and live. Try to walk across a busy highway without judging the traffic to see if it is safe.

i. Verse 6 requires us to judge what is holy and also you must judge who the pigs are. The idea is that scripture is holy and enemies of the church are the swine. It is good that we present the gospel to unbelievers but when they scorn scripture and just try to criticize what God's word is saying; then we need to judge that they are the swine mentioned here and we should not continue to present more scripture to these people.

ii. There is proper judging and wrong judging. Wrong judging is when we judge people constantly over minor things. We also should be honest and judge ourselves before we judge others.

E. Verses 7-11 remind us to pray for the things we need and want. God could give us everything He wants us to have without our asking, but God wants a personal relationship with each Christian so He wants us to ask for things. He will give us the things we truly need according to His wisdom.

F. Verse 12 has really good teaching about what we call the "Golden Rule". Another way to state this rule is to say that we are to treat other people the way we want to be treated by them. We are to do good things for others. Do you enjoy sharing your belongings with other people?

i. This rule is also found in Mark where first Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5 in Mark 12:29-30 Here Jesus answered, "The most important commandment is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Mark 12:31 The second most important commandment is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." It is only after you learn to fully love Jesus that you can obey the rule to love your neighbor properly.

ii. Think how good life would be if we all treated others the way we wish to be treated.

10. Chapter 7:13-29 teaches us that there are two ways a person can travel during his life. One is the easy way which leads a person to hell, and the other is more difficult, but it leads a person to heaven. We see the idea of these two ways in Jeremiah 21:7 "And to this people you shall say: 'Thus says the LORD: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.'" In this section we also see that there are those who want to lead you into hell instead of heaven.

A. The narrow and wide gate found in verses 13-14 illustrate the fact that getting into hell is easier than getting into heaven. The Bible teaches that many evangelist and Bible teachers are wrong when they that it is easy to get into heaven. Many of them say all you have to do is say a prayer of salvation and then sit back and go to heaven. It is true that we don't do any work to become a Christian, but our lives must change and we must do a lot of work after salvation or we are not really saved. Remember Jesus said to follow Him see Matthew 10:38.

B. Verses 15-20 warn us that there are many people who will lead us to follow the wide gate to hell instead of the narrow gate to heaven.

C. These people often are pastors or other church leaders. The Bible is full of warnings about false teachers. One of these warnings is found in Acts 20:29.

i. The warning here is to not listen to people who tell you it is easy to be a Christian.

D. We also learn in verses 15-20 that we are to judge if our teachers are true or false.

i. Verse 16 tells us to judge our teachers as being godly by their good fruit.

ii. We can do this by seeing if they do good works.

iii. We can also see if their Bible teaching is true to the Bible. Does their teaching satisfy your soul, does it bring you closer to God, does it help equip you for Christian living, and is the teaching helping you mature as a Christian?

E. Verses 21-23 are some of the most frightening verses in the Bible. Jesus is talking to all Christians, especially people like me who teach the Bible. We must make sure that we really belong to Jesus. We must remember that God uses all people including the unsaved for His purposes. The fact that you are a pastor or other church leader does not mean that you are saved. Make sure you have saving faith.

F. Build your house on a rock—read verses 24-27. The rock we are to build all our future on is the Bible. Everything we know about God is found in the Bible.

D. Verses 29 Jesus taught as if He had authority which he did have because He is God. Sadly most people do not believe this. This ends the Sermon on the Mount.

11. Chapter 8:1-17 reports a series of healing miracles that Jesus performed. We closed out chapter seven by reporting that Jesus has all authority and here he proves it by performing several miracles. One of the purposes of miracles is to prove that Jesus is God. These miracles also fulfil prophecy from Isaiah 53:4.

A. There are lessons to be learned from the first three miracles found in chapter 8.

i. The first miracle found in verses 1-4 reports that Jesus healed a Leper. Lepers in Bible times were complete outcast from society; they were not even allowed to come near other people. Jesus shows that even though people would have nothing to do with Lepers, Jesus would touch and heal them. This shows that nobody is too sinful to be saved by Jesus and that you can teach sinners without their sin contaminating you.

ii. The second miracle found in verses 5-13 concerns a non-Jew. And teaches that salvation through Jesus is for the whole world and not just the Jews. The message in verses 11-12 is that many gentiles or non-Jews will be saved and many Jews will go to hell. Many Jews believed they were automatically saved because they were Jews and today many people believe they are saved because their parents are Christians or they join a church. All people are judged by Jesus based only on their relationship with Him.

iii. The faith of the centurion shows that he really understands that Jesus is God and he completely trust Jesus. We need to do the same. The centurion also shows great humility which we need to copy.

iv. The third healing happened in verses 14-15 and we see that when Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law He healed her so completely and quickly that she immediately went from being sick to serving.

12. Chapter 8:18-22 teach a lesson that many would like to forget or ignore. Becoming a Christian does not mean that a person can expect to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous, and live an easy life. We must be prepared to let Jesus be Lord of our lives and make Him first, even ahead of our family see verses 21-22. To be a Christian means we follow Jesus wherever He leads us and we do this no matter how much it cost us. We might lose our health, our time, our money, and even our lives. We must still gladly follow Jesus.

13. Verses 22-34 tells us that we must have faith. In these verses we also have an interesting story about Jesus driving demons out of people and into pigs. We must be careful to not add anything to this story. We can say that seeing the destruction of the pigs does prove that the demons were driven out of the men by Jesus. The people lost a lot of money when the pigs were lost and probably they asked Jesus to

leave their area because they did not want to lose any more money. The reason they grew pigs in this area was because many gentiles lived there.

14. Chapter 9:1-17 Jesus makes people angry.

A. Jesus in verses 1-8 heals another man; only this time he tells the man his sins are forgiven which makes the scribes angry. They are angry because Jesus by forgiving the man's sins is saying that He, Jesus, is God because only God can forgive sins.

B. Next in verses 9-13 Jesus angers people because He calls a tax collector to follow Him and He visits with the tax collectors and other people who were looked down at because people felt they were sinners. Jesus spent time with the people who most people considered were sinners because He says that He came to heal sinners and not those who are well. A lesson for us is that we are supposed to bring the gospel to non-believers so we must spend time with them to do this. Many Christians only want to spend time with their Christian friends, but we must be willing to invest our lives in unsaved people just as Jesus did.

C. Next Jesus is criticized in verses 14-17 because His disciples do not fast. Jesus answers this by saying that Christians will fast after He is gone, but while He is with his disciples it is a time of joy and they will not fast. After all, fasting is not normally associated with times of joy but with times of sorrow. His disciples are joyous as long as Jesus is with them. He assumes they will fast after He leaves them.

i. The Christian reason for fasting is different from the Old Testament. Jesus uses the example of the wine skin to teach a lesson about the joy associated with the new covenant; the new way of fasting and serving Jesus. The old covenant which is legalistic was not good while the new covenant of grace with Jesus is good. We don't want to mix the new covenant of grace with the old covenant of law and works.

15. Verses 18-34 Report about more miracles. First Jesus restores a girl to life. He also heals a woman and two blind men who He heals because of their faith in Him. This is the way we are saved from our sins; by our faith in Jesus.

A. We next read how he chases a demon out of a man. In verse 34 the enemies of Jesus attack Him by accusing Him of using Satan's power to do these miracles. We will talk about this in chapter 12.

16. Chapter 9 verses 35-10:4. Jesus traveled through the land healing people because He had as verse 36 says great compassion for them. Jesus was sorry for the physical suffering of the people and for their spiritual blindness. There was a shortage of those who would go and heal the people so Jesus instructs his disciples to pray for more workers to help with this work. He then calls His twelve disciples and sends them out to help evangelize.

A. The application for us today is that we must feel sorry for the unsaved people of the world, and we must pray and ask Jesus to call and send out more missionaries. When you pray for people to be missionaries around the world, also ask God if you yourself should go. Are you willing to go? Every Christian is supposed to be a missionary at least to his own home area.

12. Chapter 10:1-15 we have the first mission trip reported here. Note that the missionaries were the 12 disciples and they were only sent to the Jews. It was not yet time for the gentiles to be reached.

A. Verses 1 & 8 are sometimes misinterpreted. The disciples, and only the disciples, were given special powers to heal and only on this trip. Some Christians today feel that they also were given these powers to heal, but this is not true. Our only power is to pray for people and ask God to heal. Also note verse 8 says

they are to not charge any money. We Christians should never charge money to pray and serve other people.

B. There are three principles for God's workers here.

i. The gospel must be offered without any price. Isaiah 55:1

ii. God's people must support God's ministers. 3 John 1:7-8

iii. God's workers must trust God for their money to live on. 1 Corinthians 9:8-14

13. Matthew 10:16-42 The Christian mission.

A. Verses 16-22 Jesus teaches again that the "health, wealth and prosperity" gospel is wrong. Look how He promises persecution to His followers as they serve Him. This is another lesson for all of us.

i. Be prepared for persecution so that you can stand fast and continue to be faithful to God and continue to do His work. God warns us in 2 Timothy chapter 3:12 to expect persecution.

ii. Verses 19-20 remind us that God the Holy Spirit will always be there to help you. See also Acts 1:8 where Jesus promises again the Holy Spirit to help us. He will give you strength to do whatever God wants you to do.

B. Verse 23 is one of the most difficult verses to understand in the Bible. There are several verses in the Bible that we don't really understand. These verses don't teach any doctrines and our not understanding them doesn't hurt our understanding the Bible. One thought about this verse is that it might mean that there is so much work for Christians to do that Jesus will come back again before we can finish all the work.

C. The last part of chapter 10 tells us what the Christian worker can expect.

i. We can expect opposition, see verses 24-25, even persecution as 2 Timothy 3:12 says. Satan will resist us with all his strength if we are doing the Lord's work. Just read how much the Apostle Paul suffered as reported in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. Verses 24-25 tell us that we should expect to be persecuted just as Jesus was. We should be encouraged when we are attacked because it is a sign that our work is effective.

iii. We must boldly speak and preach the truth about Jesus without fear. Here are three good reasons to not fear:

1. Verses 26-27 tell us that the truth we are teaching will win in the end.

2. The soul is more important than the body. Verse 28 is good advice. People can only hurt our bodies and not our souls so our suffering on this earth is of little importance. We will soon leave this life behind forever. Christians live for the next life which will last forever. This life only last for a short time. As Christians we don't fear death because death is a door leading us to heaven.

3. Verses 29-31 we should not be afraid of any person because we know God is sovereign and nothing will happen to us unless God allows it for His own glory. God reminds us here that He takes care of the sparrow (small bird) and we are much more important than sparrows so we know He will take care of us. Remember according to Romans 8:28 everything that happens to a Christian is for his own good.

iv. Verses 32-41 be bold in telling people about Jesus and tell everybody you know that you are a follower of Jesus.

v. Verses 34-36 illustrate that the teachings of Jesus are offensive to the non-Christian world. We can expect battles because of this. One of the mistakes many Christians are guilty of is trying to be at peace and get along with everybody. This can't happen because we can't compromise God's rules. For example

God says many things such as abortion, homosexual behavior, premarital sex, etc. are sin. Many people hate us because of this teaching. Remember the unsaved person enjoys his sin.

vi. Verse 42 closes this section by promising spiritual rewards for our faithful service. We Christians work for the kingdom of God because we love Him. Africans teaching Africans is a volunteer effort to bring true Bible teaching and preaching to people. Our ATA teachers teach because they love Jesus and they will receive their payment in heaven.

13. Chapter 11:1-19 Jesus and John the Baptist.

A. It is normal for people to have doubts about Jesus. Even John the Baptist, when he was in prison, had doubts about Jesus. Here are three reasons for John to have doubts:

- i. He was in prison and he was isolated from his followers and friends.
- ii. John was drained emotionally after the strain of denouncing the sins of King Herod. Elijah was also drained emotionally after confronting King Ahab and became depressed. It is common for a person to become depressed after a major confrontation.
- iii. Jesus upset many people because He did not fulfil their expectations of what the Messiah would do. John was like many other people in expecting the Messiah to do certain things but Jesus had His own idea and this was different than what John expected. This made John question if Jesus was really the Messiah.

B. Jesus did not condemn John for his doubts instead He used the Bible in verses four-six to reassure John that He, Jesus, was fulfilling prophecy and that He was the Messiah. The lesson for us it that at times, especially when we are troubled, we will have doubts about Jesus. Jesus does not condemn us for this, and He shows us that to overcome our doubts we should read the promises found in the Bible. In other words reading the Bible will strengthen our faith.

C. Note verses 9-11 Jesus praises and encourages John the Baptist. John was both a prophet and he also fulfilled earlier prophecy from Isaiah. John had the special privilege of pointing out the Messiah which no other prophet did so John was special.

i. Jesus goes on in verse 11 to point out that there was no greater man than John. Jesus then makes the point that the greatest man on earth is less than the least man in heaven. The least person in heaven has a greater position than the greatest person on earth.

D. Chapter 11:12 might better be translated "comes with force" in place of "has suffered violence" or "subjected to violence". The meaning is that the message of the gospel is so strong that it shatters the heart of stone (Ezekiel 11:19) of an unbeliever and changes it into the heart of flesh of the Christian.

E. We can understand what verse 14 is talking about when it mentions Elijah when we look at a couple of other verses.

i. We know that John is not literally Elijah from his words in John 1:21 which say "And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So John clearly denies being Elijah.

ii. Next Luke 1:17 says : "and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." This means that John acted in power like Elijah so Jesus referred to him as Elijah.

iii. Listen to Jesus speaking in Matthew 17:11-13 "He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. 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." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist."

F. Verses 15-19 tell us that some people are so opposed to the message of Jesus that they will not listen no matter who speaks the message. They are determined to not accept the message.

14. Chapter 11:20-30 Unbelief and a wonderful invitation.

A. Jesus is saying that He has shown people who He is by performing miracles and good works, but the people refuse to accept Him for who He is. These people are looking at a terrible future in hell.

Let's look at four facts about judgment:

1. There will be a judgment. Many people don't want to believe this but there will definitely be one.
2. There are degrees of punishment. As it says in this passage the punishment will be worse for Korazin and Bethsaida than for Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. This is because the punishment will be worse for people who were told the truth about Jesus and who refused to accept the truth than the punishment will be for those who were never told the truth. Korazin and Bethsaida were both part of Israel and they had been taught the truth about Jesus while the other towns were from outside Israel so they were never taught the truth about Jesus. The application for each of us is that we have been taught the truth of the gospel and we will not have any excuse at judgement if we are not Christians and we can expect harsh punishment.

3. The worse sin of all is unbelief. This is refusing to repent and believe. The people who won't believe in Jesus are going to spend eternity in Hell.

4. God does not owe salvation to anybody. God freely gives His mercy to those He wants to give it to.

B. Verses 25-27 have two things we need to understand.

i. Verse 25 is not talking about actual physical children but it is talking about people who have the humility of children. These are the people who are humble enough to turn to Jesus and be saved. We must have no pride about our salvation.

ii. Verse 27 teaches that Jesus and God are equal. They are both God along with The Holy Spirit.

C. Chapter 11:28-30 close on a positive note with Jesus giving a wonderful invitation for all people to become His followers. He is talking about removing the heavy burden of sin from people. He tells how following Him is easy and not burdensome like false teaching is. As we learn more about Jesus we will find true relief from the burdens of our lives. It is easier to serve Jesus than to serve idols, and it is good to live as a Christian. We know peace from knowing and serving Jesus as our Lord and master.

i. Isaiah 46 talks about the burden that false gods are to people. We often travel to India which is a country full of false gods. We see the Indian people working very hard trying to make these false gods happy. They have many temples which they build and decorate. They have a festival where they make new gods which they worship and then they throw them away. They keep very busy serving these false gods who can't help them.

15. Chapter 12 is about increasing opposition to Jesus. The Jewish leaders look for ways to be angry with Jesus

A. Verses 1-21 report that opposition increases against Jesus as the Pharisees are angry because Jesus does not obey the rules that the Pharisees added to the Bible's laws. The first issue in verses 1-8 is about proper keeping of the Sabbath.

B. Matthew 12:3-8 makes three points about the Sabbath:

- i. Man is more important than obeying rigid rules.
- ii. The Sabbath is made for man; it is a gift from God.
- iii. Jesus also taught that He is Lord of the Sabbath—Jesus announced that He is divine. In other words, Jesus is boss of the Sabbath, and He makes the rules. This statement really angered the Pharisees.

A Bible commentator by the name of James Boice says about the Sabbath that, "it is to be lived in whatever manner will most honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ." It is for believers only. We should enjoy the Lord's Day; enjoy worship fellowship and family. We need a break from our regular schedule.

C. The Pharisees had added many rules to the Bible which were not proper and made life very difficult. We just studied how Jesus said in chapter 11 verse 30 that the yoke or burden that Jesus placed on His people was light and easy. The Pharisees made rules which were very difficult and often impossible for the people to follow; the Pharisees laid a heavy yoke and burden on the people. Below are some of their rules that apply to the Sabbath as reported by James Boice. These were legalistic rules that were meant to make it appear that the Pharisees were following the letter of the law, but they were really avoiding the spirit of the law. In others words they wanted to make it appear to the world that they were obeying the law, but really they were manipulating the law. Look at the following examples. Some of this is ridiculous and silly.

"The Pharisees had added man's regulations to God's law, reducing a right observance of the Sabbath to the most terrible forms of legalism. Here are some examples.

1. The law said that man was not supposed to travel on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:29). Fair enough! But what constitutes traveling? The Pharisees asked. As an answer, they developed the concept of a Sabbath's day journey, roughly three hundred meters. A man could walk that far on the Sabbath, but if he went farther, it was sin. However, if a rope was tied across the end of a street, the whole street technically became a dwelling place, and in that case a person could go three hundred meters beyond the rope. Or if he deposited some food at a given place on a Friday night, on the next day he could walk to it to eat his meal (thereby technically establishing a new home), then go three hundred meters beyond that. I suppose that if he were clever enough, a determined man could walk halfway across Palestine.

2. The law forbid the carrying of a load (Jeremiah 17:21-27). But what was a load? Was a piece of clothing a load? The Pharisees answered that if it was worn as clothing it was not, but if it was carried it was. So the way to get a jacket from one room to another was obviously to put it on, walk to the second room, and take it off.

3. The law forbade work. The same logic worked this way. A man is out walking. He spits. Is that work? Answer: It depends on what happened to the spit. If it goes into the dirt and makes a slight furrow, then it is plowing, which is work. If it hits a rock, no work is done. Under this system, being a devout Jew seemed to depend in part on where one spit on Saturdays.

A recent visit to Israel by the author of these notes showed that two thousand years later nothing has changed and the Orthodox Jew still manipulates things to make it appear that he is observing the law. Actually he invents rules to do the things he wants. For example:

1. On the Sabbath the Jew says it is illegal to do any work which means in a tall building he can't push an elevator button because this is work. So the elevators are pre-set to stop at each floor so that the person can ride the elevator to his floor without doing any work such as pushing the elevator button. There are many similar rules.

D. Then in verses 9-14 Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath which also makes the Jewish leaders angry. Jesus points out that the Jews would allow the healing of an animal on the Sabbath but here they object to Jesus healing a person.

i. The Bible teaches that man is more important than any animal. In many countries the people have reversed the order of things and they make rules which make animals more important than people. An examples is that in countries where abortions are legal often it is legal to sell the aborted baby parts for medical research. At the same time it is not acceptable to sell parts of dogs and cats.

E. Jesus gives us more ideas about how we are to apply the teaching from the Bible about the Sabbath. We certainly are to eat and do acts of mercy. Jesus says it is about the heart attitude of people and not about external appearance. With the Pharisees, it was all about the external for show. Jesus exposed their phony religion and made them very angry with him.

F. Why do we celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday instead of Saturday?

i. Probably the most important reason is that Jesus rose from the grave on Sunday.

ii. Acts 20:7 indicates that the early church met on the first day of the week.

iii. The early church had many difficulties with Jewish converts trying to make Christianity part of Judaism. Many of these Jewish converts thought that Christians needed to keep the Old Testament Jewish laws. It was important for everyone to understand that Christianity was different; the old covenant was past and there was a new covenant. Worshipping on a different day helped in this. The early church even picked different days than the Jews to fast each week to emphasize that Christianity is different.

G. Verse 14 reports that the Pharisees become so angry about Jesus exposing their hypocrisy that they make plans to kill Him.

H. Next in verses 15-21 Jesus withdrawals from the area to avoid violence because it is not yet time for Him to die as He still has work to do.

i. Matthew now in 12:17 sums up who Jesus is and what His ministry is all about by repeating some of the teaching about the coming Messiah from Isaiah 42. Here it says Jesus would be a gentle ruler. This prophecy from Isaiah shows the kind of Messiah the Bible predicted; yet when Jesus fulfilled this prediction many of the Jews rejected Him. This is because the Jews wanted a Messiah who would be a strong military leader who would free them from Roman rule and establish a strong Jewish country. Many people today reject Jesus as being Lord because they want to do what they think is right and not what the Bible says. We must remember that Jesus is God and whatever he wants to do is the only correct thing to do.

i. Verse 21 tells us that our hope is in Jesus and only in Jesus.

16. Matt. 12:22-37 talks about the unpardonable sin.

A. We read how Jesus healed another demon oppressed man and verse 23 reports how the people started to show signs of believing in Jesus. So verse 24 is an effort by the Pharisees to discredit Jesus.

They said it was by the power of Satan that He performed miracles. In Matthew 9:24 they had earlier accused Jesus of doing miracles by the power of the devil.

B. Now Jesus in verses 25-29 teaches the Pharisees that their statement about using Satan's power is all wrong.

i. First Jesus says that He can't be using Satan's power to free this demon possessed man because Satan would not allow his power to be used to free a man who he already controlled. This would be like a man stealing from himself.

ii. Since it is obviously not by Satan's power that Jesus drives out demons then it must be by God's power that He does this.

iii. The third thing is that since the demons are being driven out of people by the power of God then the kingdom of God has come to you. The kingdom of God has come because Jesus, have brought it to you.

iv. The conclusion of this is that the kingdom has come because I, Jesus, have come, therefore I, Jesus, must be the king, the Messiah.

C. Verse 30 makes a powerful statement that we are either with Jesus or against Him; you can't be neutral. We are either children of God or children of Satan. We either belong to God or we are at war with Him. Romans 5:10 teaches us this when it says: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

i. It is important to remember to remember we can't be close friends or partners with non-Christians. See 2 Corinthians 6:14 where it says, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

ii. Once while teaching a pastor's class. I was teaching about this idea, and I was told that during election time some churches would allow local politicians to preach in return for gifts of money from the politician. I was horrified about this for several reasons. One is that we must only allow qualified Christians to preach in our churches. Also, we must not form close relationships with nonbelievers because they are enemies of Christ.

D. Now Jesus mentions something which frightens many Christians who think they are guilty of this unpardonable sin. Verses 31-32 mention the unforgivable sin which is identified as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What is this sin? Answer--The Holy Spirit is the one who enlightens us to be able to accept the gospel. The unpardonable sin is when a person rejects The Holy Spirit and God allows their heart to harden in this rejection. The person who commits this sin does not worry about it so if you are concerned it is a sign that you have not committed this sin.

i. Another way of looking at this is that it is when you call good, evil and evil, good which is just what the Pharisees did when they called the good work of Jesus evil; when they said His work came from Satan. Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! You can't be saved while you are calling the sin of evil good. You can only be saved if you recognize what is evil and repent from it to be saved. Many people harden their hearts to sin and are eternally condemned because of this unrepentant sin.

E. Chapter 12:33-35 teaches us that our words and our actions prove whether or not we belong to God. We can't expect good to come out of unsaved people, but we expect good things to come from Christians.

F. The final two verses, 36-37, of this section warn all people that judgment will come. See Hebrews 9:27 for confirmation. Here Matthew 12:36-37 tell us that all sin will be judged and a person will be condemned for even the sin of his words; even his thoughts. We see that God is very serious about all sin, and any person who has not become a Christian will be judged and punished in hell forever even for just one sin that has not been forgiven.

17. There are several points for us to look at in verses 38-50.

A. The religious opponents of Jesus ask Him in verse 38 for a sign but Jesus refuses because he had already given them enough signs to convince them that He is God and Jesus knew that no amount of signs would convince them because they had hardened their hearts and refused to believe. This hardening of the heart is the unpardonable sin.

B. Jesus goes on in verses 38-40 to tell them that He will give a sign that will be clearly understood after the death of Jesus, His burial, and His resurrection. The reference to Jonah reminds the people that Jonah was buried three days in the belly of a fish before he came out of the fish and Jesus will be buried in the tomb for three days before He comes out of the tomb.

C. In verses 41-42 Jesus makes the point that the people of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba repented and believed and they will be judging the unbelieving Pharisees and other Jewish religious leaders who refuse to believe.

D. The lesson in verses 43-45 is that if you are not filled with the Holy Spirit you will become filled with an evil spirit. If you spend some time listening to the truth about Jesus and reject Him then you will become more hardened in rejecting Him and you will be worse off than you were before. We Christians must fill ourselves with the things from God such as reading the Bible, praying, serving God, etc.

E. Verses 46-50 teach us that our true family is the family of believers, and we are closer to our fellow Christians than we are to our unsaved relatives such as our mother or daughter or son. Remember our eternal family members are all Christians.

i. Verse 50 makes it clear that it is very important for us to obey Jesus if we want to be part of His family. The Bible teaches us in 2 John 1:6 and other places that obeying Jesus is loving Jesus.

18. Chapter 13 is a series of parables. A parable is a story which has a single meaning. True understanding of a parable requires a right relationship with Jesus. For us to understand a parable look for one central idea.

A. Read 13:1-9 the parable of the sower. Look at verse 18-23 to see the explanation from Jesus. The seed it talks about is the gospel and the soil is the human heart. Three kinds of hearts are described which hear the gospel and in the end they reject Jesus. The last heart hears the gospel and becomes converted to become a Christian. We learn the following:

i. Not all the people who hear the gospel become Christian. You must have an open heart to become a Christian.

ii. We show that we are Christian by displaying fruit which means we will do good works and we will start to live the way Jesus wants us to.

B. In verses 10-17 the disciples ask Jesus why He speaks in parables.

i. In verse 11 Jesus answers why He speaks in parables. He says that the true meaning of these parables remain hidden to unbelievers; the true understanding is only for believers. This is partly because understanding requires much study and prayer.

ii. Verse 17 tells that we Christians are privileged to know the secrets of the Messiah. We read that throughout Old Testament time the prophets and religious students searched for the secrets about the Messiah that are not secrets to us.

C. Next we look at three parables found in verses 24-43. These parables teach that one of the ways Satan fights against Jesus is to bring his own people into the church to harm the church.

i. The first of these parables is found in verses 24-30 and uses the example of weeds being planted among the good crop of wheat. It is impossible to separate the good plants from the weeds without destroying some of the good plants. They will be left together until harvest time when the weeds will be destroyed. Christians are the good plants and non-believers are the weeds.

ii. Jesus explains the first parable in verses 36-43. He says that the field is the church and Satan has planted the enemies of the church in the church to destroy the work of the church. It is not possible to separate all these enemies without hurting the real church members so some of these enemies remain in the church where they keep trying to hurt the work of the church. These enemies will be identified at the time of judgment and thrown into hell.

Jesus is warning us that the enemy will always have nonbelievers mixed with true believers in the church. We must try to search these unbelievers out and send them away. However, we must be very careful to not send away any true believers. This means that we will always still have some nonbelievers left in the church. They will be identified by Jesus at judgment and sent to hell.

iii. Verses 31-33 gives us two parables which people sometimes interpret differently. The gospel message will start with only a few converts but it will spread to be big and like leaven or yeast in bread it will spread throughout the world.

C. The last part of chapter 13 in verses 44-58 has three parables.

i. The story about the treasure and the pearl have similar meanings. The treasure or pearl refers to the gospel and the main lessons are:

1. The men recognized the value of what they had found. They recognized that the gospel is the most valuable thing there is. Many people refuse to recognize the value of the gospel and walk away from it, but King David knew it was most valuable. See Psalm 19:9-10 or Psalm 119:127-128.

Example: We must realize that there is nothing more valuable than the gospel.

2. These men were determined to have the treasure no matter what the cost and they knew it would change their lives. When you become a Christian, you must change.

Example: We realize that we must have the gospel and become born again, it is worth the cost.

3. The men sold everything they had to get the prize. You must give up things you think are valuable to gain the kingdom of God.

Example: Are you willing to change the way you live? Are you willing to give up your favorite sins?

4. The men acquired the prize. They became Christian.

Example: The more they learn About God, the more they will know that they have gained the best thing in the world which is their salvation; their relationship with Jesus.

ii. The next parable is the parable of the net and is found in 13:47-50. This is the second time in chapter 13 that Jesus teaches the same lesson about judgment. See the parable about the burning of the weeds found in verses 24-30. Jesus is teaching us a lesson about how at the end of time Christians will be separated from non-Christians. These non-Christians will be sent to a place of terrible suffering. The suffering will be so bad and there will be no hope of it ever ending. Hell is permanent which causes the hopelessness of those in hell. See Matthew 25:46 and Mark 9:43 & 48 and Luke 16:26.

i. We must understand that both heaven and hell are permanent. Many people and many cults such as the Jehovah Witness believe that they don't have to fear going to hell because it is not real. Some believe that if there is a hell it is not too bad and it is not permanent. Some non-Christians say that they did not know anything before they were born and they will not know anything after they die. They are only fooling themselves and after they die and it is too late, they will experience the truth of the Bible: that **hell is worse than we can imagine and it is permanent.**

19. Chapter 14:1-12 is the story about how John the Baptist was killed. As we study the character of John the Baptist and also King Herod we see the difference between a godly man and a worldly man who lives only for himself.

A. First we look at the character of John.

i. John was a righteous man and according to Mark 6:20 King Herod knew this. Because of his righteousness. Herod even feared John according to verse 2.

ii. John spoke out against bad things even to the king. Often people speak out against bad things to their friends, but when they get the opportunity to speak to someone in authority like the president they become silent. Christians must be bold to tell the truth.

iii. John was a brave man. John knew it was dangerous to speak the truth about the king, but he still did it because it was the right thing to do. All Christians need to speak the truth even if like John we are killed for speaking the truth.

B. Next we look at King Herod. Herod was wicked. He seduced his brother's wife and he married her. When he was drunk he had John killed.

20. Chapter 14 tells how Jesus feeds the 5,000 in verses 13-21. The story tells how Jesus tried to withdraw and have some time alone to grieve over the death of His friend John. We must always remember that Jesus was fully human as well as being fully God.

A. He wanted to be alone but the crowds followed Him and we read in verse 14 that Jesus had compassion on the people so He ministered to them by healing their sick and feeding them.

B. The feeding of the 5,000 men was a different kind of miracle then we have seen Jesus previously perform. This time instead of healing people He provides food for at least 10,000 people counting women and children.

i. Jesus continues to show His great compassion for people. At this time Jesus wanted to be alone with His disciples but because of His compassion for the people He healed and fed them. Compassion for other people is a mark of a person being a true Christian. Our compassion for people makes us love them so much that we help them when they need help. Christian charity is caused by compassion which is love strong enough for action.

ii. One of the lessons about feeding the people is that we can do nothing in our own strength. We must rely on God to provide the strength for us to do good works for the kingdom. Many Bible stories prove this, for example, the story of David and Goliath found in 1 Samuel chapter 17 is one of these stories. We can't defeat the enemy in our own power: we need God's help.

iii. We also learn here that God is sufficient and we need no other helper. We rely on God alone.

iv. We also learn that God works through people. He used the food provided by the people and his disciples to distribute it to feed all the people. God does not need any help from His people to do

anything, but He blesses us by using us. It is our duty to be faithful and do the work God has provided for us using His strength.

21. The next teaching is found in verses 22-36 and is a lesson about faith. Peter shows great faith when he walks on the water but then his faith falters and doubts set in which cause him to start to sink. Often people start to start to do something requiring faith and then their faith weakens. We must persist in doing whatever God is leading us to do and we must rely on God to help us when difficulties arise.

A. God often allows difficulties to come into our lives because troubles teach us to more completely trust Him. We often do things without even thinking about God until we have trouble and only then do we seek His help. We should ask God's help first before we do something.

22. Chapter 15 There are two main teaching conversations in chapter 15:1-20. The first is between Jesus and the Pharisees; the second was between Jesus and the crowds of people, and the third one was a private conversation between Jesus and His disciples.

A. Jesus criticized the Pharisees because they broke God's laws so that they could obey their manmade traditions. We see this in verses 1-5 where the Pharisee attack Jesus because the disciples did not ceremonially wash their hands. Their hands were physically clean but they did not follow the Pharisee's rules to ceremonially clean them. The Pharisees lied to make up many rules for religion which placed heavy burdens on the people.

i. The Pharisees were more concerned about outward appearances than the heart of people.

ii. The Pharisees thought it was more important to obey their manmade rules than to obey God's rules. For example, Jesus tells how they disobey God's rule to honor our father and mother.

iii. Jesus next in verses 7-10 teaches the Pharisees about improper worship which continues to be a problem today. Many people go to church and they appear to be worshipping but their hearts are far from God. We must worship God in spirit and truth with true hearts. This is the kind of worship God wants. Amos 5:21 tells us that God hates worship which is just for showing people how religious you are.

ii. God will weed out those who teach and practice false worship. These ones will not go to heaven see verses 12-14.

B. Next Jesus teaches the crowds how their inner cleanliness is more important than their outer cleanliness. Verse 11 teaches the Pharisees that it is more important to have clean hearts than clean hands.

C. The disciples came to Jesus to complain about what the Pharisees said. Jesus gave them some answers to the Pharisee's words.

i. Jesus says that the words of the Pharisees were proof that they were not God's people and they were totally outside the kingdom. This is what Jesus is saying in verses 13-14.

ii. Now in verses 17-20 Jesus tells His disciples the same thing He had told the Pharisees earlier. Dirty hands will not condemn a person but a dirty (sinful) heart will.

23. Chapter 15:21-39 has a story about the strong faith of a gentile woman and the story of feeding 4,000.

A. Jesus goes to Tyre which is the only time He left Israel and there He finds a Canaanite woman who had strong faith in Jesus. She ask Jesus to heal her daughter which He at first refuses to do. We can only guess why Jesus refused to help the woman. Jesus said in verse 24 that at that time He had only come to the Jews. Jesus used this story to teach a few lessons about faith.

i. Our faith is to be in Jesus alone. In verses 22, 25, and 27 the Canaanite woman calls Jesus “Lord” and “Son of David”.

ii. She appealed to Jesus solely on the basis of His mercy. She did not claim that Jesus owed her anything. We must appeal to Jesus to save us by His mercy, and we must acknowledge that God does not owe us salvation. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9.

iii. We must be persistent in our prayers. Verses 23, 25, 27 show her persistence. Luke 18:1-8 is another story demonstrating the value of persistent prayer.

B. Jesus uses both stories in this section to indicate that salvation would also be for gentiles in addition to the Jews. Verses 29-39 tell the story of Jesus feeding 4,000 men and the same story is told in Mark 7 where the area is identified as an area mostly occupied by gentiles. So probably those 4,000 who were fed were mostly gentiles.

C. Jesus is sending a message that salvation is also going to be for the gentiles.

24. Chapter 16 Verses 1-4 report about a meeting between Jesus and the Pharisees and the Sadducees who were His main enemies. It is interesting that the Pharisees and Sadducees united to fight Jesus because they were bitter enemies who sometimes even killed each other. They hated Jesus so much that they worked together to stop Jesus’s ministry. We see this hatred of Christianity today as the attacks by the enemies upon Christians is fierce. Even enemies such as the Pharisees and Sadducees unite to attack us.

A. The Pharisees were more interested in making their own rules than in obeying God. They put on a show of being religious but their hearts were cold to God. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection which meant they did not believe in heaven or hell.

B. Jesus knows that His enemies will not believe any signs from heaven so He refuse to give them more signs. He tells them that they are more interested in understanding signs about coming weather than about understanding signs that will lead them to heaven. A lesson for us is that often enemies of God will keep asking us to explain verses, but they are just asking us about difficult verse to argue with us. They ask these questions to trap us and not to understand the Bible. The lesson, from Jesus, is that when we meet people like this we should move on and find someone else to share the Bible with. Deuteronomy 29:29 and Isaiah 55:8-9 teach us that we are not going to understand everything in the Bible. The really important things such as salvation is by faith and not by works is easy to understand.

25. Verses 5-12 demonstrate that the disciples still did not understand what Jesus was trying to teach them.

A. The first thing was that they were worried about food. They seemed to forget the two times Jesus fed thousands of people.

B. They also failed to understand that His teaching when he warned about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He was warning about their false teaching which was just like yeast in bread; a small amount of bad yeast can ruin the whole loaf of bread. . He was warning them to stay away from all their false teaching because a little false teaching can do a lot of damage. We must do the same.26. Jesus continues to work with His disciples in verses 13-28.

A. He ask a very important question.

i. First he ask the disciples who the people think He is, and verse 14 shows that the people don’t recognize Him as the Messiah even though they had witnessed His many miracles.

ii. Next Jesus ask the disciples who they think He is and, of course, it is Peter who is brave enough to give an answer. The answer shows that Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah and that Jesus is God. He very strongly stats that Jesus is not just a man but that Jesus is also God.

iii. Verse 17 tells us that this answer came from God to Peter. We must believe that Jesus is God in order to be saved and go to Heaven see Romans 10:9-13. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to believe in Jesus.

B. Next in verse 18 Jesus says some things that many Christians do not really understand. Jesus is saying that He, Jesus, is the rock the church will be built on.

i. The Roman Catholic Church understands this verse to say that Jesus is saying that Peter is the rock on which the church will be built and that the popes are the successors of Peter. This is wrong; Jesus is the rock that the church is built on. God would not build His church on something as unreliable as a sinful human being such as Peter. Peter himself never calls himself the rock on which the church is to be built. Peter in Acts 4:8-12 says that Jesus is the cornerstone on which the church is built on. Peter also says the same thing in 1 Peter 2:4-8.

ii. The Old Testament also says that Jesus is the rock. Isaiah 29:16; Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 all talk about the coming Messiah as being the rock the church will be built on. So Jesus clearly is the rock talked about here in Matthew 16.

C. Matthew 16:18 is an encouraging verse for the church. Jesus tells Peter that because the church is built on the solid foundation of Jesus that the enemy, Satan, will lose the war with the church, and the church will win.

D. In verse 19 the keys open the doors to the kingdom of heaven to the world's people. It is possible that Peter is mentioned here because Peter was the first to open the doors of the gospel to all the world. This is reported in Acts 10:34-35.

E. Verses 20 instructs the disciples to keep it secret that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus knew that if the people knew he was the long awaited Messiah they would try to make Jesus be the kind of Messiah they wanted. This would have hindered the work of Jesus. Today there is no reason to keep secret that Jesus is our savior. Today, we Christians must tell everyone about Jesus.

F. We see in verses 21-23 that Jesus begins to prepare His disciples for His coming death. Note Peter's response and then what Jesus says to Peter's comment. The death of Jesus on the cross was God's perfect plan to defeat Satan and redeem us. To oppose this would be to oppose God. Remember that God is always in control. Peter had just finished acknowledging that Jesus was God and then he tells Jesus that God's plan is not to be. We must always obey God's plans, because they are perfect plans.

G. Chapter 16 verses 24-27 we again see this idea that we must be prepared to suffer and be willing to pay a big price to follow Jesus. As the parable we studied in chapter 13:44-46 says, we must be ready to sacrifice everything, including our lives, for the sake of the kingdom. Read the following true story which happened recently in the United States. This story is about a seventeen year old, former Muslim girl, who was murdered because she became a Christian. At first her family tried to convince her to return to Islam, then they tortured her, and she ran away. She was staying with family when she was killed probably by family members. This girl understood that often there is a price to pay for following Jesus, and she willingly paid it.

i. We may not have to sacrifice our lives to pick up our cross and follow Jesus, but we are expected to serve Jesus and give of our possessions to His work and to further the kingdom work. We must be willing to sacrifice our lives if necessary.

ii. Many people put all their energy into building a comfortable life here on earth. Verses 25-27 teach that all our energy should be put into preparing for the next life. Remember the lesson from Matthew 6 about storing up treasures in heaven where they last forever.

H. Verse 28 is a verse that is not clearly understood now and there are many different ideas. It is possible that the original audience that heard this message knew what He was talking about. One idea that I like is the idea that Jesus is referring to the transfiguration which is mentioned in the very next chapter.

21. Chapter 17:1-13 reports what we call the transfiguration of Jesus. This was also reported in Mark and Luke, and referred to in 2 Peter 1:16-18. The transfiguration was a revelation of Jesus' deity. The transformation in the appearance of Jesus was a momentary transition or temporary change from the hiding of His divine glory that marked His days on earth to the manifestation or showing of His glory that will be revealed when He returns. God in the transfiguration is confirming who Jesus is; He is God, and for a brief moment He showed His glory. In other words, Jesus while on earth did not show people His full glory as God except at this time of transfiguration.

A. God's statement in verse 5 confirms what Peter had said in chapter 16:16 when he said that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

B. The transfiguration of Jesus showed the three disciples and us the glory of Jesus and that He is God. The transfiguration serves to strengthen and encourage us by giving us a brief picture of the true glory of our God.

22. Chapter 17:14-23 contains two teachings about the failings of the disciples.

A. Verses 14-23 tells us about the failure of the disciples to drive demons out of a man's son. Jesus tells them it is because their faith is deficient. Their faith was not effective. To be effective faith must be a true, close and continuing relationship with God. Effective faith only comes when we really know and trust our God. This requires us to study the Bible and spend a lot of time with God in prayer.

i. Newer and more accurate Bible translations do not have Matthew 17:21, and Mark 9:29 does not mention fasting. Some older translations have Matthew 17:21 and mention fasting in verse 9 of Mark 26. There was a time in church history when many leaders were very strong supporters of fasting and it is felt church leaders put fasting into these two verses to build support for their ideas about fasting. The oldest Greek copies of the Bible do not mention fasting in these two verses.

B. The second failure of the disciples is found in verses 22 and 23 it is their failure to understand and to accept that it was God's plan that Jesus must be killed. We must learn to trust God enough to trust Him in everything. We do this by spending time in prayer and Bible study. Remember what Romans 8:28 says.

23. Verses 24-27 is a lesson about how Jesus submits to the temple tax so that He avoids offending people.

A. The tax being collected was the temple tax and since Jesus was the Son of God He was not required to pay the tax.

B. Jesus paid the tax to avoid offending other people. Paul later taught in 1 Corinthians 8:7-13 that the mature Christian will give up his rights to something to help his weaker and less mature brother keep from stumbling.

i. An example would be to give up eating beef when you are eating a meal with a person who is or who used to be a Hindu. You as a Christian are allowed to eat beef but a Hindu regards a cow as being a god and he would be offended if you ate beef in front of him. Even a recent convert to Christianity might be uncomfortable if he witnessed you eating beef. So it would be best if you gave up your right to eat beef.

ii. Another example is in the drinking of alcoholic beverages. A person may feel he has the right to drink alcohol but he will abstain so as not to offend his brother. Alcoholism is a terrible problem in our society and we don't want to spread the problem by encouraging someone to drink.

II. The Triumph of the King Matthew 18-28

1. Chapter 18 starts out in verses 1-10 with a misunderstanding among the disciples about the mission of Jesus and their place in the kingdom of God. The disciples show they really don't understand what Christianity is all about. They do not yet understand that Jesus was not going to make Israel a strong, independent nation with Jesus as its king. They failed to understand that Jesus was calling them to a spiritual kingdom, in heaven, where the greatest one is God alone.

A. Jesus is saying, when He talks about becoming like a child, verse 3, that our attitude must be humble, verse 4, like a child is humble. The question the disciples ask him show that they lack humility. Being humble is a mark of a true Christian. We Christians have nothing to be proud about. We deserve God's wrath and hell; we have not earned the right to be a Christian. Remember that The Bible teaches that our salvation is a free gift from God. Ephesians 2:8-9. Jesus is saying that instead of focusing on who is to be the most important person, they should concentrate on helping God's people.

B. In verses 6-7 Jesus is saying that it is a terrible sin to cause other Christians to sin. This is related to the lesson in the last chapter about being a stumbling block to another person when it comes to the food we eat or drinking alcohol. There are many other ways we can tempt a person to sin.

i. An example of causing another person to sin is if you encourage a person to have sex with you when you are not married to the person.

ii. We are guilty of terrible sin any time we encourage another person to sin.

C. In verse 7 Jesus is now opening up the idea of causing weaker Christians to sin to include all people; as it says to the world. The idea is that the world is full of temptation, but we Christians are to help unsaved people to become Christians; not to tempt them to sin. Our actions can cause people to not want to become Christians and this would be terrible. We, Christians, must be good examples.

i. People who wish to be great must show this by loving and caring for the weak person and never look down at a weaker brother.

D. Verses 8-9 repeats the idea we studied in chapter 5:29-30 that we must avoid all temptation to sin. We must know the areas where we are weak and might sin, and we plan to avoid these temptations. This means that if we are tempted by alcohol that we would not walk close to a business selling alcoholic drinks. If we are young we would avoid being alone with a person of the opposite sex to avoid sexual sin.

i. The best way to avoid sinning is to love God so much that we always want to please Him. This love makes us hate our sin so much that that avoiding sin becomes easier.

ii. Another way to avoid sin is to plan ahead to avoid temptation.

E. Verse 10 talks about the weaker Christian who is referred to here as the “little one.” The idea is that God cares for the weaker Christian and we should take care of children, and not worry about being important.

2. The next section is a parable about the lost sheep and is found in verses 11-14. Remember a parable is a story about a real life event which teaches a spiritual truth. Look for one spiritual point in each parable although on rare occasions there may be another point. The following story demonstrates that the love of God is a very powerful and permanent love.

A. The main point of this parable compares God to the shepherd who takes good care of his flock of sheep. There are several important lessons about God in the parable:

i. God cares for each one of His people. He knows each one of us and every believer is very important to Him. God has no favorite Christian; He loves each one of us equally. He does not love pastors more than other Christians and each Christian’s prayers are equally important to Him whether from a pastor or another believer.

ii. God understands our weaknesses because He made us according to Psalm 100:3. He knows we are not perfect.

iii. God seeks us out when we stray from Him. Just as He did in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:8-9, He comes after us when we wander away from Him. He will not allow any Christian’s relationship with Him to die.

iv. God grieves when we turn away from Him and He rejoices when we repent and return to Him. This is the point of the story of the prodigal son as reported in Luke 15:11-32. The father grieved because his son had left him and he greatly rejoiced when the son returned. When we return to God, He welcomes us just as if we had never strayed away. We don’t lose any of His love.

v. God will not allow any Christian to be lost which He tells us in Matthew 18:14. As a Christian we are secure in our relationship with Him. Jesus repeats this again in John 10:27-29. We must remember that each Christian is very important to God.

3. Lessons about forgiving from Matthew 18:15-35.

A. The first lesson as found in verses 15-17 teaches about church discipline and disputes among fellow believers. A mark of a true church is that they faithfully and biblically exercise church discipline as needed. The failure to properly exercise church discipline can completely stop the ministry of the church. The goal of church discipline is always restoration of relationships among church members and also restoration of someone engaged in sin to the church. Remember Christianity is all about restoring our relationship with God.

B. There are three steps to this procedure.

i. Verse 15 tells us to go and talk with the individual who sinned. The goal is that the individuals work out the problem with each other and become reconciled.

ii. Verse 16 tells that if the two can’t reconcile their differences together then they should meet with one or two fellow brothers to see if the brothers can help reconciliation.

iii. The next step found in verses 17-says that if the complaint is not resolved then it must be taken to the church. Different churches are organized differently, but the principle is to go to the authority in the church that is in charge of discipline. If the parties involved will not submit to the authority of the church then the guilty party is to be treated as if he is not a Christian brother.

iv. Many times the offended person decides the problem is small enough that it can be ignored and forgotten. 1 Peter 4:8 tells us that love can cover many problems.

C. Verses 18-20 say that Jesus authorizes the church to discipline its people. Verse 20 is saying that Jesus is present with the church as it disciplines people and Christians should be encouraged to know that Jesus is always with His people when they meet.

i. In verse 20 Jesus is again saying that He is God; after all only God can be in more than one place at a time. Satan can't be in more than one place at the same time.

D. The next parable explains that the discipline process we have just talked about is meant to restore relations and it is not meant for punishment. Jesus sets the stage for this parable by saying in verse 21-22 that our attitude is to always be one of forgiveness and restoration.

i. The parable, verses 23-35, is easy to understand it is all about forgiveness. Jesus is saying that Christianity is all about forgiveness. Jesus is not saying in verse 35 that our refusal to forgive will cause us to lose our salvation, but He is saying that Christians forgive and it is a necessary mark of a Christian.

4. Matthew 19:1-12 teaches us much about marriage; about divorce and there is much disagreement about the meaning of verse nine.

A. One thing there is no disagreement about is that God hates divorce. Malachi 2:10-17 teaches about how God hates divorce; we see this especially in verse 16. Jesus is using scripture from Genesis in Matthew 19:4-6 to command that people must not get divorced. Jesus is saying that God made two people into one person when they married and these people are not to separate what God made into one. We learn that God ordained marriage and He is part of a Christian's marriage.

i. Christians are to honor God in everything they do so they must work out their differences and they must stay married to each other. My wife told me when we married that the word divorce does not exist for us because we are Christian.

ii. We can apply the lesson from the last chapter about forgiving to understand that a husband and wife must forgive each other and reconcile. If we are determined to honor God we will stay married and follow the instructions found in Ephesians 5:22-33.

B. Most Bible scholars agree that verse nine means that it is permissible for a person to divorce his spouse and remarry if his or her spouse commits adultery or fornication. Neither divorce nor remarriage is commanded, but is allowed.

C. Divorce affects many innocent people especially children. We must deal tenderly with people affected by divorce. There is always a lot of pain in a divorce. We, the church, must reach out in love to those involved in a divorce.

D. Chapter 19:10 is interesting because it tells that the disciples think the teaching of Jesus is too hard so they suggest that one should not get married. They still don't understand the teaching of Jesus.

5. Chapter 19:13-15 talks about little children and a young man.

A. Jesus repeats earlier teaching from Matthew 18 about children. Again the idea is that the proper attitude is that we Christians must have humble hearts just like little children.

i. Jesus shows that it is important to spend time with children. He doesn't just tell us to spend time with children; He spends time Himself. We must remember to teach our children about Jesus from the time they are born. These children are tomorrow's church. Christians must teach their children about Jesus or the world will lead children away from God.

B. The next thing we learn is found in verses 16-24. We see a man interested in being saved and he comes to Jesus to talk about this. He tells Jesus all about how he does good things and Jesus then tells the young man that he must do one more thing. The young man refuses to do this and so he leaves Jesus and goes away still lost to the kingdom.

i. The lesson here is that we must willingly give up everything to follow Jesus and be saved. The young man was not willing to do this. He picked hell over heaven. God must be first in everything in our lives.

ii. Jesus's comment about it being very difficult for a rich man to be saved points out that worldly things such as possessions can become the most important thing in the world to a person, and this prevents the wealthy person from going to heaven. To be a Christian a person must make Jesus the most important thing in his life, and live for Jesus all the time.

C. In verses 25-26 the disciples listening to the statement about rich men being saved are concerned about how anyone can be saved. The answer is that our salvation is only possible through the actions of God; by God's grace alone.

D. The last section of chapter 19 verses 27-30 has several thoughts about the rewards for following Jesus. Peter is concerned about his reward for following Jesus. In verses 28-29 Jesus tells him that he has nothing to worry about because Jesus has wonderful things planned for all of us in heaven. Verse 30 makes the point that Jesus will decide who is first in the kingdom and many who think they are the top people will find Jesus does not agree with this. Nobody in heaven will worry about their position; we will all be satisfied just to be with God.

6. Chapter 20:1-16 teaches again the last lesson that Jesus is in charge of rewards. It is His sovereign choice who He wants to reward based on His perfect will. We need to trust Him to do what is correct for us and be satisfied.

7. Chapter 20:17-34 Jesus is moving toward Jerusalem to be crucified.

A. In verses 17-19 Jesus makes the prediction for the third time of his coming death. He knows that He must suffer terribly by being crucified. He also mentions that He will be raised on the third day which they totally do not understand.

B. In verse 20-24 just after Jesus makes this prediction of His coming horrible death; the disciples again show that they don't yet understand things; they are so insensitive to others. They are so focused on their selfish desires that they don't even appear to understand what Jesus just told them about being killed by crucifixion. We must be careful to be sensitive to what people around us are experiencing. We must also realize that we are to be content to serve God and concentrate on lifting Jesus up and not ourselves. Christianity is all about Jesus and not ourselves.

i. In verse 23 the disciples learn that they will also suffer, and history records that they did. Many Christians have been persecuted both in past times and also in our time. 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us to be prepared to be persecuted.

C. The next section of Matthew 20:25-28 again teaches this idea that we Christians are to be humble and to serve in humility.

i. Verse 28 is one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible where Jesus says that He came to serve and not to be served. He proves this by washing the feet of His disciples. John 13:5 reports this fact that God, Himself, washed His disciple's feet. We must be as humble as Jesus showed us He was.

ii. We must think about this for a few moments. The Bible is telling us that God came to serve lowly human beings. This should teach church leaders such as pastors and Bible teachers that they are to be humble and serve their people in humility.

D. The last thing, we see in chapter 20:29-34, is Jesus giving sight to two blind men. He does this to prove that He is God and also because He has mercy on these two men. Today we can also make application to the spiritual condition of people from this story. We are all spiritually blind and we must cry out to Jesus to give us spiritual sight to see the truth about Jesus. Verse 31 reports that people will try to prevent us from coming to Jesus for help. We must be like the blind men and ignore these people. We cry must cry out to Jesus to have mercy on us and ask Jesus to allow us to see the truth about Him. We need to see that Jesus is God and our salvation is only through our faith in Him.

8. Chapter 21:1-11 reports the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem where the people greeted Him as a hero on Sunday and several days later the same people demanded His cruel execution on a cross. This event occurred on Psalm Sunday and is the beginning of what is called Passion Week. Passion means the suffering of Jesus. The events of this week are so important that Matthew devotes one fourth of his book to reporting the events of this week.

A. The arrival of Jesus riding on a donkey was the fulfillment of prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. Everything that happened this week was planned in advance by God; He was not caught by surprise. This was the completion of God's plan to save His people from their sins and everything that happened was necessary.

B. The use of a donkey instead of a horse signified that Jesus was coming as a gentle king. The Bible reports in Isaiah 63:1-6 and again in Revelation 19:11-13 that when Jesus next returns to earth He will come as a mighty king angrily attacking His enemies. Remember that you are either a Christian or an enemy of Jesus.

C. There is a lesson here in human nature. People can't be trusted to remain faithful and trustworthy, but God does. Malachi 3:6 tells us that only God remains the same and will never change. We can put all our trust into God but not man.

9. Jesus next cleans the temple again in chapter 21:12-17. John 2:14-15 reported that at the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus had cleaned the temple. Jesus was not acting as a janitor and doing housecleaning of the temple; rather He was cleaning out the corrupt merchants. People were required to bring unblemished animals to the temple to offer as a sacrifice. If they brought their own animals for sacrifice then the priest would reject their animal which forced the person to buy an acceptable animal from the priest at a very high price.

A. The people also had to pay their annual temple tax and the money had to be of a certain type. The priest charged a very high fee to change the money.

B. What Jesus did was to clean out the corrupt business out of the temple. After all the temple was to be a house of prayer see Isaiah 56:7, and not a business place where people were cheated see Jeremiah 7:11.

C. Jesus does give us two more duties of the temple or a modern church.

i. Verse 14 teaches that the temple or church is a place where the needy are cared for. It is to be a welcoming place or all people both rich and poor and black and white. As Christians we are all one family.

ii. Verses 15-16 make the point that the temple or church is a place where God is to be worshipped and praised by people with the humble hearts of children.

10. We next learn in verses 18-22 how Jesus has no love for religion which does not produce fruit. He causes the fig tree to die because the fig tree did not produce fruit and our practice of religion is worthless and dead if it doesn't produce spiritual fruit. The religious leaders thought what

counted was the public observance of religion. Their religion was all for show and did not come from the heart. Christians are to produce the fruit of good works or we are spiritually dead. Read James 2:14-18. The lesson is that we are saved by faith alone and not by works as Ephesians 2:8-10 says, but the Bible clearly teaches us that if we are saved then we will do good works. Otherwise we are spiritually dead like the fig tree.

A. In verses 21-22 Jesus teaches a lesson about prayer. He is saying there is power in real prayer but not in the false religion the Pharisees followed. Often the prayer of a faithful person can make things happen that seem impossible. For example, late in 2013, I had cancer that could not be treated by doctors and they told me I was soon going to die. However, God answered the prayers of many Christians and God healed me. Today two years later I have no cancer in my body.

11. In verses 23-32 the enemies of God attack the good things Jesus is doing by ignoring His good teachings and instead they attack Him by questioning His authority for doing good deeds. The enemies of God are more concerned with protecting their institution than doing good Kingdom work. We see three lessons in this passage

A. First we see that the enemies of the church don't care about the Lord's work. An example of this is when Africans Teaching Africans asked one of the major denominations in Uganda to join our work; the denomination refused to work with us because we refused to make our ministry strictly a denominational work of their denomination. We explained that ATA was a ministry designed to advance the entire kingdom of God, but this denomination was more interested in advancing their own kingdom than helping advance God's kingdom.

B. The second thing we see is how Jesus avoids the trap of the question which had been designed to allow the religious leaders to attack Him when He answered. They thought that whatever Jesus answered would leave Him open to attack. So Jesus asked His enemies a question which He knew they could not answer. He knew that they did not dare deny that John the Baptist was from God because all the people knew that John was from God. If they admitted that John was from God they acknowledged that Jesus was God because this was the message of John.

C. The last lesson of this section in verses 28-31 is a parable about two sons. It is the lesson that often Jesus allows us time to repent. The first son refused to work but after thinking about his decision he went and did the father's work. Many sinners refuse the Lord's call to repent at first, but later after thinking about it we do accept the Lord's call to repent. 1 John 1:9 tells us that God is faithful and just to forgive all our sins when we repent. We must not wait too long to repent because Jesus can take away His offer of salvation at any time.

12. Chapter 21:33-46 closes with Jesus telling a parable which talks about planting and caring for a vineyard; we know from Isaiah 5:1-7 that the vineyard is Israel. In the case of Israel God planted the nation and cared for it and he expected a harvest of faithfulness and obedience which He didn't get. Today this parable applies to the church. God has planted His church and given it the gospel and God expects the Christians to be faithful and obey Him by spreading the gospel. Often the church puts other things ahead of Jesus and does not obey Him.

A. God's patience with sin eventually comes to an end. Forty years after Jesus was killed the city of Jerusalem including the temple was destroyed. Many Jews were killed and the surviving Jews were scattered all over the earth. What punishment does God have for His church which disobeys Him? God has richly blessed America and yet most of the people have turned their backs on Him; what will He do?

13. Chapter 22:1-14 contains the parable of the wedding feast. The parable has two parts.

A. Verses 1-7 talks about the refusal of the invited guest to come to the wedding feast for the king's son. The king in this story is God and the son is Jesus. The feast they are invited to is the marriage supper of the lamb. The servants are the teachers who brought the message of the

gospel to the people. The story says that God sent messengers to convert the Jews, but the Jews rejected these messengers and abused and even killed them. The Jewish leaders strongly rejected Jesus and salvation so the gospel was then given to the poor people and the gentiles who came to be saved.

B. The second half of the parable is found in verses 8-14 and talks about these people who did come to the feast. The people who did come to Jesus (Christians) brought much honor to Jesus because:

- i. These guest were more grateful than the first would have been. The guest who came were not used to such favor and they appreciated it very much.
- ii. The guest who came expressed their joy much more than the first ones would have done. They were nosier about their joy and spread it to others.
- iii. The salvation offered by Jesus became more famous because of these particular guest.

C. This parable also tells us that only those people who are properly dressed will be allowed to stay in the party. To be allowed to stay in the party, a person must be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. Only Christians are covered in the righteousness of Jesus and allowed to stay in heaven.

14. Chapter 22:15-40 reports that the differences between Jesus and the religious leaders is no longer a secret and the religious leaders ask Jesus three questions so that they can trap Him into breaking the law or discredit Him with the people.

A. The first question is about paying taxes and is really about the authority of the Roman government. The question was designed to get Jesus arrested by the government or to lose support of the people depending on the answer. The answer Jesus gave teaches Christians that they are to obey their lawful government as long as the government does not try to force its citizens to break God's laws. In other words all earthly governments are subject to God's laws first. We are to pay all our taxes, obey traffic laws and to be very good citizens. However if the government tries to make us disobey God's laws then we must disobey the government; see Acts 5:29. Examples of this are in some western countries where preachers are no longer allowed to preach against homosexual behavior or where Christians are forced to help homosexuals get married. They must preach the truths of the Bible even if the government forbids the Bible.

B. The second question is reported about in verses 23-33 and was asked by the Sadducees. This was about the resurrection which is interesting because the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Act 28:8 reports that they also did not believe in angels or any spirits.

i. The marriage question was not important although we do learn a little more about what heaven is going to be like. We learn that relationships will be different and there will be no marriages in heaven. We will be with God and so we will not need a helper or companion anymore.

ii. The question from the Sadducees was designed to trap Jesus into saying that the idea of a resurrection is false. Jesus answers by quoting Exodus 3:6 where God says, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." By saying "I am" instead of "I used" to be the God of these three men, God is saying they are still alive. Jesus adds the words that God is the God of the living and not the dead to explain this to the Sadducees. Humans are eternal and the resurrection is true.

iii. Tricking people into believing that there is no resurrection and that everything ends at death is a major weapon that Satan uses to trick people into ignoring God's plan of salvation. Before I became a Christian I used to believe that I didn't know anything before I was born so I won't know anything after I die. This belief allowed me to remain a non-believer and I was headed for hell. Fortunately God showed me the truth that we will live forever either in heaven or hell, and I became a Christian. Revelation 20:7-15 teaches that there is an eternal destination for everyone. The non-Christian will be tormented forever.

C. Verses 35-40 discusses that the third question which was designed to trap Jesus was a good, valid question but verse 35 reveals that the questioner had a bad motive; he asked the question to trick Jesus. We should study Jesus answer for a few minutes to learn how we should obey the two commandments Jesus talks about.

i. First Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This command to love God with everything we are and have is easy to understand but difficult to follow. Numerous times Jesus tells people to follow Him. To be a Christian we must be willing to live for Jesus alone and not for ourselves. He must become the most important thing in our lives. We must obey Him in everything we do. The way we love God is to obey Him. The Bible shows we are loving God when we obey Him. See John 3:36, Luke 6:46, 1 John 2:3-4

15. Chapter 22:41-46 has one more lesson only this time Jesus is the one asking the question. The question shows that the Pharisees don't really understand the scriptures and they don't understand much about the coming Messiah or The Christ.

A. Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 to show that the Messiah would be superior to David. King David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to call the Messiah Lord. In verse 44, the original Hebrew words make it clear that God the Father is talking to Jesus and not David. Verse 45 makes it clear that King David as inspired by the Holy Spirit acknowledged that he (David) was not the superior of Jesus. Jesus was the superior and He was in existence before David so the Messiah is not under David.

16. Chapter 23 is a chapter where Jesus publicly and strongly teaches about the wrongs of the Pharisees and other religious leaders. This is a strong attack on the errors of the religious leaders of the day. Jesus has the most loving heart of anybody but He still corrected the teachers who misled the people. We must today stop the pastors and church leaders who are not correctly teaching their people the truths of the Bible.

A. Verses 1-12 teach us that we must establish and enforce standards for our religious leaders, and it teaches us what these standards are.

B The statement of occupying Moses seat in verse 2 tells us that these religious leaders wanted to be the teachers. The Moses seat was the name of the seat in the synagogue where the teacher sat. They wanted to be religious leaders and they knew the scriptures and they strictly followed their own interpretation of them. Their problem was that while they knew the scriptures, they hadn't been changed inwardly by God. They wore their religion outwardly to tell the world what good godly men they were, but inwardly they were cold to God and their fellow men. This is like the person who tries to tell and show the world what a good Christian leader he is, but actually he has never been born again.

C. What did the religious leader do wrong?

i. Verse 3 condemns the teachers because they were hypocritical. They did not themselves do what they told the people to do. Their practice was to tell the people to do something and then the religious leaders did something different. We leaders must set a good example and we must do the things we tell others to do.

ii. The religious leaders were indifferent to the people. Verse four says their rules made life very difficult for the people who had to try to follow these burdensome rules. They didn't care that their rules made life difficult for the people. Matthew 11:29-30 teaches us that the burdens from Jesus are easy.

iii. Verse 5-10 tells that the next thing wrong was that the religious leaders were very proud and did things to show people what good, godly men they were. They wanted to always be in the place of honor.

iv. Verse 8-10 is telling religious teachers that Christ is the real teacher and that men should not elevate themselves to positions above where we belong. Putting on titles such as father, priest,

and rabbi means that religious leader are putting themselves in a position between man and God which they are forbidden to do.

v. Verses 11-12 again tell religious leaders that they are to be humble. Only God is to be lifted up. In my opinion, this lesson is very important for pastors and church leaders today. Pride is an enemy of church leaders. We see pastors who violate these standards all the time. They drive around in their big cars with bodyguards, and they think they need to be paid to pray for someone because they mistakenly think their prayers are more important than other people's prayers. God listens to all His people's prayers equally.

vi. We must recognize that if we are good at preaching and teaching it is because God enables us to do a good job. When we think that we are special it is time for us to quit preaching before as verse 12 says we are humbled by God. If you think you are special then you need to pray and ask God to humble you before your pride gets so big that your fall when God does humble you is so big that it really hurts. Hebrews 12:6 teaches that God will discipline His people so if you are a prideful Christian expect God to humble you. It is very important for a Christian to be humble.

D. In verses 13-33 Jesus now pronounces eight woes or troubles coming to the religious leaders.

i. In verse 13 Jesus calls them hypocrites because by fighting Jesus they block people from accepting the gospel. Today an example would be pastors who don't regularly preach the lifesaving message of the gospel that Jesus is the only way to salvation. Another example is when a religious leader undermines the authority of the Bible by finding fault with any part of the Bible. Either all the Bible is true or none is true.

ii. Verse 14 isn't found in many Bible translations because it is not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts. Since its message is consistent with the other verses in chapter 23, I will comment on it. This is for those who have verse 14 in their Bibles. This woe is pronounced on those religious leaders who use their leadership position to take advantage of people, especially widows, and get rich from them. Today there are many false preachers who coax money from the church. We see many of them on television.

iii. Verse 15 pronounces troubles on the religious leader who goes to a lot of work to convert a person so that he can have a large church membership. As soon as the person's name is added to the church membership the person is forgotten and not discipled as he should be.

iv. Verse 16-22 condemns the practice where words are manipulated so that what you said can be made to mean something else. Earlier in Matthew 5:34, 37 Jesus instructed us to just say yes and mean yes. Recently I gave a class a test where the questions were to write down, from memory, the exact words of several verses from the Bible. One student copied from notes she had earlier written which was cheating as the students were supposed to write their answers from memory. The student defended herself by saying I did not specifically say she couldn't use notes. She knew that she was manipulating my words to make them say what she wanted them to say. This is what Jesus is condemning here.

v. The fifth woe found in verses 23-24 is about how the Pharisees worried about obeying the littlest point of the law. They made sure to tithe their garden crops, but they ignored the big things such as justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Vi. The sixth and seventh woes verses 25-28 are so closely related that we are not going to divide them. The sin here is when religious people are concerned about appearing to be righteous and pure, but inside, hidden from view, they are evil. God looks at our heart to judge us.

Vi. The last woe found in verses 29-35 is a commentary about the terrible state of the Israel nation was at the time of Jesus. He points out how the ancestors of the religious leader were the ones who killed the prophets such as Zechariah who God sent to the Jewish people; see 2 Chronicles 24:21. Jesus is saying that these current religious leaders were just like their ancestors and they

would kill the current righteous people. This is what the religious leaders did when they killed the Messiah. They also killed early Christians such as Stephen. The Apostle Paul was one of these Jewish leaders who was killing Christians when he met Jesus and became a Christian.

E. Verses 36-39 records the last words recorded, in Matthew, of Jesus teaching the public. He announced judgment coming to Israel. Luke 19:41-44 records how sorry Jesus was as He cried about the coming punishment. The prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed and the surviving Jews were sent into exile all over the world.

17. Chapter 24 is a chapter of prophecy; some of which has already happened and some is still in the future. The future prophecy, like many future prophecies, is not completely understood.

A. Verses 1-28 is prophecy about living in the last days. Verse 2 continues the thought of chapter 23 about the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus predicts the complete destruction of the beautiful temple and the entire city including the walls of the city. History reports that Jerusalem was destroyed and in a few short years.

B. Verse 3 records that this caused the disciples to ask two questions. The first question they ask is when will the destruction of Jerusalem be, and the second question is when will Jesus return?

C. The prophecy has three points: the first is the destruction of Jerusalem, the second is the personal return of Jesus, and the last is the end of the world.

D. There are two general lessons in the first 14 verses of the chapter.

i. The first general lesson is found in verse four and warns us to not be deceived. There will be many false teachers. There have been before, there are now, and there will be in the future many false prophets. As you study the cults, you will discover that they were founded by false prophets. The Jehovah's Witness was founded by Charles Russell and the Mormons by Joseph Smith; both of the false religions changed the parts of the Bible they disagreed with and these organizations along with many others are currently leading many millions to hell. The best way to protect ourselves from false prophets is to really know your Bible and refuse to listen to anybody who doesn't teach from the true Bible. Remember, do not believe what the man of God says about God unless he shows you that what he says is in the Bible.

ii. Don't be misled by those who tell you the date that they world is coming to an end. The only thing we know for sure about the return of Jesus is that He will return suddenly and this time He will come in power.

iii. A second general lesson is to not be overly optimistic or expect too much about what will happen before the end comes. Don't expect universal peace to come to the earth before the return of Jesus. Don't expect a time of universal purity in the church, and don't expect the whole earth to be converted to Christianity.

iii. Verse 14 tells us that Jesus will return after the gospel has been offered to all nations.

E. There are some lessons for us in verses 15-28.

i. A main part of this prophecy is about the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews revolted against the Romans and The Romans were ruthless in putting down the revolt killing around a million Jews and in 70 AD the temple and the city were destroyed by the Romans. The destruction ended the Mosaic system of worship. The heart of Jewish worship was Jerusalem and the temple. For almost 2,000 years the Jews have been unable to sacrifice and observe other parts of their worship.

ii. It is probable that this prophecy also applies to a future tribulation for Jerusalem which will come to an end when Jesus returns.

F. There are four additional lessons to be learned from verses 15-28.

i. There are times when it is all right to flee according to verses 16-20. There are times when we must stand firm even if it leads to our death. There are times when we can better serve the cause

of advancing the kingdom of God by fleeing to safety so that we can continue serving God. We must pray and do what God leads us to do.

G. Observing the Sabbath is still important. Jesus teaches this in chapter 24 verse 20. Very often the modern church ignores observing the Sabbath saying it is only an Old Testament practice. By mentioning the Sabbath here Jesus is teaching that even in New Testament times the Sabbath is important. Hebrews 4:9 also teaches that the Sabbath is still a day of rest for the church. We should set the day aside for worship, mercy ministries, and spending time with families.

iii. God shows that God takes special care of Christians. In verse 22 Jesus says that the times of the tribulation will be shortened to protect the Christians. Again in verse 24 the words teach that Jesus will prevent the elect, meaning the true Christian, from following the false Messiah.

iv. Verse 27 makes the point that Jesus will return without any warning. Don't believe any person who predicts when Jesus will return. We must always be prepared.

H. Verses 29-35 are very difficult to understand. I will give you an interpretation that J.C. Ryle wrote more than a hundred years ago.

i. Jesus here is describing His second coming when He returns to judge the world. His second coming will be very different than His first coming. He will return, verse 30, as the King of Kings with full majesty and glory.

ii. Verse 31 tells that He will gather His elect from wherever they are. Just as He protected Noah with an Ark, He will protect His Christians from any harm. While His second coming will be a terrible time for His enemies, we Christians have nothing to fear.

iii. Verse 34 is difficult to understand. A possible interpretation of the idea that "this generation will not pass away until this all takes place" is that the Jews will remain as a distinct group of people until Christ comes back again. Today we see that the Jews after 2000 years are still a separate and distinct group of people.

iv. Verse 35 tells us that no matter how long it takes Jesus's words will come true and He will return.

I. Chapter 24:36-51 is a long passage that tells people to be warned that Jesus will return and He will return without any warning. We must make sure that we are already Christians because when He does return it will be too late for a non-believer to become a Christian and the person will be condemned to eternity in hell. The meaning is clear: are you waiting and watching? Are you ready for Jesus Christ's return?

J. Verse 36 is a difficult verse to understand. The best explanation I could find is from John Calvin about five hundred years ago. He says that the divine (God) part of Jesus knew all things including when He would return. However, the man part of Jesus was ignorant of some things such as this fact. This does not take away from His being God.

K. The passage gives us some stories to emphasize this point:

i. The first story is about Noah and how in his time the people were continuing their sinful lives without any concern. Then, without warning, the flood began and it was too late for the people to prepare for the flood. These unprepared people all perished in the flood.

ii. The second story found in verses 40-41 tells that people will be separated into two groups. One group will go to heaven and one group will go to hell. Family groups and all groups of people will be divided and go their separate way. Husbands and wives and church members will all be divided solely on the basis of their relationship with Jesus.

iii. The third story tells us that the return of Jesus will be sudden and there will be no warning. The main purpose of this passage is to make sure that we are prepared for His sudden return because he will come without warning.

18. Chapter 25 continues the idea from chapter 24 about always being prepared for the return of Jesus. This message is for the people who think they are prepared but who will find out when it is too late that they are not really Christian. Churches are full of people who think they are Christian but who have never followed Jesus. These are the people Jesus was talking to in Matthew 7:21-23. Many people think they are saved because they once prayed a prayer and they faithfully go to church. This is not enough because we must have saving faith which requires us to follow Jesus.

A. There are three parables in chapter 25 which we will now look at. These three parables all have three points in common.

i. In each parable the return of the Lord is sudden and unexpected. In both chapters 24 and 25 Jesus emphasizes that no person knows the date when Jesus will return. If you hear someone say he knows when Jesus is coming back then you know you are listening to lies and you should quit listening to the speaker.

B. The first parable is the parable of the foolish virgins and is found in verses 1-13. It is easy to see that this parable is talking about some people who will be prepared when Jesus comes back and these will be invited into heaven. Others will not be prepared and they will be sent to hell instead of heaven. All the virgins in the story are people who are familiar with Jesus. The five virgins who are prepared with oil represent true Christians who are invited into heaven. The five virgins who have no oil represent people who know about Jesus but have never been born again even though they may have gone to church.

C. There are seven similarities in the two groups of virgins.

i. All the virgins had been invited. These were people who had known Jesus and had been invited to become Christians.

ii. All the virgins had liked the idea of going to heaven and responded positively.

iii. All the virgins represent people who had attended church, but half of them were not true members.

iv. All had some affection and love for the bridegroom who is Jesus.

v. They all knew Jesus was Lord; see how they called Him Lord in verse 11.

vi. All these virgins believed Jesus was coming back.

vii. They all fell asleep but when they woke up only five were prepared to go to heaven.

D. What it means to be ready? It means that a person must be born again; it is not enough to know about Christ and go to church. A person has to become a new creature. We read this in 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come." Ask yourself if you are truly born again or are you one of those who only pretend to be ready. Don't wait until it is too late.

E. Verse 13 again talks about the fact that no person knows when Jesus will return so we must always be prepared. There are three more lessons to be drawn from this.

i. Jesus may be delayed in returning but when the time is right he will definitely return. Matthew 24:14.

ii. The Lord will return without any warning.

iii. Lost opportunities can't be regained. Many people delay making a decision to follow Christ saying they will do it later. This is a mistake because often this person's heart becomes hardened against God as time goes on and he dies in his sin and goes to hell. Our life can end at any time we are not promised that we will even be alive in the next second.

E. The next parable found in Chapter 25:14-30 is about the talents. It is a story about whether we love God enough to serve him using the skills He has given us. It is very clear that if you are a Christian you will serve Jesus and others because you love Him.

i. The application of this parable is that Jesus expects to see that Christians are busily working for Him while He is away. The first two servants have faithfully worked to serve the kingdom of God and Jesus is pleased with their results. The last servant has done nothing with the skills God gave him and he has nothing to give to the Lord. He has been lazy like so many people who claim to be Christian, and instead of working for God's kingdom he does nothing to serve. He is not really a Christian which causes him to be thrown into hell.

ii. The application of this story of the talents is that real Christians will work and serve the Lord. Service is a sign that you are a Christian. Not working is a sign that you don't love God.

ii. We must remember that we are saved by faith and not by any work. Ephesians 2:8-9, the work we are talking about is the good work we do after we are saved. Ephesians 2:10 says we were saved to do this good work.

F. Now in verses 31-46 Jesus describes judgment day when Jesus returns as judge. This is the last teaching, from Jesus, that Matthew reports.

i. We see that every person, with no exceptions, will be judged. There are only two groups of people and these are the saved and the unsaved. All humans are either Christians headed for heaven or they are not Christians and headed for hell. There is no other destination for people.

ii. This last judgment will be done according to the evidence of your life. The witness of our lives will be the good works we do; especially our good works. We are not saved by our good works, but our good works do prove our faith. Verses 35-36 teach that these good works include acts of charity.

iii. The final results of this judgment is that all people will be in one of two places forever. Those who are Christian will spend all eternity, with God, in a wonderful place called heaven. People who are not Christian will spend all eternity, with Satan, in a horrible place of terrible torture.

G. Let's take a quick look at hell. Hell is permanent; there is no escape. Hell is horrible beyond anything we can understand.

i. Hell is, according to chapter 25:41, total separation from God. This is separation from anything good. However, Satan and his demons will be there.

ii. Verse 30 describes a place of total despair because of the terrible suffering that will never end. Verse 41 says it is a place of eternal fire.

iii. Hell according to verse 30 and Jude 1:6 is a place of total darkness.

19. Chapter 26 begins the story about the suffering and death of Jesus. We see the fulfillment of prophecies about the death of Jesus; three of these prophecies were made by Jesus himself see Matthew 16:21, 17-22, 20:18. We see here how the Great Sacrifice of Jesus was the sacrifice to which all the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed to. We see how the blood of Jesus was shed; the blood which cleans us from our sin, and the lamb was slain (Jesus) which took away all our sins. We see here how God's judgment could be satisfied and how we could be forgiven. These events are the turning point of history and the center point of Christianity.

A. We see in this chapter in verses 1-16 three things leading up to the arrest and crucifixion.

i. The first event occurs in verses 3-5 and is the plotting of the religious leaders to arrest and kill Jesus. These leaders had been planning to do this for a long time but now under the leadership of Caiaphas, the high priest, they get more determined. They decide to arrest him secretly.

ii. Next Jesus is anointed in Bethany according to verses 6-13. We know that a woman named Mary, see John 12:3, shows great love for Jesus by pouring very expensive ointment or oil on Him. Verse 12 tells us she did this to prepare Jesus for burial. Mary really studied Jesus and she understood that Jesus said He was going to be killed shortly. Luke 10:39 tells us of another time that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and learned from Him. The application of this for us is that

to really know and understand Jesus we must spend much time reading and studying the Bible. Mary anointed Jesus as a lasting memorial to Him.

iv. Now we see in chapter 26:14-16 Judas betray Jesus. The religious leaders were afraid to arrest Jesus in public because they feared the crowds of people would riot if they arrested Jesus. The city was full of visitors who had come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. So Judas was paid to lead the priest to Jesus in a place away from the crowds. We learn from Judas that a person can be very close to Jesus and spend much time with Him and never love Him enough to become one of His followers. This applies to the person who goes to church, studies the Bible, preaches, or teaches Bible classes and yet never became a Christian but is still lost and goes to hell.

B. The next event in chapter 26 is the Passover. Verses 17-19 show that Jesus is in control and He arranges the details for His celebration of the Passover meal.

C. Next verses 20-30 report about the Passover.

i. The first thing that happens at the meal is that Judas is shown to the other disciples to be a traitor. We need to pay close attention to verse 24 where Jesus says that it would have been better for Judas if he had never been born. What this means is that any person who is not a Christian will be in hell forever and he will wish he had never been born.

ii. As the Passover begins, Jesus turns it into the sacrament that we celebrate as The Last Supper or sometimes we call it Holy Communion. The church observes two sacraments which are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A sacrament is a sign and seal of the Lord's covenants with us. It strengthens and encourages us as it reminds us of the promises of God's grace to us; of the forgiveness of our sins.

iii. The first thing we notice is Jesus says this bread is my body and this cup is my blood. We need to examine the real meaning of these words. He is saying that He is spiritually present when we celebrate The Lord's Supper. Some churches teach that Jesus is physically present in the bread and drink, but this is not true. Jesus is spiritually present.

iv. The Lord's Supper is a means of grace which strengthens us as it symbolizes our participation with the crucified Christ. It blesses and strengthens us as it reminds us of the Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. We are reminded that we participate; that we participate in the crucified Christ. The Lord's Supper gives life, strength, and joy to the believer because it reminds us that we will rise from death just like Jesus did.

v. The Lord's Supper is only for believers who understand its spiritual significance. Children who don't yet understand and those who have not professed Christ should not be allowed to participate. Even mature Christians need to examine themselves before they take part in the Lord's Supper. 1 Corinthians 11:28-29 tells us that we must be sure that our relationship with Jesus and the church is a good relationship.

D. Chapter 26:30-35 talks about an event that was predicted in Zechariah 13:7. This is the prediction that all of Jesus supporters and friends will desert Him during His troubles.

i. Peter opens his mouth and in verses 33 & 35 boast that he will never fall away and abandon Jesus no matter what happens. Jesus says that Peter will fall away before the rooster crows again.

E. The next section verses 36-46 takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. It is a time of deep anguish for Jesus. Jesus knew what was going to happen to him and he would like to have avoided it because we must remember that Jesus was a human being just like we are and He had the same emotions that we have such as laughing, crying, pain, etc.

i. In verse 38 we again see the humanity of Jesus. He was deeply troubled and He wanted His friends to be with Him. This is a normal human reaction. Sadly twice he found his companions sleeping instead of watching over Him. As was predicted He was all alone in His time of trial.

ii. Jesus begins praying in verse 36. His prayer shows how much He understood the terrible things that were going to happen to Him. He knew that He was going to suffer a very painful death on the cross, but His real suffering was when He took the sins of the world on Himself and was He was rejected by God. We can't fully understand all His sufferings but they were terrible.

iii. We see from Jesus the first thing we should do when we are facing trouble. We should pray.

iv. We must submit to the will of God. Our prayers must acknowledge that we want God's will to be done even if it means that we will suffer and even die. This is what Jesus did in verse 39 and it is a good example for us.

v. Verse 41 is good advice to all of us. We must watch and pray ahead of time to avoid falling into temptation. If we desire to walk with God we must keep looking for trouble to come and we must pray for the lord to keep us from falling into temptation. Temptations will keep coming as long as we live.

F. We now see Jesus in the hands of His enemies in verses 47-56. There are lessons to be learned in this section.

i. The first event is the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, and the abandonment of Jesus by all His friends. We read that Judas kissed Jesus which proves they had a very close relationship which didn't prevent Judas from betraying Jesus. A lesson for us is that some people may appear to be Christian and belong to the church, but they really are not Christian. These imposters can even be church leaders.

ii. Verses 53 proves that Jesus was arrested and crucified because He loves us so much. He suffered willingly; no man is strong enough to force Jesus to do anything.

iii. He was completely abandoned by everybody. This proves how weak we humans are. Peter was so weak here but later at Pentecost he was strong. The difference was that at the arrest of Jesus, Peter was acting in his own strength and he was a coward. Later at Pentecost Peter was strengthened by God and he spoke boldly for God. We must rely on God to strengthen us to do His work.

G. We next study, in verses 57-68, the beginning of the trial of Jesus. We observe three things in this section.

i. The Jewish rulers were the chief accusers of Jesus; particularly Caiaphas the high priest. We learn that we must make sure our pastors, elders, teachers, and all church leaders are examined with the Word of God to make sure they are indeed followers of God. We are to only follow them if they are true to God. A good rule to follow is to: only believe what you are told about God when you know it is in the Bible. In other words, if someone tells you that God says something, and you are not sure that God says this then ask the person to show you in the Bible where it says this. If you find yourself in a church where the preaching and teaching does not follow the Bible, leave the church.

ii. Jesus, in verse 64, boldly declares that He is "the Christ, the Son of God." He warns them that though they have not seen Him in His glory as they expected the Messiah to do, Jesus would still come in His glory, see Revelation 1:7.

iii. Immediately after Jesus declared that He was the messiah, the Jews began to abuse Him. This had been predicted more than 700 years earlier in Isaiah 50:6.

H. The last part of chapter 26 verses 69-75 tell about the temporary fall of Peter. Let's see what we can learn from this.

i. Peter's denying that he was a follower of Jesus was a terrible sin. It teaches us not to be arrogant and to be always on guard that we don't fall like Peter. Peter twice bragged to Jesus in Matthew 26: 33 and 35 that He would be brave and even die for Him. He was overconfident. This was the first step leading to Peter's downfall.

ii. Peter was also lazy and did not follow the advice of Jesus given in verse 41 to watch and pray so that he would not fall into temptation.

iii. We must stay close to Jesus so that we don't fall, but verse 58 says that Peter stayed far away from Jesus.

iv. We must stay in good company; not the way Peter did. According to verse 58 Peter went right in and sat with the enemies people.

v. The last thing Peter did was to lie three times about knowing Jesus.

vi. Many well-known Christian leaders have fallen just like Peter did. We must all be humble and be on guard so that we don't also fall. We must pray that God will help us stay humble.

vii. Verse 75 reports that Peter was bitterly disappointed in himself. He was broken hearted.

I. Peter was a true believer in Jesus and he repented and was restored to do kingdom work. King David was also sorry for the sins he committed with Bathsheba.

Both of these men were truly repentant and were restored to service. Judas, however, did not belong to Jesus and he was not truly repentant, and his fate was death and hell. The lesson for us is that we can also fall into serious sin but if we are truly repentant we can be restored to fellowship and service to Jesus.

20. Chapter 27 tells us about the final fall of Judas and the crucifixion of Jesus.

A. We learn from Judas that we can spend a lot of time in church, listen to the best sermons, teach Bible lessons, serve God, and still not be sent to heaven. 2 Peter 1:10-11 instructs us to make sure we really are Christian. We do this by making sure we have a saving relationship with Jesus and that we are following Him. Judas spent a lot of time with Jesus but he never gave his heart to Jesus.

B. Judas in verses 3-5 was sorry for his sin but being sorry is not true repentance. True repentance requires being sorry and turning away from our sin and turning toward Christ. Judas was truly sorry which he proved by hanging himself, but he never turned toward Jesus to seek forgiveness. He died without forgiveness for his sin and is now in hell.

C. Verses 11-26 describe the trial of Jesus. Although it was not really a trial because there were no valid charges and Jesus was not found guilty of anything but He was still sentenced to death.

i. Jesus is standing trial, verse 11, in front of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. It was quickly determined by Pontius Pilate that the Jews had no real criminal charge against Jesus, and he should have released Jesus. However the governor wanted to keep the crowd happy so when the crowd called for the crucifixion of Jesus the governor ordered it to be done.

ii. We see Pontius Pilate in verse 24 try to not take responsibility for this great crime by washing his hands; just as if he was really innocent. We humans like to find ways to avoid taking responsibility for doing wrong things. We like to say that someone else or the devil made me do the wrong thing, but this is not true. Each one of us is solely responsible for each sin we do. Pilate could have done the correct thing and released Jesus, but since he did not do this he is responsible for the death of Jesus.

iii. Prophecy from Isaiah 53:7 and Isaiah 53:9 was fulfilled during this trial. Jesus was innocent and He did not say anything to defend Himself during this trial.

D. Now in verse 27-44 we read how Jesus was terribly abused. It is very sad to read how our Lord was so beaten and tortured for my sins. 1 Corinthians 15:3

i. The Romans were experts at making a person suffer. Jesus was scourged which is a vicious way of whipping a person and often this scourging is caused the death of the victim.

ii. He was forced to wear a crown of thorns.

iii. He was then nailed to a cross which was very painful. It was a slow tortuous way of dying. Jesus hung, in pain, on the cross for six hours before He died. He did this because of His love for His people.

iv. We must remember that Jesus died for our sins and not His own because He had no sin. 1 Peter 2:24 says: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 3:18 says: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

2 Corinthians 5:21: For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Galatians 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree".

Hebrews 9:28: so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Isaiah 53:5-6: But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

E. Verses 45-56 report the death of Jesus.

i. Verse 45 reports three hours of darkness came over all the land. This darkness can't be explained by natural means. The sky stayed dark for the last three hours that Jesus was dying on the cross.

ii. Verse 46 has the words which describe the anguish of Jesus as He suffered greater pain than any other person ever. A thousand years earlier in Psalm 22 these exact words were written in a passage describing the agony of Christ on the cross. See Psalm 22:1-21. The depth of the suffering of Jesus as expressed in these words is more than we can understand. He was suffering the punishment for every sin ever committed by every Christian.

iii. Verse 50 records that Jesus gave up His spirit and died. His death paid in full all the debt every sinner, who belong to Jesus, owed to God for his sins. The death of Jesus meant that God was satisfied and we would be declared righteous and not be eternally punished. Jesus was punished in our place so that we might go to heaven. His death was a complete defeat for Satan; Satan has lost the war. He is still fighting but He has lost the war and Christ has won.

iv. There were several other miracles that occurred at the crucifixion of Jesus. Verse 51 reports that there was an earthquake at the exact instance that Jesus died, and verse 52 tells us that graves opened and dead saints came to life again.

v. Another, very significant, miracle occurred when He died. Verse 51 tells us that the curtain in the temple was torn in two parts. This curtain divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place where all people were forbidden to be except for once a year. On the Day of Atonement the high priest was allowed to go into the Most Holy Place to sprinkle blood, of a sacrificed animal, on the mercy seat to seek forgiveness for the people's sin. This act looked forward to the final atonement that Jesus would make on the cross. It pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus as all other sacrifices did. Atonement is the way of reconciling man to God. The act of sacrifice, by Christ, on the cross, paid the price for our sins and made us righteous in the eye of God.

vi. The tearing of the cloth was significant because it happened exactly when Christ died which marked the end of the need for the Old Testament sacrifices. They were no longer needed because they pointed ahead to the coming sacrifice of Jesus, and now that the perfect sacrifice of Jesus had been accomplished the Old Testament way of approaching God was no longer needed. Now because

of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, each Christian is able to approach God directly. We do not need anybody such as the Pope or a pastor to go between ourselves and God.

vii. The veil or cloth was torn in two pieces at three o'clock in the afternoon at the time the priest would have been in the temple preparing the evening sacrifices. They would have witnessed the curtain miraculously tearing. Acts 6:7 reports that a great number of priest became Christian. It is possible this was because they witnessed the tearing of the cloth.

F. The tearing of the veil or cloth is so important we must repeat the lessons taught by this.

i. The old system of offering sacrifices over and over again was ended forever.

ii. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself was the perfect and final sacrifice; so nothing more needs to be done to bring peace between man and God. Jesus did it all. All we need to become a Christian is to believe in Jesus and commit ourselves to Him in service, obedience, and repentance.

iii. Because of Christ's work it is now possible for we who believe in and follow Him to come directly to God. We don't need any priest to go to God for us. Every Christian is able to talk to God, in prayer, by himself and every Christian is equally important to God. This means that each Christian is as important to God as a pastor or other church leader.

G. The last miracle reported at the crucifixion is found in verse 54 where the Roman Centurion after witnessing all that had happened recognized Jesus as Lord and he believed. We must all acknowledge that Jesus is God and asked Him to save us. It is the only way we can be saved.

21. Chapter 27:57-66 talks about the burial of Jesus. There are three necessary steps to the accomplishment of our redemption; to our being able be Christians. The first we have already talked about which is the crucifixion or the punishment of Jesus for the sins of His followers. The second is His burial to prove that He really died and had sunk as low as He could go. The third thing is His resurrection and ascension to heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

A. Why the burial is so important.

i. It proved that Jesus was really dead. It was necessary for Jesus to die so that His resurrection would be a true resurrection.

ii. The details of His burial fulfill prophecy from Isaiah 53:9. A rich man gave Him his grave.

B. Jesus always has His secret friends and Joseph of Arimathea was one of these. Joseph was rich and powerful. He was a member of the Sanhedrin; the Jewish ruling body who caused the death of Jesus. He was a brave man to ask the Romans for the body of Jesus. He gave his new tomb to Jesus. He did all this at a time when all of the disciples of Jesus had abandoned Him in fear.

C. The guarding of the tomb proved that the body of Jesus was not stolen that He did indeed rise from the dead.

22. Chapter 28:1-15 reports the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A. Verse 1 reports that at daybreak on Sunday morning a number of women went to the grave to properly prepare it, see Mark 16:1, with spices for burial. They were surprised to see that the body was not there. They thought that maybe the body had been stolen, but the angel told them that Jesus had risen from the dead just as He had earlier predicted.

B. We see in verses 11-15 how the enemies of the church tried to hide this most important truth that Jesus rose from the dead. God's enemies will never admit the truth about God. Today they continue to lie about God.

C. There are several passages in the Bible that report about Jesus being seen after He rose from the dead. See Acts 1: 3-9, Mark 16:14-19, Luke 24:37-40, John 20:15-17. Josephus, a Jewish historian living at the time of Jesus, reports that Jesus rose from the dead. There is no doubt about the resurrection of Jesus.

D. The significance or importance of the resurrection. These four observations are from Romans.

i. In Romans 1:4, Paul says that Christ Jesus was proven to be God, by His resurrection from the dead. And so, the resurrection is proof that the death of Christ was accepted by God for payment for the sins of His people. The first and most important thing that the resurrection proves is that Jesus is God.

ii. Secondly Romans 4:25 teaches that the resurrection is proof about the certainty of our justification. Our redemption, our being saved rests upon the truth of Jesus' resurrection. Look at what Paul says in Romans 4:25: "He, who was delivered up for our transgressions..." Jesus was delivered over, betrayed into the hands of His enemies in order that He would suffer in our place, for our transgressions; Then Paul goes on to say, "and was raised for our justification". He was raised for the sake of our justification, for the purpose of our justification. Our assurance of salvation rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is not an afterthought. It is absolutely essential to our salvation.

iii. Thirdly, in Romans 6:4, Paul says, therefore we have been buried with Jesus through baptism, into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead, through the glory of the Father, so we might walk in newness of life." This means that as Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, then we, too, may walk in newness of life. He is saying that our union with Christ, by faith in His resurrection, provides us the energy, the power, the grace to live the Christian life right now. The New Testament teaches this about the Christian life; that we do not do it in our own strength; that we do it in the power of the grace of the living God. This is wonderful knowing that we are not expected to live the Christian life in our own power; we only live the Christian life with the willing help of Christ.

iv. Fourth and last, Paul tells us that the resurrection of Jesus is the proof of our resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees our own resurrection. We see this In Romans 8:11, where the apostle emphasizes this glorious truth, "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through His Spirit who indwells you." If the Spirit of Jesus dwells in you, and He is the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, so also He will raise your mortal bodies from the dead. In all these ways Paul points to the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ for us as believers.

E. To summarize:

i. The crucifixion of Jesus is when Jesus earned the pardon for Christians for their sins. The crucifixion is where Satan totally lost his war against Jesus and Jesus totally won the war.

ii. The burial of Jesus is necessary because it proves that Jesus really did die.

iv. The resurrection of Jesus is proof that Jesus is God and it proves that we Christians are forgiven and we will be in heaven with Him

28. Chapter 28:16-20 is what we call The Great Commission. Here Jesus orders His church; every Christian to be missionaries to the whole world. Jesus chose all Christians to be evangelist and tell everybody the truth of the gospel. Every Christian is to be a missionary where he lives, or some Christians are called to leave their homes to be missionaries. Every Christian who stays home is to support the missionaries who leaves home. A Christian who does not do this is disobeying God.

There are lessons for us in these closing verses to the book of Matthew:

A. We see first of all that Jesus is in charge of everything. Paul says the same thing in Philippians 2:9. The Bible is telling us that Jesus is God and He is our ruler.

B. Second verse 19 tells us to go to all the world telling the truth that Christ died for sinners.

C. People are to be baptized which means to make a public profession that they are Christians and are saved.

D. Verse 20 tells that it is important to obey the commandments of God. We show we love God when we obey Him. 1 John 5:2

E. Verse 19 gives the command to make disciples of people. This means that we are to evangelize people but we are not to stop when the people agree to become Christian. We must follow up and teach them more truths from the Bible. Often a person tells someone about salvation through faith in Jesus, and then leaves the person. We must help the person find a good church and find someone to teach the new Christian.

F. Verse 19 reminds us of the trinity of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

G. Verse 20 closes with the encouraging message that God is always with us. We never suffer alone because God is always with us.

i. Acts 1:8 confirms that missions is very important to Jesus. The last words of Jesus, in the Bible, tell us to go throughout the world spreading the truth about Him. Both in Matthew 28 and Acts 1:8 Jesus encourages and strengthens us by promising us to be with us and to give us strength. We must always be bold and do all the work God calls us to do.