

addressed the children of Israel with regard to the sins that they were once again falling into. He admonished them to follow after the Lord more completely than did their fathers before them. The Jews were involved in a half-hearted practice of their religion. They worshiped in an abusive manner. They offered up lame and blind sacrifices; they refused to give as they had been prospered. The priests were becoming more and more like the priests prior to the captivity. They did not keep the covenant of the Lord. They did not teach the truth of the word of the Lord. They were oppressive and abominable in their ways. The institution of marriage was falling in the sight of the Lord and in the respect that it so richly deserved. The people had gone into wholesale corruption of the ways of the Lord. But, there were still a few who were faithful to the ways of the Lord, a few who "feared the Lord." John the baptist is referred to as coming into the midst of just such a wicked and perverse people, but when he comes the people would not, by-in-large, subscribe to his teachings. Many would not abide in the day of his coming. From the book of Malachi we learn: 1) the Lord is always concerned with worship coming from the heart, 2) outward appearance can be deceiving, 3) worship involves outward manifestations that come from inward convictions, 4) the Lord is just and merciful, 5) the people were deceptive, 6) people often grow weary of obeying the will of the Lord, 7) those who are to be the "most responsible" for keeping the ways of the Lord are often the "most guilty" (e.g. the priests), 8) breaking the will of the Lord brings and does deserve punishment, 9) the Lord withholds blessings from the unfaithful, 10) marriage is precious in the sight of the Lord, 11) God expects his people to give as they were commanded to give, 12) the wicked sometimes prosper in their wickedness, 13) the righteous are written in the book of life, 14) punishment awaits the wicked, et al.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT IN PERSPECTIVE

The Old Testament covers hundreds of years of Jewish history beginning with the creation of the world and the creation of man, and continuing through the establishment of God's chosen people (later to become a nation) and the events that related particularly to them. It is important to view each book of the Old Testament (indeed, each book of the Bible) as contributing to the major theme of the Bible: THE GLORIFICATION OF GOD AND THE SALVATION OF MAN THROUGH THE BLOOD OF JESUS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD.

Everything within the Bible either directly or indirectly contributes to this major theme. Each book within the Bible concerns itself with an aspect of the Bible that is unique unto itself. Every book should, therefore, be studied with regard to its own major theme that it contributes to the overall theme of the entire Bible.

The Old Testament has often been referred to as the 'New Testament veiled'. The coming of the Christ is constantly depicted as an event that was going to be of primary importance to the people of God. From the first sin that was committed in the garden of Eden to the close of the Old Testament Canon, the "scarlet thread" of the story of the coming Christ occupies a central position in the Bible. The change from good to bad in man would one day change from bad to good.

The application of the Old Testament to Christian today is often misunderstood. Though the law of Moses was nailed to the cross (Col.2:12ff), there are principles which were in existence then that are still in existence now. The Old Testament is not simply a compilation of stories that are to be told to our children. They reveal the unfolding plan of redemption which God purposed for the benefit of mankind. They are to be studied diligently, just as the New Testament is to be studied. There are numerous portions of the New Testament which cannot be properly understood except that one know the historical background of the Old Testament. The books of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews abound in references to the Old Testament. The book of Revelation is more easily understood having read and digested the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The apostle Paul said that these books

(that is the books of the Old Testament) were written for our admonition and for our learning. The lessons to be learned from them are great.

The Jews were human beings, just as much as you and I are human beings. We can learn from their weaknesses, their strengths, their failures, and their successes quite readily. In principle, God expects from us what he expected of them. The principle of grace and faith remains the same, but the form of obedience differs.

Furthermore, the Bible would not be complete without these most important books. The aspect of prophecy is most unique. From the predictions and the fulfillments we can learn and confidently affirm that the Bible far exceeds a product of mere human imagination. It must of necessity be supernatural in its origin. In addition to that, we learn numerous types and figures of people, events, and places which would one day come to fruition in the New Testament. The church, its origin, its duty, and its prominence in the scheme of God's plan, is amply depicted within the Old Testament. From a study of the prophets we can learn that the church of which we are members is the one and the only church. The Old Testament is indispensable in this service.

The number of references to the coming Son of God are too numerous to mention, but they play a very important role in the Old Testament. The love which the Lord has for mankind was to be manifested in the giving of that Son upon the cross of calvary. The Christ, his birth, his life, his ministry, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his goal, and much more, are given just a brief treatment in the prophets, but from that brief exposure we learn much about the Messiah which was to come.

It is important that you continue your study of the Old Testament. It is an area that many Christians are far too weak in, and therefore an area which demands our constant and immediate attention. Paul told Timothy that his knowledge of the scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation. It can do no less for us when we master it.

### THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

As we indicated previously in our discussion of the book of Malachi, the history of the Jews makes an abrupt stop following the period of the restoration. For a time of about 400 years we have no inspired record of the lives and the activities of the Jewish nation. There were, however, secular accounts of this period in time, and it is from them that we draw the greatest bulk of information about this "dark period" in the history of Israel. [FOR YOUR FURTHER STUDY YOU MAY WANT TO CONSULT SOME OF THESE WORKS: 1) THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS, 2) NEW TESTAMENT TIMES, by Merril C. Tenney, and 3) THE NEW TESTAMENT ERA by Bo Reicke]

The Old Testament is not, however, totally silent about the events of this period. We have already noticed several prophecies which addressed events which would transpire during this general time frame. In the book of Daniel we noted several allusions to the four kingdoms which would arise and fall prior to the coming of the kingdom of God. We identified these kingdoms as 1) the Babylonian kingdom, 2) the Med-Persian kingdom, 3) the Grecian kingdom, and 4) the Roman Empire. The first of these two kingdoms are discussed more fully than are the last two in the Old Testament, and with good reason. Each of these kingdoms had a direct impact upon the history of the Jewish people. It was at the hands of the Babylonians that the southern kingdom of Judah went into captivity. During this period of captivity, Daniel spoke about these four kingdoms mentioned above.

Following the Babylonian kingdom, the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians emerged. This was the empire that was in control when the Jews were released from their bondage and allowed to return unto their homelands. It is this

kingdom that is in existence at the close of the Old Testament Canon. But what of the other two kingdoms that Daniel spoke about?

These two kingdoms, the Greek and the Roman, came into power during this period between the testaments. The Grecian kingdom was established due to the mighty military exploits of Alexander the Great. He was a student of the famed Greek philosopher Aristotle. He was impressed with the Greek culture to the extent that he imposed it upon his subjects everywhere that he went. When a nation or city was defeated, Alexander would begin to institute the Hellenistic (Greek) culture into their lifestyles. A prime example of this is the city of Alexandria, Egypt (named after the general). This city became a city famed for its intellectual environment just as Athens, Greece was noted for the same quality.

One of the most unique facets of this dramatic change in the world environment centered around language. In addition to changing and adapting to the Greek style of thinking, living, and governing, the nations which Alexander conquered also changed to the language of the Greeks. In addition to their own languages, the nations of the world learned the Greek language.

After the death of Alexander at the young age of 31, his kingdom was divided between four of his generals. It did not last forever, for within a relatively short period of time a new world power emerged. It was this new world power, later known as the Roman Empire, that would dominate the history of the world for centuries to come. The Roman Empire gained its power during the second century before the birth of the Christ and spread rapidly. About 65 years prior to the coming of the Christ, the Romans had conquered Palestine. Christ was born under the influence of the Roman Empire, and he lived and died under that same influence.

The Romans continued the practice of encouraging the Greek culture and especially encouraged the continuation of the spread of the Greek language. During the days of the Christ and the early church, the Roman Empire was enjoying a time of great peace and prosperity, commonly called the PAX ROMANA (peace of Rome). The empire was linked with highways that were open to travel for all people. They were protected by the Roman armies and assured the safety of the wayfarers who used them.

Into this world came the Christ and the kingdom which he established. Galatians 4:4 teaches that Christ came in the fulness of time, that is he came when everything was right, just as God planned. When the kingdom was established in Jerusalem the work grew rapidly. When persecution came at the hands of the Jews, those who left the city had free course to travel wherever they wanted. The church grew rapidly because the early Christians went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). They could use the highways of Rome to travel to any part of the empire, and when they got there they could teach just about anybody due to the almost universal language of Greek. The New Testament was written in the language of the people, called KOINE or common Greek. In this way, everybody could have access to the truths of God's word. Because of all of these favorable influences, the Lord's church grew and grew rapidly. By the time that the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, he could say that the gospel had gone throughout the world. (Col. 1:6, 23) It spread without the means of television, radio, and newspapers; it spread because Christians were willing to live the gospel and die in order that it might be proclaimed to the lost of the world.

There were other changes that developed during this silent period of 400 years that affected the work of the Christ and the work of his church. During the Old Testament we see no reference to: 1) the synagogues, 2) the Pharisees, 3) the Sadducees, and 4) many of the traditions taught and believed by the Jews during the days of Jesus. Yet Jesus came into the world and had to deal with these people and ideas. Where did they get their start? Why are they not within the Old Testament? The answer, they started

during the period between the testaments.

During this period of time the synagogue grew in prominence. Tradition says that when the Jews spread during the general period of captivity, that they established these houses of worship to maintain their religious practices. They could not, after all, go to the temple to worship God as previously prescribed by the Lord. Many of them were in captivity and many were in exile from their homeland. Furthermore, the Babylonians, destroyed the temple of God in Jerusalem. When the restoration came, many of the Jews just stayed where they were in the world. During the time of the Christ and his kingdom, the Jews would travel from all over the world to come to the feasts that they were commanded to keep. But what did they do in the meantime? They were supposed to offer sacrifices at the temple regularly, but they could not do so living so far away from Jerusalem. The synagogue started during such circumstances and grew to be a house of worship wherever there were enough Jews to sustain one. During the ministry of Paul we see their role in the spread of the Lord's church. Paul was accustomed to going to the synagogues as soon as he came into a new city. There he would find Jews, who might be receptive to the gospel of Christ. They already believed in one God, and they should have been practicing a system of morals that distinguished them from the Gentile world in which they lived. They would make excellent Christians if they could be converted, and many of them were.

The religious sects of the Jews, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, also developed within this 400 year period of history. Jesus, and later his disciples and Christians, often encountered these Jewish rulers in their lives. The Pharisees and the Sadducees developed traditions which grew beyond the scope of the laws of Moses and which inhibited them from being in complete accord with God's commands. They often sought to trap Jesus by forcing him to answer questions which were designed to catch him saying something wrong, or they sought to catch him performing some wrong act. Needless to say, the Son of Man never broke the law of Moses; he never sinned in any way, in thought, word, or in deed. He countered the questions of these religious traditionalists with questions which confounded them. He performed miracles by the power of Deity and taught lessons with Divine authority. Because of his true interpretations of the law of Moses and the will of God, he often was at odds with the Pharisees and the Sadducees. This prompted them to plot against the life of Jesus, and ultimately they succeeded. Christ went to the cross because of their false conceptions about truth, the law of Moses, the Messiah, and because they were a proud and self-loving people. Their role, though they did not realize it, fulfilled the numerous prophecies of Isaiah, Zechariah, etc. concerning the death of Jesus the Christ. In Acts 2 Peter and the rest of the apostles convicted them of their sins and informed them that Christ, through the determinate knowledge of God was raised and made both Lord and Christ.

The influence of these traditionalists (their own traditions were practiced and not those of the Lord) continued after the death of the Christ. On several occasions we note that these men sought to inhibit the proclamation of the gospel by the disciples and other early Christians. Through the work of some of these men, Paul was enabled to gather Christian men and women and bring them to punishment. Indeed, the history of God's plan would have been quite different if these religious sects of the Jews did not develop during this period of 400 years.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament has often been referred to as the Old Testament unveiled and the description is warranted. Many of the prophecies, types, shadows, and figures which are mentioned and described in the Old Testament are brought to fruition and fulfillment in the New Testament.

The New Testament deals specifically with the coming of the Christ, his life, his ministry, his teachings, his trials, his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, and the kingdom which he came to establish. The first four books of the New Testament are often referred to as the 'gospels'. They record the life of the Christ.

The following book, Acts, records the history of the church from its beginning to its spread around the world. It is a history of the church from the standpoint of the people involved. Peter, Paul, Stephen, Barnabas, John Mark, et al. are involved in this divine history. It centers around the conversions of those who became Christians.

The rest of the New Testament (with the exception of Revelation) consists of letters which were written by apostles and other inspired men. Some of these letters were written to a church, a group of churches, or to a small group of individuals or to just one individual. They contain vital information concerning the "hows" of living the Christian life. They do not form any supplementary/contradictory revelation, but rather expound upon those teachings which the Christ already taught (at least in principle) to the disciples (cf. Mt.28:18ff). These epistles deal with such subjects as: 1) the unity of the church, 2) the difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, 3) church problems, 4) miraculous gifts, 5) the Holy Spirit, 6) attacks on the deity of Christ, 7) the pre-eminence of Christ, 8) the glory and purpose of the church, 9) the joy and happiness of the Christian life, 10) the second coming of the Christ, 11) how to live in the midst of persecutions, 12) false teachers, and so much more.

The last book of the New Testament, Revelation, is a highly specialized book of prophecy. In many ways it is similar to the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, and an understanding of these books and principles of interpretation within them is almost essential to a proper understanding of this last book. It basically affirms the proposition that God is always in control and that no matter what the circumstances might be, ultimate reward always awaits those who are faithful and obedient to the will of the Lord.

The New Testament gets its name from the will or covenant which was instituted by Jesus the Christ. It went into full effect on the day of Pentecost following the ascension of the Christ. A full explanation of the relationship that it sustains to the Old Testament is fully set forth in the books of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, but it is a basic reaffirmation of the first covenant with Abram in Genesis 12. God promised blessings to those Jews who were obedient to him under that covenant, but under this new covenant confirmed and dedicated with the blood of Jesus Christ, God promises even greater blessings. The blessings of this life, but more importantly, the life to come, are all contingent on our getting into and maintaining a proper relationship to that new covenant.

One of the most important things to realize with regard to the work and the message of the Christ is this: THERE ARE NO OTHER COVENANTS THAT WILL APPLY TO MAN UPON THIS EARTH. THE REVELATION OF JESUS THE CHRIST IS THE FULL AND FINAL REVELATION OF GOD TO MAN. IT IS THROUGH THIS COVENANT THAT GOD ADDRESSES THE PROBLEM OF MAN'S SIN AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. THE COVENANT APPLIES TO ALL MEN. ALL MEN ARE RESPONSIBLE TO ITS DICTATES AND COMMANDS. ALL MEN ARE EXPECTED TO LIVE UP TO IT. WE WILL BE JUDGED RIGHTEOUS OR UNRIGHTEOUS ACCORDING TO ITS TERMS; WE MUST, THEREFORE, LIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS REQUIREMENTS. THE COVENANT REQUIRES MAN TO WANT TO OBEY THE LORD OUT OF LOVE AND A DESIRE TO BE PLEASING TO OUR GOD AND CREATOR. IT IS NOT A COVENANT OF STONE, BUT IT IS A COVENANT WHICH IS TO BE ENGRAVENED ON THE TABLES OF OUR HEARTS. IT IS A SPIRITUAL COVENANT, AND TO KEEP IT WE MUST BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED PEOPLE. IT IS THE FULLEST EXPRESSION OF THE LOVE OF GOD CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAN IS UNDER...SIN. IT COMPLETELY REMOVES SIN, PROVIDES FOR THE CONTINUED FORGIVENESS OF SIN, AND ULTIMATELY PROVIDES FOR AN ETERNAL HOME FREE FROM SIN.

MATTHEW

The gospel according to Matthew was written by the apostle of the same name. He was a publican (tax-collector) and was called Levi by the writers Mark and Luke. Not much is known with regard to his personal life or concerning his efforts in the promulgation of the gospel. This does not, of course, detract from the fact that his book is part of the inspired word of God.

CHAPTER ONE

1. It must be pointed out initially that the comments on the chapters of the New Testament must be kept to a minimum in order to give equal treatment to all of them. For further study and consideration you are invited to study any one of a number of standard commentaries. [cf. Boles, Barnes, Coffman, Henry, Clark, Dummelow, Jamieson-Fausset - Brown, McGarvey, McGarvey-Pendleton, Lenski, Barclay, et al.] Many of the events are quite familiar to the average reader and will, therefore, be treated briefly. Many of the events and teachings common to one account will be found again in another account for that reason you may be referred to different sections of the notes for previous comments.
2. The opening verse of the book and the chapter sets the stage for the "flavor" of the remainder of the book. The reference to David and Abraham would have sparked an interest most acute in the mind of the Jew of Matthew's day. Each of these men was highly revered in the minds and hearts of the Jews familiar with the Old Testament. David was, of course, one of the most beloved of the kings of Israel. He was a man noted for his military prowess and also for his faith in God. The latter is most uniquely expressed via many of the psalms in the book of the same name. On the other hand, Abraham occupied a unique place in Jewish religion. He was considered to be the father of the Jews, and it was to him that the Lord addressed the great covenant of blessings and cursings. Abraham became the progenitor of the Jewish nation. He serves as the epitome of faithfulness (cf. Heb.11).
3. To equate Christ with these men was of utmost importance to the writer and to the prospective reader. Christ was the fulfillment of numerous passages which refer to the kingdom of David. David was told at one point by the Lord that his throne would continue forever. Though David may not have fully understood this, we do know that David "in the Spirit" made references to the Christ. Christ was also the fulfillment of the promise/covenant which was made initially with that great patriarch Abraham. Galatians 3:16 informs us that Christ was "the seed" through which all of the spiritual blessings were to come. Christ, therefore, as the descendant of these men would occupy a strategic position in the scheme of God's plan of redemption. He would have been important also to the Jews who realized this all-important status.
4. A great portion of this chapter (through vs.18) deal with the genealogy of the Christ. It will not be practical to go into an involved and detailed explanation of each of these ancestors of the Christ, but it is important to note this great fact. Christ was of kingly heritage. He was the descendant of David, and was therefore legally entitled to sit upon the throne of Israel. The genealogy in this chapter is cited just to establish and sustain that very fact.
5. The last portion of the chapter relates the appearance of the angel to Joseph, the father (not the physical father) of the Christ. When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was found to be with child, Joseph was mindful to divorce her. This might seem to be awkward in view of the fact that Mary and Joseph were not yet married, but it makes sense when we realize that the period of engagement (betrothal) to the Jews was just as binding as if they were married. An engagement was broken as formally as was a marriage. The angel informed Joseph about the circumstances behind the pregnancy of Mary and Joseph finally married her (vs.24).
6. Note that Christ's name was significant (vs.21). He was named Jesus because he was going to save his people from their sins.
7. Note also that Joseph knew not Mary (i.e. did not have sexual relations with her) until after the birth of the Christ. Mary was a virgin at the birth of Christ, but she was not, as the Catholic church maintains, a perpetual virgin. In subsequent chapters we will note several references to the brothers and sisters of Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Christ was born in the city of Bethlehem (explanation given in Luke's account). After his birth wise men came from the east to visit him. We have no indication from scripture concerning the number of the wise men or the time of their visit. The gifts mentioned, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, do not indicate there were three men. There could have been 30; 10 brought gold, 10 brought frankincense, and 10 brought myrrh. The Bible does not say, and it is not within our realm to definitely say.
2. Furthermore, we do not know the exact time of the year of Christ's birth. The fact that shepherds were in the fields the night of his birth serves to indicate that it was during the warmer part of the year. Because the land of Palestine is in the northern section of the world (relative to the equator), the seasons correspond to the seasons with which we are familiar. In any case, we can almost certainly state that Christ was not borne in the dead of winter. The date December 25 was established by the Catholic church centuries later and has been traditionally celebrated as the birth of the Christ. As Christians we must remember that we are to celebrate the death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ every Lord's day.
3. When Herod heard of the birth of this new king he sought to learn more about him. Note specifically that "he was troubled" (vs.3). He claimed that he wanted to come and worship this new born child/king, but from the rest of the chapter we note that his intentions were not quite so noble.
4. Note vs.5ff concerning the prophecy quoted in that passage. You will notice as you read through Matthew several such references to the prophets and the Old Testament. Take note of them and try to determine the significance of them as we study through the book.
5. The wise men were warned not to return to king Herod, so they returned unto their own country by another way. Likewise, Mary and Joseph were warned that Herod sought the life of the young Jesus and they, too, fled. Verse 15 informs us that their flight to Egypt was referred to in prophecy (cf. Hos.11:1).
6. Outraged at the deception which had befallen him, Herod sought to retaliate. He commanded that all children in the vicinity of Bethlehem who were 2 years old and under were to be slain. The following verses teach us that the prophecies of Jeremiah applied to just such a destruction of the innocent.
7. Following the death of Herod Joseph began to return to the land of Judea but was warned in a dream by God. He then went into the parts of Galilee, the northern kingdom of Palestine, to the town of Nazareth. Note again the reference in vs.23 to the fulfillment of prophecy.

CHAPTER THREE

1. The beginning of the ministry of John the baptist is depicted in the earlier parts of this chapter. Remember that Is.40:3, Mal.3:1 and Mal.4:5-6 refer to the coming of John. In Luke we will learn more about his relationship to the Christ.
2. John came preaching "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The emphasis is that the kingdom (later identified to be the church) was now closer, much closer, than when we first encountered prophecies concerning it (cf. Is.2, Micah 4, Daniel 2, and Joel 2). The message of John was that the people were to repent. That basic message is still needed today throughout the world. People need to stop their sinful ways and turn to the Lord. [Note the reference to the fulfillment of prophecy of Isaiah in vs.3ff.]
3. The effect that John had is seen in vs.5ff. Many people went to be baptized of him in Jordan. Note the following concerning the baptism of John: 1) it was in water, 2) it was conditioned upon repentance, 3) it was conditioned upon confession of sins, 4) it resulted in the remission of sins (cf. Mk.1:4). These similarities are found also within the baptism of the great commission: 1) it was in water, 2) it was conditioned upon repentance, 3) it was conditioned upon confession of sins (and faith), and 4) it resulted in the remission of sins. Were the two the same? No, the baptism of the great commission added one to the body of Christ and was in the name of Christ. During the ministry of the baptist (the term simply means one who baptizes), the kingdom was not in existence (cf. Matthew 11).



4. When John saw the Pharisees and the Sadducees come to his baptism he questioned them concerning their presence. Note the statement in vs. 8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:..." True Bible repentance will produce fruits. That which does not produce fruit, is not Bible repentance. It is just that simple. Fruits is a term that usually designates behavior and actions. The fruits of the spirit and the fruits of the flesh are contrasted in Galatians 5. Repentance will occasion one to engage in fruits of the spirit.
5. John spoke of the Christ who was to come after him, explaining that he was to be far greater in works that he (i.e. John) was.
6. The concluding verses of the chapter portray the baptism of the Christ by John. On several occasions I have seen pictures supposedly depicting this event with John and Jesus knee deep in water. In the hand of John was a pitcher and he was scooping water out of the river and pouring it upon the head of the Christ. This is not an accurate description of the baptism of John the baptist. Baptism was done in the river because people were being immersed, buried, plunged, into the water. Further New Testament references will substantiate this fact.
7. Note in vs. 17 the voice of the Father which said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Compare this to the statement in Matthew 17:5.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

1. Following his baptism, Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he fasted 40 days and 40 nights. Following this period of fasting, Christ was tempted of Satan.
2. The temptations which Christ endured (James 1:12) at the hand of Satan were perhaps the greatest temptations possible. Satan visibly appeared before the Christ and used the totality of power at his control to cause the Christ to sin. From the scene in this chapter we note: 1) Satan appealed to the three sins that are described in I John 2:13ff: A) the lust of the flesh, B) the lust of the eye, and C) the pride of life. These same three categories are itemized in Genesis 3.; 2) In each case Jesus replied with "it is written". This shows us the value, the importance, and the power of the word of God. Christ relied upon it.; 3) Satan quoted the Bible, but he misapplied the passage which he quoted. Far too many people think that any one who can quote the Bible or who knows the Bible, must of necessity rightly apply the Bible. Such is not the case. It is not enough to know what the Bible says, for we must also know what the Bible means.; 4) Christ did not yield to temptation. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet he did not sin. [Additional accounts of the life of Christ inform us that Christ was tempted on other occasions. It is reasonable to believe that Christ, while manifested as deity in the flesh, was tempted just as frequently as any human being might be and is tempted. There is no reason to doubt otherwise. To maintain that the brief confrontation with Satan in this chapter comprised the total of the temptations while Christ was on this earth is to lessen his humanity and place him in a category of being other than the perfect mediator for mankind.]
3. When Jesus began his public ministry, he began by proclaiming the same general theme that John the baptist did (cf. vs.17). Note that John had been imprisoned at this time. He was to prepare the way for the Christ; not to work contemporary with the Christ. There was virtually no overlapping of the works of these two men. When Christ began his period of ministry, there were no other prophets actively engaged in the teaching of God's word...and there are none other than the Christ today.
4. Note once again the emphasis laid upon the fulfillment of prophecy (cf. vs.14ff).
5. Verses 18-22 of this chapter depict the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, the two pair of brothers and the four fishermen who became the apostles of Christ. They were to become fishers of men.
6. The last section of the chapter speaks of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus and the spreading of his fame. He spoke in synagogues, healed all manners of illness, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and cast out demons. Multitudes of people followed him wherever he went. Note that Jesus began in the cities where the most people were living. He did, however, also speak to smaller groups and even to individuals during his lifetime, but it must be pointed out that Jesus went where the people would listen. This is a valuable lesson so much needed today.



CHAPTER FIVE

1. The fifth chapter of the book of Matthew begins one of the longest and most prominent discourses of the Lord. The lesson is often called "the sermon on the mount" and it deals with numerous subjects.
2. The first section of this sermon (vs.1-12) are referred to as "the beatitudes" because of the blessings and blessedness that are involved in these sayings. Each of the beatitudes enjoins spiritual thoughts, words, and actions upon the followers of the Christ.
3. Immediately following the beatitudes we note direct references to the influence which the disciples of Christ are/were to have: 1) they were to be the salt of the earth (preserving, influencing, etc.); 2) the light of the world; 3) a city set upon a hill; and 4) an open burning candle. All of these illustrations were intended to convey the spirit of true discipleship. They were not given to encourage the followers of Christ in ostentatious living, but living that would show the world that they were followers of the Lord. The works to be done were to glorify the Father in heaven and not themselves.
4. Beginning with vs.17ff, Christ sets forth the proper interpretation of numerous Old Testament teachings as well as his role and relationship to the law. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Christ was, of course, the only being who ever lived that lived sinless according to the law of Moses. He came to fulfill (or "fill full") the law of Moses (Rom.10:4; et al.). The things which he said in this discourse were not some new interpretations of the law, but were rather the meaning that was originally intended by the law. This original meaning of the law was given concerning: 1) righteousness (the keeping of the commandments of the law), 2) anger, 3) adultery, 4) divorce, 5) oaths, 6) love for enemies, etc. In almost every case, the Lord would say "it hath been said" or something similar to that, and then respond with "but I say unto you." Christ was therefore establishing his authority with regard to the will of God as it was related to the Jews in the Old Testament. That authority was recognized by the people at the conclusion of the lesson. [Again, for a detailed verse by verse analysis of this chapter, feel free to consult any standard commentaries.]

CHAPTER SIX

1. As the lesson continued, Jesus addressed more subjects in the same manner. He presented what was the common idea concerning the topic, and then he affirmed the divine meaning and will of that same topic.
2. In the beginning of this chapter Christ speaks about three broad areas of religion which were abused and misunderstood by the average Jew of his day. They were: 1) almsgiving, 2) prayer, and 3) fasting. In each case, Jesus spoke about the demerits of any form of religion that was mere form and no content. Giving to be seen of men would not profit, praying to be seen of men would not profit, and fasting to be seen of men would not profit. They might impress those who witness another engaged in such activities, but they did not impress Jehovah God. Rather than prescribe mere outward actions which man was to follow, Jesus taught his audience about principles, principles that would motivate a disciple to the proper actions. A great majority of the Bible's teachings addresses the subject of proper outward actions, but the Bible never presents these outward manifestations without addressing the inward principles that govern them. In prayer, giving, and fasting, it was the inward man which the Lord looked upon. Remember, the Lord does not look upon men as other men do (I Samuel 16:7).
3. The last half of this chapter deals with a man's relationship to the physical world. Though man is involved with the physical world in almost every facet of his existence, he must remember that his primary obligation is of a spiritual nature. In vs.19-21 we note the Christ's teaching about man's relationship to his finances. The last of these verses teaches a great lesson: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." A man is to be concerned about spiritual matters to two different ways: 1) he is to keep his mind, his heart, and his thoughts upon them, and 2) he is to support them with the physical possessions available to him. If a man has millions of dollars invested in commodities, stocks, and bonds, you can rest assured

that he is going to be interested in them. Likewise, if a man is going to invest those millions in the work of the Lord, he will be concerned about their proper use. A man's interest lies where he has the most at stake. If a man truly values his spiritual life, his soul, and the work of the Lord, then his money will be there. We learn from II Corinthians 8:5 that poor people gave abundantly, but only because they had already given their lives to the work of the Lord. A worthy example for us to follow...to say the least.

4. Beginning with vs.25ff, the Lord expounds further upon a man's relationship with his physical possessions. In this explanation, Christ sets forth the value of human life and the value of a person's soul. They are of much greater value than food, clothing, and things of that nature. The Lord loves those who love him and seek to serve him. That love is manifested in numerous ways. Ultimately it is made known through the blood of his only begotten Son who came to die for the sins of all men, but it is also known through the multiple magnificent blessings which the Lord provides for his people. Romans 8 teaches that the Lord who gave the greatest gift to man (i.e. his Son) will not neglect to give us everything else that we need. Notice that the emphasis is upon those things which we need, not upon those things we desire or want. Christ taught that the Lord took care of the birds of the air and the lillies of the field. Man, who was made in the image of God, is more important in the sight of God than birds and flowers. Man would, therefore, be taken care of... IF (a big IF)...he would "BUT SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; ...what would be the results of this..."AND ALL THESE THINGS (physical blessings) SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU." (vs.33).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

1. This chapter concludes the "sermon on the mount". It contains several more teachings concerning subjects which the Lord already addressed, as well as information relative to new topics.
2. The first part of this chapter is quite often misunderstood. The first verse "Judge not, that ye be not judged" is one that is misapplied more than almost any other verse in the Bible. The import of the Bible's teaching on judging is this: 1) a person is able (and required) to make decisions involving judgement, and 2) those judgments are never to involve the person as a) his own standard of judgment, b) involved in vindictive and vengeful judgment, or c) the ultimate judge. That a person is to make judgements is amply taught elsewhere: 1) "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (Jn.7:24); 2) "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to DISCERN (i.e. judge) both good and evil." (Heb.5:14); et al. The latter part of this teaching on judgment (vs.3ff) admonishes brethren to be as good as they can be. Note that in Galatians 6:1 the brother told to help his brother in sin is the "spiritual" brother. If an alcoholic goes to rebuke and admonish another alcoholic, what good has been done? The greatest good is always going to be done by those who practice what they preach when restoration of the erring is the subject.
3. Immediately following Christ's teaching on judgment we note further instructions regarding prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." This verses have often been cited to argue that everything we want will be given to us if only we will ask God for them. THIS IS NOT THE TEACHING OF THESE VERSES. As always, when studying any Biblical teaching it is of the essence that the totality of the Bible's teaching be taken into consideration. In this juncture it is necessary to note James 4:3: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." True, the Lord does give the things we ask for, but the giving is conditioned upon making the proper requests. He is not going to give us something which we ask for to consume it upon our own desires. The extent to which he gives is further shown by comparing himself (i.e. God) with an earthly father. Just as a fleshly father seeks to provide for his own family, so does the heavenly Father provide for his own. He does not neglect to give us anything that we need essential to our salvation.

4. The twelfth verse of this chapter contains what we often refer to as the "golden rule". Note that Jesus said "for this is the law and the prophets." Several times in the New Testament we notice statements that say something to the effect that such fulfills the law, or the prophets, or the law and the prophets. Jesus is not saying that one statements teaches the same as all that is found in the law and the prophets, but rather he is saying that the principle found in vs.12 (and others) is the underlying principle upon which all of the law and the prophets rests. Note the number of times this phrase is used in the New Testament and in Matthew.
5. Following his statement about the golden rule, Jesus explains to his audience the numbers of the saved and the lost. Verse 13 teaches that many will go into the gate (i.e. the way) that leads to destruction. The very next verse teaches that there will be few that enter into the narrow gate (way) that leads to life. Note that Jesus said: "and few there be that FIND it." Those who are entering in through the proper gate are those who FOUND that gate. Matthew 13 teaches this same principle. The merchant man was searching for a goodly pearl. People must be of the disposition that they are seeking after God, after all, this is what God desires (cf. Ps.14, Ps.53, and Acts 17). Though the relative number of the saved when compared to the lost is given as FEW, that does not mean that the saved will be few in number. The book of Revelation teaches that John saw a multitude without number in heaven. The saved from all ages (Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian) will be there. It is still true, however, that the number of those saved today compared with the number of those lost today will be very small.
6. In the following section (vs.15-20) Jesus warns about false prophets. The very fact that he does so implies that false prophets could cause the saved to err from the faith. Peter addressed this same situation in II Peter 2. Paul spoke of false teachers numerous times (Acts 20, II Thes.2, et al.). Jude also discussed this subject. If it is true that a person could never fall from grace, then all of these passages are useless. Why would Jesus, Paul, Peter, and Jude warn the faithful of false teachers if those false teachers would have no effect upon them. Note also that Jesus indicated the method which false teachers employed. They did not present themselves openly as false teachers, but rather were like wolves in sheep's clothing. They appeared to be harmless, but they certainly were not. The last verse of this section (vs.20) teaches us that we can know something about a person's heart by the fruits that they produce. If a person is sincere, dedicated, and truly compassionate for the souls of the lost, then such qualities will be manifested in his outward actions. If, on the other hand, a person is insincere, hardened in heart, and hateful, then those qualities will be shown in his life. It is, therefore, false to say that we can not know ANYTHING about a person's heart. We may not be able to know everything, but we can know something.
7. The following section (vs.21-23) indicates the seriousness of claiming to follow Christ, but really following only outwardly. It is not enough to claim to follow him, one must be completely obedient, one must be constantly doing the will of the Father which is in heaven. Those who were only giving outward obedience were never really known by the Lord.
8. The final section of chapter seven provides us with the familiar illustration of the two houses, one built upon the rock and the other built upon the sand. The lesson is that we must build our lives upon the Christ, the rock of our salvation. Anything else will not suffice.
9. The last two verses indicate the authority of the Christ. The people were amazed because Jesus did not teach like the scribes, but as one who had authority. That authority came, of course, from the Father. Jesus was demonstrating to humankind that he was the Son of God by virtue of his authority which came from heaven. He also demonstrated the same truth via his miracles.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Within this chapter we see Jesus exercising his power to heal the sick. He healed a leper, a centurion's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, and also cast out demons. In addition to that he also quieted the storm. His miraculous power indicated that Jesus was in control of 1) the physical world, 2) the spiritual world, 3) the world of demons, and 4) physical man.

2. A most unusual lesson is seen in the story of the centurion's servant. The centurion, realizing the power of the Christ, knew that Jesus could heal his servant without actually being present. Jesus marvelled at such great faith. It is interesting to note that in almost every case when a person is praised for great faith, that person is a non-Jew. Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."
3. A lesson is presented in the middle of the chapter that is oftentimes confusing to the reader. One of the disciples said unto Jesus: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." On the surface, this seems to be a normal request. Jesus responded, however, in a way that seems harsh: "Follow me; and let the dead bury the dead." Matthew Henry emphasizes: "LET THE DEAD BUY THE DEAD. LET THE DEAD spiritually BURY THE DEAD corporally; let worldly offices be left to worldly people; do not thou encumber thyself with them. Burying the dead, and especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work, at this time: thou hast something else to do, and must not defer that. Piety to God must be preferred before piety of parents, though that is a great and needful part of religion. We must comparatively neglect and disesteem our nearest relations, when they come in competition with Christ, and either our doing for him, or our suffering for him." [Matthew Henry's Commentary, p.1242] The principle that is taught in this passage is quite simply this: We should seek first the kingdom of Christ. Anything else, regardless of how close it is to us, must take second place to the work of the Christ. [NOTE: It is postulated by many Bible scholars that the disciple's father was not yet dead, but rather just an aged man. His request, therefore, was to wait until his father died before he did the work of the Lord. Even if this possibility is not true and the man was already dead, the principle Jesus taught still applies.]
4. We mentioned previously that Jesus most often praise Gentiles for their great faith. In this chapter we also see the opposite of that, Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. (vs.26) We will notice several more times, as we read through the Bible, that this is true regarding the closest of his followers.
5. In the section dealing with the casting out of the demons, this point needs to be stressed. The demons knew who Jesus was. They even addressed him as "Jesus, thou Son of God." From this we learn that a mere recognition of the facts does not constitute everything necessary for salvation. A person might full well realize and understand everything that he/she needs to do in order to become a Christian, but simply knowing it will not saved that person. Knowledge of the truth must be applied to our live in complete obedience.

## CHAPTER NINE

1. In the opening verses of the ninth chapter we note that Jesus comes under the attack of the scribes. Jesus told a man "thy sins be forgiven thee." This caused the scribes to think that Jesus was being blasphemous. Only God could forgive sins, but they failed to realize that Jesus was the Son of God. Notice that Jesus knew their thoughts (cf. John 2:24-25) even before they said anything. Notice also that Jesus said: "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" The evil originated within them, not from the outside. This is just one of the many passages that teach that a man can sin inwardly. Jesus then set forth the truth of the matter: "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." The multitudes, when they saw it, marveled and gave glory to God for such power which had been given unto men.
2. The following verse (vs.9-13) provide us with an account of the call of Matthew (also called Levi). Because he was a publican (tax-collector), and because Jesus was eating with publicans and sinners, the Pharisees questioned the disciples. Jesus taught that those who are sick need the doctor, not those who are well. The sinners needed the Christ, and Christ went to them.
3. When the disciples of John (i.e. John the Baptist) came and questioned Jesus about fasting, Jesus taught them that such (i.e. fasting) was not appropriate at this time. This was true because: 1) such was not necessary while the Christ was with them, and 2) because his teachings were not just to reform the law (Judaism), that is they were not intended to patch up the law (hence the reference to using new cloth on old garments and new wine and old bottles), but Jesus came to fulfill the law. At that time it would be removed and the new dispensation, the Christian age, would be in effect.

4. Another example of faith in a person is presented in the account of the woman who touched the garment of the Christ hoping that she might be healed of her disease. Jesus told her: "thy faith hath made thee whole." This sort of example is often turned to in order to uphold the doctrine of salvation by faith only. This is an unfair exegesis of the passage for the following reasons: 1) ultimate salvation is not the topic under consideration in this passage, 2) her faith made her whole, not because she kept it to herself, but rather because it caused her to do something about her situation. She had the faith to try to reach the Christ and touch his garment. Begin made whole refers to her healing and not to her ultimate salvation.
5. Jesus once again present his power over all by raising the daughter of the ruler (later identified as Jairus). Though she was already dead, Jesus said she was only sleeping. Those who heard this laughed him to scorn, but Jesus brought her forth alive. As a result of this incident, his fame spread throughout the land.
6. In the remaining portion of the chapter we note: 1) the healing of two blind men. Note that when Jesus learned of their faith he said: "According to your faith be it unto you." 2) the casting out of a devil. Jesus cast a demon out of a dumb man and he was then able to speak. The multitudes marveled at this event, but the Pharisees accused Christ of performing this acts by the power of Satan. 3) Jesus showed his compassion upon the multitudes because they were like sheep without a shepherd. His final words in this chapter emphasize the necessity of more laborers in the kingdom. Such is still the case today. There are many, many more souls to be saved than there are people willing to help save them. Such should not be the case, for the church should be wholly involved in her mission of saving souls. If she were, the problem would not exist.

#### CHAPTER TEN

1. The first section of this chapter informs us of the calling of the twelve (apostles) and provides us with a listing of their names.
2. Immediately following, we note their mission which Jesus gave unto them. It has often been referred to as the "limited commission" because of its scope. The "great commission" encompassed the entire world and every soul in that world, but this commission was specifically to the house of Israel, the Jews. The disciples were to go forth preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. This is the same message that John the Baptist began to proclaim. It was also the message of the Christ. They (the disciples) were given miraculous powers to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. They were to take only the minimum necessities, relying primarily upon the generosity of the people they met.
3. Jesus also warned the disciples of the persecutions that they would receive. Paul said that all who lived godly in Christ Jesus would suffer persecutions. (cf. II Tim. 3:12) That same principle applies not only to the disciples of Jesus day, but also to Christians today. Jesus told them that if he were persecuted, they could rest assured that they would be as well. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." In the midst of such persecution Jesus said that they must still continue to confess him. This involved not just a physical confession, but a confession of life. It must be their way of life to stand for the truths of the Lord. Those who failed to confess the Lord would not be confessed by the Christ to the Father in heaven.
4. In the next to the last section of the chapter Jesus spoke about the divisions that would come as a result of people who stood for the truth. Though Jesus is referred to as the Prince of Peace, his teachings seemed to cut like a sword. This was not the intention of the Christ. Those who accepted his teachings and lived in harmony with them would realize the peace that passes understanding, but those who refused to accept the teachings of Christ and refused to practice them in their lives would view the gospel as a sword. Jesus further emphasizes that we must not put mother, father, son or daughter, before him. We must give up those things which we desire for the sake of the flesh in order to have eternal life.
5. In the last section of the chapter (vs.40-42) Jesus speaks of the good works which would one day reward the disciples. Even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple would be remembered. Those who received the disciples received the Father.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. The first nineteen verses of this chapter concern themselves with John the Baptist. We learned from the fourth chapter of Matthew that Jesus began his ministry following the imprisonment of John. At this point John was still in prison. Exactly how much time transpired between the beginning of his imprisonment and this event is not known for a certainty. John sent inquiring of Christ, for he (i.e. John) heard of the works of the Christ. Jesus told the disciples of John that; 1) the blind can now see, 2) the lame can now walk, 3) the lepers are being cleansed, 4) the deaf hear, 5) the dead are raised, and 6) the gospel is being preached unto the poor. Many have mistakenly assumed that because the gospel was being preached, the church of the Lord was therefore in existence. If this were true, then the church existed during the days of Abraham for the gospel was preached unto him (cf. Galatians 3:8). Jesus answer was meant to confirm the fact that he (i.e. Jesus) was indeed the Messiah, the Christ.
2. After the disciples left, Jesus continued to speak about John to the multitudes. He said: 1) John was not a reed shaken with the wind, 2) John was not a man clothed in soft raiment (not a rich man), 3) John was a prophet, but more than a prophet, 4) he was the messenger the Malachi and Isaiah spoke of, 5) of them born of women, none were as great as John the Baptist, 6) John was Elijah which was to come, and 7) those who were least in the kingdom of heaven were greater than he. This last statement is only possible when we realize that John was not in the kingdom of heaven (the church). This facet of Christ's teaching is most important. The date of the church's establishment came on the day of Pentecost immediately following the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Christ. The church did not, therefore, begin at any time other than that day of Pentecost. It did not begin during the life of Jesus the Christ. It did not begin prior to the life of Christ, during the days of Abraham or the days of John the Baptist. It did not begin during the period between the resurrection and the ascension or between the ascension and the day of Pentecost. It was established on the day of Pentecost. That aspect of the Bible's teaching is often misunderstood by non-Christians and Christians alike. If we do not know when the church started, then we can not know what man must do in order to be saved. If the church started at some other time than Pentecost, then it is possible to affirm a different mode of salvation. BUT THE CHURCH DID NOT START AT SOME OTHER TIME. Because this is true, we can know what a person needs to do to be saved and we can preach and teach without reservation that those who teach contrary to the Bible teaching are false.
3. In the second section of the chapter (vs.20-24) Jesus spoke of the judgment which was to come. He upbraided the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida for their unbelief. He states that Tyre and Sidon would have repented if the mighty works done by the Christ were performed there. In this we learn that Christ had a knowledge of contingencies, he knew what would have happened if circumstances were different. In this same regard, God knew that if David hid from Saul in certain places that he (i.e. David) would be found. The knowledge of God is not limited by time as is our knowledge. God transcends both time and space.
4. The closing verses constitute what we often call "the great invitation." The impact of this invitation is enormous. Would Jesus invite all of the world ("all ye that labor") is it were impossible for all of the world to respond to his invitation? Would it be fair for the Christ to extend such an invitation if some people were destined (regardless of what they did in this life) to hell? Such would be monstrous if this false doctrine of predestination were true, but IT IS NOT. Every person has the freedom of will to choose right and wrong. Christ encourages them to choose (implying volition) the right way, for the right way provides eternal blessings.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. The initial section of this chapter has proved to be most troublesome to Bible students and Bible scholars. The disciples of Christ went through a field of corn on the sabbath and ate some of the corn. The Pharisees, when they say this, accused the disciples of breaking the law of Moses as it related to the sabbath. The answer which Jesus gave informed them that they had their understanding of the sabbath backward. The Pharisees maintained that David was correct in his action of eating the showbread of the temple. Jesus plainly stated that this was not lawful for David to do.

David broke the law concerning the sanctity of the temple. The disciples, however, did that which was allowed on the sabbath day, but the Pharisees said that it was not allowed. This was due to their misunderstanding of the law of Moses. Jesus' statement that he was "Lord even of the sabbath day" is also quite misunderstood by some. It has been interpreted to mean that Jesus knew that his disciples broke the law, but because Jesus was "Lord of the sabbath" he could break the law and allow his disciples to do so. One person said: "The sabbath was made for humanity, the Lord of humanity is Lord of sabbath; therefore, he had the right to make any change in it, in the interest of mankind, that seemed to him wise." Jesus never sinned (Heb.4:14ff), nor did he ever encourage someone else to sin or cover up for those who did sin. Jesus taught the truth concerning the proper interpretation of the law of Moses.

2. After this incident, Jesus went into a synagogue. It was there that he healed a man with a withered hand. The Jews had asked him whether or not it was right to heal on the sabbath day in order that they might accuse him. Jesus informed them that they themselves would not allow a sheep, which fell into a pit, to remain there on the sabbath day. Men were more important than sheep, therefore it was within the scope of the law of Moses to heal a man on the sabbath day.
3. Later a man was brought to Jesus that was possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb. Jesus healed this man and the Pharisees, when they heard it accused Jesus of performing these feats by the power of Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, informed them that: 1) a kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, 2) a house divided against itself can not stand, 3) if Satan cast out Satan he is divided against himself and his kingdom could not stand. Jesus affirmed that he cast out demons by the power of the Spirit of God. If this were true, and it was, then the kingdom of God is come unto them.
4. Immediately following this we note the following: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." I have note two major interpretations of the preceding passage: 1) the sin against the Spirit involved attributing the works of the Spirit to Satan, and 2) the sin against the Spirit involved denying the gospel of Christ during the final Christian dispensation. Both of the interpretations have merit, but which one of them applies as the correct interpretation of this passage will require further study on my part. I suggest that you study this matter by consulting various commentaries.
5. In the following section of this chapter (vs.33-37) we see another affirmation of the fact that a man can sin inwardly. Jesus said: "...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." He further taught that men would be judged by the words they spoke (vs.36).
6. In the next section (vs.38-45) we note that the Pharisees sought to see a sign from the Lord. Their request was most inappropriate in that Jesus had performed numerous signs in their presence. Jesus then spoke of Jonah and his relationship to him. Just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, so would the Christ be three days in the heart of the earth. This was, of course, a reference to the time period which Christ would spend in the grave and after which he would rise from the grave. Jesus further convicts the Jews by: 1) pointing out that the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, but the Jews of Christ's day did not repent at the preaching of the Christ, who was greater than Jonah. 2) That point is further emphasized when Jesus maintains that although Solomon was wise, his (i.e. Solomon's) wisdom was nothing compared to the wisdom of the Christ. The last part of this section emphasizes the necessity of not only removing that which is wrong in our lives, but also of adding that which is right. The unclean spirit returned and found a place just right for him. The latter situation was therefore worse than the first.
7. The final section of chapter twelve deals with the true family of God. Jesus said: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Family ties are important, but the bonds which link Christians together should be greater. It is sad to say that the Christian ties are weaker than family ties.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. The entire thirteenth chapter, with the exception of a very few verses, centers around the kingdom of heaven (kingdom of God). Most of the teachings of Christ concerning the kingdom are told through the use of parables. A parable is a story told in allegorical form. It uses common everyday scenes in order to portray deeper spiritual truths. The word parable literally means to cast along side of. The common story is placed alongside the spiritual story and points of parallel are brought out.
2. The first of these parables is the parable of the sower or the parable of the seed. The sower scattered the seed (the word of God, Luke 8:11), and depending upon the type of ground the seed landed upon, it either lived or died. Jesus explained the parable in vs. 18-23. The ground which brought forth fruit was the person who received the word of God, understood it, and finally bore fruit. The rest of the soils represented those people who were less than totally obedient to the truth of God's word.
3. Jesus explains his use of parables by pointing out these facts: 1) those who were seeking for the truth of God would understand the parables or inquire of the meaning of them, 2) those who did not care about the truth of God would not understand the parable or bother to ask about their meaning.
4. Jesus also presents parables about 1) wheat and tares, 2) mustard seed, 3) leaven, 4) hidden treasure, 5) a pearl of great price, and 6) a parable about a net. Each of these parables was intended to convey some important truth about the kingdom of heaven (the church). The parable of the wheat and tares illustrates and emphasizes that Satan is sowing his seed at the same time that Christ is sowing his. The two fruits of the two seeds would remain until the day of judgment, at which time they would be harvested and separated. The parable of the mustard seed emphasizes the growth and the influence which would be characteristic of the kingdom of heaven. The parable of the leaven also teaches about the influence and the growth of the church. The parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl of great price both address the importance of 1) seeking the truth, 2) doing all that one can in order to obtain the truth, and 3) keeping the truth after it is found. The parable of the net teaches about the judgment which was to come when the good fish would be gathered into the vessels and the bad would be cast out.
5. The last section of the chapter (vs. 53ff) shows us the reception that was given Jesus in his own country. The people of Nazareth could only see the human side of Christ. After all, wasn't he the carpenter's son, the son of Mary, don't we know his brothers and sisters? These things were said as if to ask: how could he be the Son of God?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. The first 14 verses of this chapter deal with the beheading of John the Baptist. When Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Christ he thought that John the Baptist had risen from the grave. Herod had John the Baptist imprisoned and subsequently had him beheaded. One of the most important things to notice from this passage beside the sad fact that John the Baptist was slain, is the teaching he presented concerning marriage. Notice vs. 3-4: "For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her." Note the following important lessons that we learn from this passage: 1) Herod was married to a woman which was not subject to be married to him. 2) Though Herod was married to her (in the sight of men), the text plainly refers to her as "his brother Philip's wife." She was, therefore, still the wife of Herod's brother even though Herod had taken her as his own wife. The binding relationship of marriage is here set forth. Man can not marry just any one he want; only those that are qualified for marriage can be married by another party that is also qualified for marriage. In this case Herodias was unqualified. She was still the wife of another man. 3) Third, and perhaps the most important aspect of this lesson, we learn that John said that "It is not lawful for thee (Herod) to have her." It must be pointed out that Herod was not a Jew. He was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau, and not a descendant of Jacob. He was not, therefore, bound by the law of Moses. Furthermore, it must be noted that Herod did not break the

civil law of his day. Roman law would have allowed his actions. What, then, was the law that he had broken? The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Herod went against God's eternal law concerning marriage and divorce, a law which applied not only to the Jews as found in the laws of Moses, but a law which applied to all men everywhere. Principles of the law of Moses applied to other people other than the Jews. Murder is wrong regardless of the application of the laws of Moses. In addition, we would affirm that stealing, lying, adultery, and fornication are also wrong, regardless of the law of Moses. Though the law of Moses was not specifically addressed to the whole world, the principles within the law were such that man should have known of them. Herod sinned, therefore, against God by marrying someone whom he was not allowed to marry. That same principle applies today, to both the Christian and the non-Christian. God's laws concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage apply to all people.

2. In the fourteenth chapter we also note the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. This magnificent feat surely manifests the deity of the Christ and his authority.
3. Toward the latter part of the chapter we learn of the account of Jesus walking on the water. Notice that Peter, attempting to walk toward the Lord, began to sink into the water. The Lord rebuke him saying: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This provides us with another example of someone close to Jesus faltering due to a lack of faith.

#### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. In the initial part of this chapter Jesus is confronted by the scribes and the Pharisees over the question of the tradition of the elders. It was the tradition of the elders to wash their hands before they eat bread. When the Jews saw that the disciples of Christ did not keep the traditions of the elders they asked the Lord about the matter. Jesus set forth the true teaching concerning the matter by pointing out: 1) The Jews transgressed the commandment of God by keeping their traditions. By keeping the traditions of the elders they made the commandments of God of none effect. The practice of washing hands is not inherently sinful (i.e. it is not in and of itself a sinful practice), but when the Jews required it as obedience to God they made their tradition to be sin. 2) The Jew drew close to God with their mouths, but in reality their hearts were far from him. 3) They worshiped God in vain. 4) They taught as "gospel" the commandments of men. 5) That which defiles a man is not that which goes into his mouth, but that which come out of his mouth (i.e. his words). 6) Jesus further taught that every plant which his heavenly Father did not plant would be rooted up. Remember in chapter thirteen that Jesus, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, taught that both the fruit of Satan and the fruit of the Christ would remain until the day of judgment, but in that day the tares would be separated. Likewise, those "plants" (traditions, churches, false religions, et al.) which God did not establish would last, some even until the day of judgment, but at that time they would be rooted up. 7) Jesus further emphasized an important lesson that we have already noted in Matthew 5:28ff and Matthew 12:34ff. Verse 19 says: "For out of the HEART proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:..." This passage once again shows that sin originates from within a man. It is false to say that the man can not sin inwardly.
2. In the second portion of the chapter we notice another example of great faith by the Canaanite woman. Though Jesus came for the purpose of teaching the Jews of the kingdom to come, when this woman persisted in her quest for help, the Lord, according to her faith, healed her daughter. Jesus said "great is thy faith...".
3. The remainder of the chapter speaks of further miracles which Christ performed and the feeding of another multitude, this one of four thousand men besides the women and children.

#### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. In the initial section of this chapter Jesus warns the disciples of the leaven (teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The disciples misunderstood Christ, and thought that he was speaking of actual food. Christ rebuked them and asked them if they remembered the feeding of the five thousand and the feeding of the four thousand. It was not food

- that Christ was concerned about, for he most certainly proved that he could provide for that, but it was the false teachings of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
2. In the second section of the chapter we learn of the confession of Peter. Many of the people maintained that Christ was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. From their opinions of the Christ we can quite obviously see that they regarded him quite highly. The men mentioned were great men to the faithful Jew. To be considered as equal or comparable to them would have been a great compliment indeed, but Christ was greater than any of these. In Matthew 12 we learn that Christ was greater than Jonah (one of the prophets) and greater even than Solomon (a Jewish king widely known for his great wisdom). It was Peter who correctly referred to the Christ as "the Son of the living God." Christ was more than a prophet; he was the Son of God. His church was built upon himself as the Son of God. Peter was not the head of the church or the foundation of it. He was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (the church), but these privileges were not to be his only. Matthew 18:18 and John 20:23 both teach that the binding and loosing ascribed to Peter in Matthew 16:19 were also later ascribed to the rest of the disciples. The church which Jesus spoke of was his church. It is singular in number and singular in purpose. Jesus said "I WILL build my church". It had not yet been built, but it was to be built in the future.
  3. The following section of the chapter tells us that Jesus began to speak of the time that he would suffer and be killed and be raised again the third day. Peter, upon hearing of this, told the Lord that he (i.e. Peter) would not allow this to happen. Christ told him: "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter did not fully understand the mission and purpose of Christ. It was Christ's mission to die upon the cross in order to provide men with the remission of sins. The prophets spoke of this (e.g. Isaiah 53) and it was meant to be fulfilled.
  4. In the last portion of the chapter Jesus spoke of: 1) the value of the soul. A man must deny himself, that is deny his fleshly desires, in order to obtain an eternal reward. The whole world is not worth the value of one soul. 2) A man must carry his cross. He must, as Paul said, be crucified daily (Gal.2:20) for the sake of the Christ. He must daily do the Lord's will and forsake his own fleshly will. His desire should be to harmonize his will with the will of the Christ. 3) Note that Jesus said men would be rewarded according to their works. Just as works will count toward the condemnation of man (II Cor.5:10), so will they count toward the redemption of man. That is not to say that a person can be saved through works alone. Such is indeed a false doctrine, but rather it is to say that works contribute to the salvation of man as does faith, hope, love, grace, baptism, repentance, confession, et al 4) The last great lesson to be mentioned here is found in the last verse of the chapter (cf. Mk.9:1). Jesus said that some of those who were present as he spoke would also be present when the Son of man came in his kingdom. They would not die (i.e. some of them would not die) until (i.e. before) that time came. This teaches us: a) that the kingdom came during the lives of those men, or b) the kingdom has not yet come and some of those men are still living today almost 2000 years later. It is ridiculous, of course, to even consider the latter as a viable alternative. The former position is the correct one; the kingdom came during the lives of some of those men during the days of the first century (specifically on the day of Pentecost immediately following the ascension of Christ.)

#### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. This chapter teaches us of the transfiguration of the Christ. Jesus with the disciples Peter, James, and John went upon a mountain. There Jesus appeared transfigured before them with Elijah and Moses. Peter was considering building three tabernacles, one for each of them (i.e. Christ, Elijah, and Moses). While he was yet speaking, a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." You will recognize these words to be very similar to the words of the Father as recorded in Matthew 3 after Jesus was baptized of John. The difference is in the last phrase which is recorded here. God said: "Hear ye him." Christ was in the presence of Moses, the

lawgiver, and Elijah, a great prophet of God. Hebrews 1:1 teaches: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world;..." On this occasion, God pointed out the supremacy of Christ over Moses and the prophets by saying "hear ye him." Christ is now the sole source of authority in religion. When the disciples asked about Elijah who was to come prior to the Christ, Jesus informed them that he came already. Following his explanation "the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

2. When Jesus returned from the mount he learned of a man that the disciples were not able to heal. We are told that such did not occur because of the lack of faith that the disciples had. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and cast the demon out of the man that the disciples could not heal. [NOTE: In vs. 22-23 Jesus again speaks of the time when he would be crucified.]
3. The last section of the chapter deals with the question of paying tribute money. Jesus told Peter to pay the tribute lest they should offend someone.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. In the opening section of the chapter Jesus is asked by the disciples about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (cf. ch.20:20ff). Jesus informed them that they must: 1) be converted, 2) become as little children, 3) and humble himself as a child in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven or to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. This section is immensely important in view of the false position which says that a child is born into sin. One denominational preacher went so far as to say that there were children in hell not a span long. If children are born sinful, then Jesus was mistaken in telling his disciples to become as little children. But Jesus was not mistaken in anything, therefore the doctrine that children are born sinful is incorrect. Children are born pure and sinless. Their humility and innocence ought to be duplicated in the heart of every Christian.
2. In vs.6-10 Jesus talked about the seriousness of sin. If it were possible to pluck out an eye or to cut off a hand or a foot in order to avoid eternal perdition, then such should be done. The principle taught is that we should do all that we possibly can in order to avoid hell, and do everything that we can in order to obtain salvation.
3. In the following section Jesus speaks about his concern and the Father's concern for the lost. He said: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." (cf. Luke 19:10) If one sheep goes astray Jesus will do all that he can in order to return the sheep to the fold. He further stated: "Even so it is NOT the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." (cf. 2 Pet.3:9; I Tim.2:4; et al.) It is God's intention to bring all to salvation, but those who willfully are disobedient to the Lord will not obtain salvation unless they repent of their sins.
4. In the next section Jesus speaks about the obligations of his disciples to another involved in sin. 1) If a brother sins against thee, the disciple was to go and speak to the brother alone. 2) If he did not respond, than the brother was to go unto the erring one with one or two more, that in the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses every word might be established. 3) If this failed it should be reported unto the church. 4) If the erring brother neglects to hear the church then he was to be considered to be as a heathen and a publican.
5. In the last section of the chapter Jesus speaks about forgiveness. He was asked by Peter how many times a brother was to forgive another. Jesus told him 70 times 7, that is, always forgive your brother if he is willing to repent (cf. Luke 17:3). He then provided Peter with an illustration of forgiveness. A certain king forgave one of his servants of a very large debt. That same servant went out and sought to force his fellow servants to pay what they owed, not mindful that he had just been forgiven an even greater debt. Jesus said that that this paralleled forgiveness of God and man. When the king learned of the wicked servants behaviour, he made him pay all that he originally owed him. We must be willing to forgive just as God forgives us. That is not to say that forgiveness is obtained by those who are unwilling to repent. God

does not, and cannot, forgive someone of those sins that are not repented of. Divine justice requires that repentance proceed forgiveness of sins.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

1. In first 12 verses of this chapter deal with a most important subject in the church and in the world today. The Pharisees came to the Christ, in an effort to tempt him, saying : "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The ideas of the Jews during the day of Christ ranged between two extremes concerning divorce and remarriage. At one end of the extreme were those Jews who maintained that a woman could be divorced for any reason, and at the other end were those Jews who held that a woman could not be divorced for any reason. As is usually the case with such misinterpretations, the truth was somewhere in between. It is important to realize that this same range of ideas is present within the church and the world today. Some of the ideas maintained are: 1) death is the only cause for remarriage, 2) divorce and remarriage is allowed if it occurs before baptism because at the point of baptism all sins are washed away, 3) divorce and remarriage is allowed if it occurs before baptism because those not in the church are not subject to Christ's law, 4) if the believer [in a mixed marriage: Christian and non-Christian] is forsaken by the unbeliever he is free to remarry, 5) both parties can remarry if for fornication [i.e. the innocent and the guilty can remarry], 6) divorce and remarriage are allowed as long as it is for some legal cause [i.e. any legal cause], and 7) divorce and remarriage are allowed regardless of the cause. ALL OF THE ABOVE POSITIONS ARE FALSE. Divorce and remarriage is allowed only in the case of fornication, and then only for the innocent party. The party guilty of the fornication cannot remarry with God's approval. This question has raised some very serious queries by people. Don't we have freedom on Christ? Yes, we most certainly do. Isn't the United States of America a free country. Yes, it most certainly is. Can't we therefore do as we please? No, we most certainly can't. All of us realize that it is quite possible for a person to behave in such a way as to result in the loss of some of the freedoms of life. The man or woman that habitually drinks and drives may lose his/her license. The person that makes a life of stealing from others may lose his privilege to walk the streets as a free man. A person guilty of murdering several people can very well lose his right to his life. All of these illustrations are given in view of the principle that people can, and do, lose certain freedoms due to the way that they live. This same principle is applicable to God's law of marriage and divorce and remarriage. It is possible for a person to live in such a way that he violates God's laws governing marriage, that such a person loses his right to be married to anyone in God's sight. Such considerations are grave to say the least, and that makes the subject of marriage and divorce all that more important to be studied. Christ set forth some very basic principles concerning marriage. 1) In the beginning God made male and female. 2) Male and female become one flesh in marriage. 3) What God has joined together man is not to put asunder. That is not to say, however, that God can not separate what has been joined because of the sins of man. 4) Moses allowed a writing of divorcement because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews. 5) From the beginning it was always God's intention that there be one man and one woman in the marriage relationship. 6) Whosoever [THE EXTENT OF THIS WORD MEANS JUST THAT. WHOSOEVER, ANY ONE AND EVERY ONE. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THE WORD WHOSOEVER, IN OR OUT OF THE CHURCH. IT APPLIES EQUALLY TO CHRISTIANS AND NON-CHRISTIANS. THIS PASSAGE DOES NOT APPLY EXCLUSIVELY TO CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO OTHER CHRISTIANS AS IS MAINTAINED BY SOME.] puts away his wife except for the cause of fornication and marries another is guilty of adultery. 7) Whoso marries her that is put away is also guilty of adultery. There are three, AND ONLY THREE, classes of people that are eligible to be married. 1) Those who have never been married before, 2) those who have been married before and whose spouse has died, and 3) those who have been married before but were divorced due to fornication and who were also the innocent party. There exists no other class of people that may remarry. These applications apply to everyone in the world. Each person must not only be personally qualified, but he/she must also marry another person who is likewise qualified. To be qualified for marriage and

then to marry someone who is not qualified is to engage in an unauthorized marriage. Because of the importance of this subject I encourage you to study the following books: CHARTS YOU CAN USE IN PREACHING, TEACHING, AND STUDYING ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE, by Thomas B. Warren, YOUR MARRIAGE CAN BE GREAT, edited by Thomas B. Warren, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE: ARE NON-CHRISTIANS AMENABLE TO THE LAW OF CHRIST?, a debate between E.C. Fuqua and Thomas B. Warren, THE CONNALLY-HICKS DEBATE ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE, a debate between Andrew Connally and Olan Hicks, KEEPING THE LOCK IN WEDLOCK, by Thomas B. Warren, AND I SAY UNTO YOU..., by James O. Baird, and MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE by Roy Lanier.

2. Another great lesson is taught in this chapter, this one concerning a man's love for physical possessions. A young man came to the Lord and asked him what he (i.e. the young man) needed to do in order to have eternal life. The Lord told him that he would have to keep the commandments, and then he went through several of the ten commandments. The young man informed Jesus that these were being kept, but there was something else missing. Jesus said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." When the young man heard that he went away sorrowful, because he was very rich. Jesus then said to his disciples: "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Jesus did not say that rich people would not be able to inherit eternal life. We must remember that Abraham was a very rich man, yet Lazarus is represented as going to Abraham's bosom. Joseph of Arimathea, the man who claimed the body of Christ and assisted in the burial of the Christ, was a very rich man. Jesus simply taught that it would be difficult to obtain heaven if you were rich because you would have a greater temptation than most to cling to riches. Peter set forth the right attitude when he said "we hath forsaken all." This did not mean that he no longer cared for his family (cf. I Cor.9:5) or for anyone else, but it does mean that he had put Christ first in his life. Jesus said that those who "hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." The passage teaches that those who follow the Lord first and foremost, will indeed receive blessings in this life. Jesus said in Mt.6:33 that the necessities of life would be given to those who seek first God and his kingdom.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

1. The parable which takes up the first 16 verses of this chapter is very important. It must be viewed in light of the last verse of the previous chapter: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." In the parable we note that a certain householder hired men to labor in his vineyard. As the day progressed he continued to hire men, finally hiring some man right up at the end of the day. When the day was done and the work was completed, the household began to pay the men for their labor. He gave the men who began last a penny each. When the men who started earlier saw this, they assumed that they were going to receive much more than the penny that they agreed to work for, but they did not. All of the men received the same amount. In the parable, the amount paid to each of the men represented eternal life. All men, regardless of the amount of labor that they put into the vineyard of the Lord, can obtain eternal life. Does this teach, therefore, that a person can refrain from doing what he knows he should and still obtain eternal reward? No, the parable was not intended to teach this. Neither was it intended to teach that works have no part in salvation. The exact opposite is the case; works have a great deal to do with salvation. The point of the parable is that the number of works does not merit salvation. Paul who did more than probably all of us, did not earn salvation simply because of the quantity of his works, but rather because of the quality. The parable teaches that all who sincerely do the best that they can (regardless of the quantity) can obtain eternal life. The emphasis is on the quality of the service. The passage does not teach that everyone should wait until the last minute to become Christian, otherwise known as "death-bed repentance". The men who received a penny after working only the shortest time, received it because they WORKED and not because they accepted Jesus into their hearts as their personal saviour, or because they prayed through to the Lord.

2. In vs.17-19 Jesus again spoke of his future death.
3. In vs.20-29 Jesus was asked by the mother of Zebedee's children (i.e. the mother of James and John) if her two sons could sit on either side of the Christ in his kingdom. The mother evidently thought that the kingdom was going to be a physical one. Jesus set forth the following principles regarding greatness: 1) The Gentiles seek greatness by exercising authority over people. 2) Such was not to be the case among the disciples. 3) The greatest among them would be the minister of all. 4) This would be the case because Christ, the Son of man, came not to be ministered unto, but rather to minister unto others.
5. The last portion of the chapter teaches us of the healing of two blind men by Jesus. Note that these men called Jesus "Lord" and "son of David". It seems as if they recognized something of the true identity of the Christ.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1. It is now within the last days of the Christ. Since the beginning of his ministry (ch.4) almost 3-3½ years have taken place. We must remember that we only have a small sampling of the teachings of the Christ and of his miracles. John said that the world could not contain the books it would take to fully chronicle the life and teachings of the Christ.
2. Now, toward the end of his life and ministry, Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem. The entrance occurred just as it was prophesied by Zechariah (cf. Zechariah 9). It is interesting to note the fact that a very great multitude greeted the Lord as he came within the city, almost as if they were honoring a victorious captain returning from battle. Yet, within the following short week, Christ the king would be crucified just a little way from the city of Jerusalem. Note the references to the honor which was given Christ. The people called him 1) King, 2) the Son of David, 3) he that cometh in the name of the Lord, and 4) the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.
3. In the section immediately following, we note the account of Jesus' cleansing of the temple. The Lord quoted a passage from the book of Isaiah, which stated that the house of the Lord would be a house of prayer, but the Jews which Jesus drove from the temple had turned it into a den of thieves.
4. In the latter part of the chapter (vs.23-27) Jesus was questioned about his authority by the chief priests and elders. They wanted to know by what authority Jesus acted, and who it was that gave him that authority. Jesus in turn asked them a question concerning the baptism of John (i.e. the Baptist). "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" The question was quite simple enough. All authority and all acts are either divinely or humanly sanctioned. The baptism of John was an act, and it came, therefore, either through the authority of men or of God. There are not any other alternatives. The Jews, however, were stumped by Jesus question, but it was not because of its difficulty, but rather because they realized that regardless of their answer they would endanger themselves. If they said that the baptism of John came from heaven, that is by the authority of heaven (God), then Jesus would ask them why they refused to be obedient to the commands of God, for they rejected the baptism of John (cf. Luke 7:29-30). If, on the other hand, they said that the baptism of John was of men, they (the Jews) feared the people, for the people all considered John to be a prophet. Either way they trapped themselves, so they lied and said that they did not know the answer. Jesus, therefore, refused to answer their question concerning his authority. A very important lesson can be learned from this. It is always possible to point out the errors of religious and non-religious people simply by asking them questions. Any person who holds to something that is false can be shown that their position is self-contradictory. Every false way is. There are no exceptions. It applies to every form of false doctrine. Only the truth can be perfectly harmonized. This is why those who teach error seek to rewrite the Bible and reinterpret the Bible. They know that their positions will not match up to the truth, so they just change the truth (cf. Romans 1).
5. The parable of the two sons which follows shows a good example of repentance. A father asked each of his sons to go work in his vineyard. One said that he would, then he refused to go. The other said that he would not, but then he changed his mind and went.



When Jesus asked the Jews which of the two sons did the will of the father, the answer given was the son who at first refused but then went. Jesus therefore said: "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." The Jews to whom Jesus was speaking were like the son who said that he would go and then refused, but the publicans and the harlots were likened unto the son who initially refused to go and finally went.

6. Jesus continued addressing the Jews through the means of another parable (vs.33ff). As did the previous parable, this one was designed to impress upon the Jews the gravity of their own situation. Jesus told them the illustration of a man who owned a vineyard. He hired me to work in the vineyard and when the time came he sent his servants to the men who were hired (or who were renting the vineyard) in order that they (the servants of the vineyard's owner) might receive some of the fruits of the vineyard. The men who worked the vineyard beat and even killed one of the servants. The owner later sent more servants. They were treated the same way. Last, the owner sent his own son thinking that he would be given the respect which the others had not been given. The men who worked the vineyard, rather than giving the son of the owner respect, treated him like the rest, and eventually slew him. Jesus then asked the Jews what the owner of the vineyard would do when he came to these men. The Jews responded saying that "he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Their answer was correct, but they did not immediately understand the full impact of the parable. Jesus then spoke about the "rejected stone", the Messiah who was to come but who would be denied by his own people. That "stone" was, of course, Christ the Messiah; but the Jews of Jesus' day almost totally rejected Jesus. As a result: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Finally, "when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them." The Jews, due to their wholesale rejection of the Son of God, would lose their blessed status of "God's chosen people". In the book of Acts we learn that Paul often went to the synagogue to proclaim the truth of the gospel to his countrymen, but when the Jews rejected that truth, Paul went to the Gentiles who gladly received the precious treasure of truth.
7. Note the last verse in ch.21. The chief priests and Pharisees sought to take Jesus, but, because they feared the multitude which thought Christ to be a prophet, they refrained from doing anything...at that time. We already mentioned previously in this chapter that the Jews were afraid to speak the truth in answer to Jesus' question about the baptism of John. One of the reasons that they had in mind centered around the same thoughts as we see in the last verse of the chapter; they were afraid of the people. When truth is commonly supported by the people, its opponents are a bit more cautious in their actions. The public opinion had to be changed for them to have free course in their ideas. Later, we will note just such a change.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. The first 14 verses of this chapter relate the parable of the marriage feast. The parable emphasizes several important truths which we need to comprehend and apply: 1) the feast itself is, of course, representative of the kingdom of heaven; 2) the invitation was initially made to the Jewish nation; 3) upon the rejection of Christ by the Jews, the invitation was made to all people; 4) the importance of the feast (the kingdom) dictated that excuses were/are not to be accepted; 5) though the invitation is open to all people, certain conditions must still be met; 6) we have the responsibility of bidding all to come to the feast. Though not all will respond to the invitation of heaven, that invitation must still be given. The last verse of the parable (vs.14): "Many are called, but few are chosen" emphasizes the strictness of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 7:13ff and 21ff we noted that the way was straight and narrow and that not all who thought they were alright were in reality chosen (i.e. saved). The phrase does not mean that God arbitrarily "chooses" who will be saved regardless of what we do. Such is false teaching. A person is "chosen" when he (the individual) chooses to be completely obedient to the teachings of the Christ.
2. In the section section of the chapter we note once again (cf. ch.17:24) the question about the tribute money. Jesus taught that it was right to pay what the law required concerning taxes and thus confounded those who came trying to tempt him once again.

3. In the following section of the chapter we note a further attempt by the Jews to catch the Lord in some error. The Sadducees, that sect of the Jews which denied the reality of the bodily resurrection, came with quite a question for the Lord. They were wondering about the woman who had numerous husbands during her life and her final marital status in the resurrection. Because they believed that the resurrection did not exist, they were convinced that Jesus would blunder in his attempt to answer this seemingly difficult and tricky question. Jesus, again showing the wisdom of his divine authority, immediately rebuked them for not know the scriptures. The number of references made along this line is quite interesting to say the least. Most of the time, it was the religious leaders of the day who were so addressed. Those who were supposed to know the truth, or who at least CLAIMED to know the truth, were being scolded for their lack of Bible knowledge. Jesus taught them saying: 1) there is no marriage in heaven, 2) in the resurrection we shall be as are the angels of God; and 3) God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. When the people heard this, they were once again astonished at his doctrine.
4. When the Pharisees had heard that Christ had silenced the Sadducees, they too gathered together in an attempt to tempt Jesus. One of the Pharisees, a lawyer, asked Jesus which was the great commandment of the law. The law, of course, was made up of the ten commandments which Moses received on Mount Sinai and all of the legislative discourses found within the Pentateuch (Gen.-Deut.). According to several Old Testament scholars, the number of commandments found within the Old Testament scriptures numbered in excess of 600. To single out any one of the commandments and exalt it above the rest would have been tantamount to weakening the importance of the rest of the law of Moses. Jesus did not fall into this obvious trap. Jesus answered and quoted two Old Testament passages; 1) Deuteronomy 6:5, and 2) Leviticus 19:18. The first encouraged a complete love for God, and the second encouraged a love for neighbor and self. It has often been said that these two thoughts summarize the ten commandments. The first four commandments deal with love for God, and the remaining six center around proper love and respect for self and others. Jesus said: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This passage forms another one of the great summary statements of the Old Testament law.
5. While the Jews were gathered there with the Christ, Jesus took the opportunity to ask them a question. He questioned them concerning the Christ: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" The Pharisees responded this time, but they were about to be placed in a difficulty in which they would be hard pressed to explain their answer. They said that the Christ was the son of David, that is he (the Christ) was of the lineage of David. Jesus, therefore, set about to close the trap upon them. He asked them how it was possible that David referred to the Christ as Lord and quoted from Psalms 110 where David did so. If Christ were the son of David, how was it possible that David referred to him as Lord, and did so by the influence of the Spirit of God? The Jews were not able to answer, not a one, and from that time do one dared to ask Christ any more questions. Once again we have noted the importance of being familiar enough with the truth to ask the correct questions. Not only should we be prepared to answer the questions which are posed to us (I Peter 3:15), but we should be prepared to the extent that we can pose questions which will prove devastating to the opponents of truth. Jesus did this numerous times. FALSE TEACHING IS ALWAYS CONTRADICTORY. IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE, THEREFORE, TO PRODUCE PROOF OF THE CONTRADICTIONS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO LEAVE THEM BETWEEN THE PROVERBIAL "ROCK AND A HARD PLACE". The only way that David could have referred to the Christ as Lord was if the Christ was greater than was David. The Jews pictured the Messiah as a person of the lineage of David who would be a great physical warrior and political king. They did not envision the very Son of God. They did not imagine that Jesus the Messiah would be Lord even over David the great king of Israel. Once again Jesus manifested the formidable knowledge which he had of the scriptures, and once again the errors of those who opposed the truth were squashed.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

1. Within this chapter we note a great proclamation to the multitudes concerning the false teachings of the scribes and the Pharisees. It is important to notice that Jesus did this in a public way. Previously, we noted that Jesus encountered the scribes, the

Pharisees, and the Sadducees head-to-head in a private fashion. In this chapter all of that changes. It is not sinful to expose sin in a public manner. We have within the pages of our Old and New Testaments the names of those men and women who opposed the truth and who were subsequently chastened of so for so doing. Note within the writings of the apostle Paul the numerous references to those who left the faith and persecuted him. When error gets to the point that it is more freely propagated and expounded than is the truth, it is time for the tables to turn.

2. In the first 36 verses of ch.23 we note the following expositions of the sins of the religious leaders of Jesus' day: 1) they desired to be in special places to be seen of men; 2) they preached, but they quite often did not practice in accordance with their preaching; 3) they expect great works of others but do nothing themselves; 4) they loved to bestow honors upon one another; 5) they exalted themselves; 6) they took advantage of others; 7) they exalted tradition in religion to the point of absurdity; 8) they prided themselves in the nitpicky matter of religion but avoided weightier matter; 8) they appeared to be holy on the outside, but within they were full of extortion and excess; 9) they appeared to be white but were full of dead men's bones; 10) they were just as guilty as were their ancestors who slew the prophets of God; et al. To some extent, these sins are duplicated in the false religious leaders of the day. It is not sinful to call the attention of the world to these grievous sins; it is, rather, our responsibility to do so. The loving thing to do is always the presentation of the truth in a kind, yet uncompromising, way. That burden rests upon the shoulders of EVERY Christian today. No one is free of the obligation to stand for the truth and to stand against error.
3. In the last section of the chapter we note the concern which Jesus expressed for the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Their house is to be left desolate. In the book of Ezekiel we noted that the presence of the Lord left the temple prior to the fall of the city of Jerusalem and did not return until the days of the restoration of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. The presence of the Lord was about to leave the temple of the Jews once again, but this time it would be a permanent departure. The rending of the veil on the day of Christ's crucifixion demonstrated symbolically the destruction of the law of Moses (more accurately: the fulfillment of the law of Moses). The presence of the Lord was no longer confined within a physical building for the Jews alone; it was not to be found within the hearts of ALL those who believed and were obedient to the gospel of Christ. In the following chapter we learn of the consequences of the disobedience of the Jews in the city of Jerusalem.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

1. This chapter has been one of the most misunderstood and misapplied chapters in the Bible. It, along with Revelation 20 and several selections from the apocalyptic prophets (Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah), has been used to defend such false doctrines as: 1) the millenium, 2) the return of Christ to reign upon the earth, 3) the rapture, 4) the "antichrist" conspiracy, 5) false teachings concerning the final coming of the Christ; and others. For a fuller understanding of this passage I suggest the study of several standard commentaries and specifically recommend a small tract by Roy C. Deaver entitled PREMILLENIALISM: MATTHEW CHAPTERS 24 AND 25 DO NOT TEACH IT! (write to Getwell Church Of Christ/1511 Getwell Rd./Memphis 38111).
2. For the benefit of the reader a small portion (the introduction to Christ's discourse) will be presented:

"In order for us to understand the Olivet Discourse we must understand the disciples' question or questions. Jesus went out from the temple. He was going on His way. His disciples came to him. They came to "point out" to Him (and to call His attention to) the temple buildings. Likely, this was in view of the Lord's statement in 23:38--"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." The Lord "answered and said unto them: See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Not a single stone would be left in place! The Lord's statements about Jerusalem and the temple buildings were enough to astound the disciples.

The Lord sat somewhere on the western slope of Olivet. The disciples came to Him to ask Him privately about "THESE THINGS." MATTHEW records that the disciples asked:

When shall these things be?  
 What shall be the sign of thy coming?  
 What shall be the sign of the end of the world? (24,v.3)

MARK says that the disciples asked the Lord---

When shall these things be?  
 What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished.  
 (13,v.4)

LUKE says that the disciples asked the Lord--

When therefore shall these things be?  
 What shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass. (21,v.7)

Matthew's account, at least on the surface, SEEMS to indicate three questions. However, it HAS TO BE RECOGNIZED that the disciples might have been thinking of one event. Then, when we consider the parallel accounts it becomes OBVIOUS that even in Matthew's account the disciples WERE INDEED thinking of ONE stupendous event. They associated the overthrow of the stones with the end of the world. They associated the end of the world with the Lord's final coming. IT IS THE CONVICTION OF THIS WRITER THAT THE THREE ACCOUNTS OF THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS ARE IDENTICAL IN MEANING. They were thinking of the final coming and of the end of the world. They ASSUMED that the "these things" which the Lord talked about would take place at the end of the world. However, it does not follow necessarily that they were correct in their assumption. In thinking about the Lord's final coming, the end of the world, and the destruction of the beautiful temple buildings the disciples really asked TWO QUESTIONS: (1) WHEN shall these things be? and (2) WHAT shall be the SIGN when these things are about to come to pass. The TIME and the sign. In answering the disciples the Lord discusses TWO comings and TWO ends of TWO worlds. He discusses His coming in judgment upon Jerusalem (to mark the end of Judaism and the Jewish nation); and He discusses His coming for final judgement (to mark the end of the world). In dealing with each of these matters the Lord kept in mind the disciples' questions: the TIME and the SIGN. [from Roy C. Deaver's tract PREMILLENIALISM: MATTHEW CHAPTERS 24 AND 25 DO NOT TEACH IT!, pages 5-7]

3. An important factor to remember in interpreting and properly understanding the 24th chapter of Matthew is that the first 35 verses of the chapter refer to the coming of the Lord upon the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the rest of the section (vs.36-44) refer to the final coming of the Lord when the world will be destroyed. If this important distinction is kept in mind, the difficulty in understanding the chapter is diminished greatly.
4. Toward the end of this chapter the Lord begins three parables, all of which deal with the necessity of being prepared. A state of preparation ought not to be viewed only as a good motto (The motto of the Boy Scout of America is "Be prepared."), but as a vital essential in Christian living. In I Thessalonians 3:14 we note that there is comfort in knowing that the Lord is coming again at any time. That comfort exists only for those who are ready at his coming. It is not a comforting thought if a person is engaged in sinful pursuits, for that person will receive a grave judgement when the Lord comes again. The last section of the chapter, in presenting the illustration of the unfaithful servant, places a great deal of importance upon the person who is prepared at any time for the Master's coming. In our jobs we all want to be doing something when the boss comes around; no one wants to be caught goofing off when they are supposed to be working. Think of how important it is to be living the Christian life when the Lord Jesus Christ come again.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. Continuing the emphasis upon preparation, the Lord presents another parable. In the parable we find then virgins awaiting the coming of the bridegroom. Of the ten, only five prepared adequately by having enough oil present. When the time came, they were not prepared as adequately as they should have been.

2. In the final parable of the three, the Lord presents 3 men, each of which is given talents "according to his several ability." It is essential to realize that this parable uses talent as it was used in 1611 when the King James Version was translated. The word does not designate some specific ability that a person has (e.g. whittling, acting, singing, cooking, etc.), but it refers to an amount of money that was used in New Testament times. The men were given this money by their employer and were expected to do all that they possibly could with it in order to produce and increase. [NOTE: In previous parables we noted that Jesus expected the Jews to produce fruit, but because they did not, the kingdom of heaven was presented unto others. In Luke 13 the emphasis upon the parable of the fig tree in the vineyard lies in this principle: God, by virtue of his character and nature as the Master, reserves the right to set the levels of expectations of his creation and expects those levels to be fulfilled.] In this parable we note that the third man (with one talent) was rebuked not because he only had one talent with which to work, but because he did not use what he had in order to benefit the kingdom. In each of these three parables we note a definite progression of preparation. In the initial parable we were warned to be prepared when the Master comes. In the second parable we were encouraged to be adequately prepared when the Master comes. It is not enough to make the preparation that WE FEEL is necessary, but it is essential to make full preparation. That is the emphasis of this last parable. God expects us to use all that we have in our attempts to be pleasing to him. Our lives should be centered around the goal of doing as much as we possibly can for the Lord. It is not an attempt to see how much WE CAN GET out of life that is pleasing to God. God has given us everything that WE NEED to be pleasing to him. Some are given more; some less. Each is going to be judged by what his own abilities are. The man with one talent was not rebuked because he did not do as much as the other two men, but rather because he did not do his best. I will not be judged by the standards of a person who is more capable than myself. The Lord knows what I can do, even better than I know myself. He is going to hold me responsible for that ability, whatever it may be. Far too many Christians stick their heads in the sand when it comes to spiritual ability. We cut ourselves short and say "Oh, I can't do that! I can't teach! I can't speak publicly! I can't knock on doors!" and on and on it goes. If God tells us to do something, we are able to do it. God never demands something of anyone if that individual is not qualified or able to become qualified in order to meet up to God's expectation. Nothing short of an all out effort will be pleasing to the Lord!
3. The last section of chapter 25 (vs.31-46) deals with the judgment of the nations at the end of time. It is in this scene that we learn the following: 1) God is coming in his glory, 2) there will be a great separation, 3) the obedient would receive the kingdom which was prepared from the foundation of the world, 4) the kingdom would be theirs due to their obedience in this life, 5) their obedience included feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, helping the strangers, and visiting those in prison, 6) in as much as they did this for mankind, they did this for Christ, 7) the disobedient were to depart into everlasting fire, 8) their disobedience came through neglecting to serve others in this life, 9) such neglect in serving others was tantamount to neglecting service to Christ, 10) the separation is eternal (vs.46).

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

1. In the first five verses of this chapter we learn more of the impending death of the Christ. Jesus said that the passover was only 2 days away, and the crucifixion followed immediately following. Meanwhile, the chief priests, scribes, and the elders of the people gathered together to devise a means by which to take Jesus and kill him. Note that the only thing that kept them from taking the Lord on the feast day was the uproar that would develop among the people. They seemingly did not consider the sinfulness of murder. They only feared for their own lives.
2. In the following section of this chapter we learn of the anointing of Jesus in Bethany by a woman with precious ointment. Some of the disciples thought that it was wasteful to so use such precious ointment, but the Lord defended the actions of the woman. Jesus was soon to depart. It was, therefore, more appropriate at this time to manifest some special attention to the Son of God who was about to die. She had "approved the excellent." (Philippians 1:10)

3. In the following section of this chapter we note that Judas Iscariot began to seek opportunity to betray the Lord (vs.14-16). Exactly what Judas had in mind when he went to the chief priests is not known. We do know, however, that Satan influenced Judas in his actions (Luke 22:3). Judas may have been under the false impression that the priests only wanted to protect Jesus from the multitudes. It is just this sort of deceptive idea that Satan is the originator of.
4. In the next section of the chapter (vs.17-30) we note the account of what we often refer to as "the Last Supper". On this occasion we note: 1) that Jesus kept the Passover with his disciples, 2) that Jesus told them that one of them would betray him, 3) that Jesus instituted a memorial practice which was to be continued even after his death. Concerning this last element, it is interesting to notice the following statement in vs. 28: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many FOR the remission of sins." The word FOR in this context is the same in the English and in the Greek as the word FOR used in Acts 2:38. The point is that Jesus died "in order to" provide for the remission of sins. The word FOR does not indicate that Jesus died because of something prior. The Greek word EIS always looks forward to subsequent actions and it is never retrospective, but always prospective. Many denominational leaders have argued that Peter commanded the Jews on Pentecost to "repent and be baptized" because their sins were ALREADY FORGIVEN. This is false teaching! If that is true then Jesus told the disciples on this occasion (the "last supper") that his blood was shed because their sins were ALREADY FORGIVEN. We know that such a doctrine is palpably false! Jesus died in order to forgive mankind of their sins! His death brought the forgiveness of sins to mankind after the shedding of blood... NOT BEFORE THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD!
5. Jesus later told the disciples that they would all be offended of the Lord that very night and would forsake him. Peter, in his characteristically impetuous nature, told the Lord that he might die with the Lord, but he certainly would not deny him. Note also that "likewise also said all the disciples." (vs.35)
6. In the remainder of the chapter we note that Jesus went into the garden of Gethsemane to pray to his heavenly Father. Three of the disciples followed behind, but they fell asleep while the Lord prayed three times. After the third time while he was speaking to them, Judas came with a great multitude of people. The people came with swords and staves and came for the Lord in the night. He questioned them about this. He labored in their midst all of the time, doing nothing in secret. Why was it, therefore, that they came for him in the night and with weapons as if he were a criminal? When the people came one of the disciples cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. In another account we learn that Jesus healed the ear of the man. As he did so he instructed the disciple to put up his sword. If Jesus desired to be delivered from this present distress he could pray to his Father and he (i.e. the Father) would at once send him 12 legions of angels. This statement is significant in view of the following facts. 1) Jesus just prayed to his heavenly father that the "cup" which he was enduring might pass from him. He did not receive that request, but it was not because of his sin for Jesus was sinless. Now, when the Jews were ready to take him, he (Jesus) knew that the Lord would send him 12 legions of angels if he so desired it. If Jesus just prayed for deliverance from the suffering and it was not granted, then how would he know that his heavenly Father would send the angels to help Jesus at this time? The answer lies in realizing the second fact! 2) Jesus willingly gave his life for the salvation of man! Jesus said: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John 10:17-18) If this is true, and it certainly must be, then Jesus did not pray that he would not have to die! He was more than willing to give his life for the forgiveness of sins. What then was the "cup" which he sought to have taken from him? It has been suggested that Jesus was willing to die, but not willing to suffer the pain and agony that went with the act of dying. Such, if true, would make the death upon the cross insufficient for the forgiveness of man's sins. Jesus went to suffer; he knew that and the Bible is replete with passages that speak of Christ's suffering (I Peter 2:21ff; Phil.2:8ff; Isaiah 53; et al.). Perhaps the most plausible idea is that Jesus was burdened with the realization that those who were closest to him were going to desert him and that

- the people for whom he came to die (i.e. the Jews) were now about to call out for his crucifixion. Certainly the betrayal of those whom we deeply love and care for would produce an almost unbearable hurt within us. Whatever the case, Jesus was willing to die and bear the cost of suffering upon the cross of Calvary.
7. As Jesus said earlier, the disciples forsook him (vs.56). We later learn that a couple of them remained close behind for a while, but they too denied the Lord.
  8. In vs.57ff we learn of the trials of Jesus. He went through seven of them in all, and all of them were illegal according to the laws of the Jews. No man, captured in the night, is rushed through a series of trials the same night in which he was taken. But this was planned to be a "rush" job. Note that vs. 57 says: "and they that laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, WHERE THE SCRIBES AND THE ELDERS WERE ASSEMBLED." The men gathered together were there for the express purpose of trying the Lord at night. Their council did not meet at night. They were, therefore, going against their own rules in the trial of the Christ. Note that Peter followed him afar off to the palace of the high priest. When the trial began they sought for false witnesses to bear testimony against the Lord. Finally, one came forward and said that Jesus claimed that he was going to destroy the temple of God and build it again in three days. The Jews misunderstood Jesus to refer to the temple of Herod (Solomon's temple was destroyed and later rebuilt between the close of the Old Testament and the opening of the New Testament), but we know from the scriptures that Jesus had reference to his temple (his body) when he made that statement. His body would be placed within a grave, but within 3 days the Lord would rise from the tomb. The high priest asked Jesus if he were the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered saying: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." When the high priest heard these remarks, he accused Christ of blasphemy. The council, therefore, stated that he was worthy of death. They spit in his face and beat him, all the while mocking him.
  9. The last section of the chapter (vs.69-75) informs us of the denial of Christ by Peter just as Jesus said it would happen. When Peter denied him for the third time he went out and wept bitterly. Later (John 21) we see that Jesus gave Peter a chance to redeem himself.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1. When the morning came Jesus was delivered to Pilate, the governor of Judea. Pilate was a Roman official. Before the Jews were allowed to carry out any executions, they had to clear them with the Roman authorities, in this case Pilate. While before Pilate Jesus spoke very little, so much so that the governor marveled greatly. Isaiah said that Jesus would be like a lamb led to the slaughter; he did not rise to defend himself. He knew their charges were false, and they knew it too. It was custom for the governor to release one of the Jews at this time of the year, and Pilate proposed to release either Jesus or Barabbas, a notable prisoner. The Jews wanted Barabbas released and Jesus crucified. Pilate knew that the Jews had delivered Jesus out of envy. He also knew that Jesus had done no evil worthy of any punishment, that Jesus was a "just person." Nevertheless, Jesus was delivered to the Jews to be crucified.
2. We also learn of the death of Judas in the beginning of the chapter. An important fact needs to be pointed out in order to properly understand Judas' actions. The text says that Judas "repented himself." The word that is translated "repent" in this passage is not the same word that is translated "repent" in other passages. The word translated "repent" here is the Greek word METAMELOMAI. The word that is translated "repent" in such passages as Mt.3:2;4:17; Acts 2:38;17:30; et al. is METANOEO. Note the following distinction made between them:

"The distinctions so often laid down between these words, to the effect that the former [METAMELOMAI, jla] expresses a merely emotional change the latter a change of choice, the former has reference to particulars the latter to the entire life, the former signifies nothing but regret even though amounting to remorse, the latter that reversal of moral purpose known as repentance-seem hardly to be sustained by usage. But that METANOEO is the fuller and nobler term, expressive of moral action and issues, is indicated not only by its derivation, by the greater frequency of its use..." [Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p.405]



Judas did not, therefore, fully repent of his sin. His emotional outlook changed with regard to his actions. But it was not the full change of life that should be characterized by TRUE REPENTANCE. It is sad to say that some cases of repentance today are just like Judas'. We must fully transform our lives when we become Christians. A partial change will not do the job; complete submission to the will of the Lord is required. It sounds like a lot to accomplish, but the Lord did not ask us to do something that we could not do!

3. A great portion of the 27th chapter of Matthew deals with the actual crucifixion of the Lord. We are well of the grisly details that are so often brought out in regard to this terrible event, but perhaps it would be wise to examine a few of the principles and spiritual elements that accompanied this act. 1) This was the culminating event of Jesus life. He lived to die. It sounds awkward to state something in this fashion, but it is true. Every human being is living to die. Our life must be used to determine where we will go after this life is over. There is not any other period of our existence that will be used to determine what our eternal (immortal) existence will be. Christ lived his life to the fullest. He did what he came to do. His will was to serve the Father. Our will should be no less. It cost Jesus his life. It may cost us the same physically speaking some day, but it will cost no less that all of our spiritual life right now. Paul said that he was crucified for the cause of Christ. He did not literally die everyday for Christ everyday, but he was crucified spiritually everyday. He gave up those things that appealed to his own desires and did those things which the Lord wanted. So should we live everyday of our lives. 2) The crucifixion of Christ signalled the end of several things. First, his death was the end of his life. It was the end of his goal, his purpose, his mission, and his work upon the earth. Second, the death of Christ signalled the end of the law of Moses. Colossians 2 teaches that Christ nailed the law of Moses to the cross. A new dispensation was to be in effect. The age of the law was gone; the age of the Christ (the Christian age) was inaugurated. The Lord no more required the keeping of the ceremonial aspects of the law. Sacrifices were not required every time a person sin. Jesus died once for all and forever. His sacrifice took the place of and even far exceeded, all of the sacrifices under the Old Covenant. Third, the death of Christ brought upon mankind the last dispensation of time. There will be no new changes in the administration of God's affairs prior to the second coming (final coming) of the Christ. We must, therefore, be obedient to the commands of Christ as they are found within the New Testament. He died to make that testament go into effect. It serves a purpose, and in order for it to be efficacious towards us, we need to submit to its conditions. The greatest gift that God could give to man to remove the stain of sin was Jesus the Christ. Under the circumstance of sin only the Christ could free mankind. The best was given. It need not be given again. God, who freely gave is Son, will also freely give us all of those things that we have NEED of when we are obedient unto his will (cf. Romans 8).
4. Several unusual events occurred contemporary with the crucifixion. Some of them are: 1) there was darkness over the land, 2) the veil of the temple that separated the most holy place from the holy place was rent, 3) the graves of some were opened, 4) many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 4) there was a great earthquake, 5) rocks were broken apart. These events had a very profound effect upon those who witnessed them. "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." (vs.54) Such should have been the consequent in the minds of all who beheld these miraculous manifestations of the power of God (cf. Jn.3).
5. Following the crucifixion Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man and a disciple of Jesus, begged Pilate for the body and upon receiving it placed it in his own new tomb. Jesus died in the midst of thieves. He was buried in the tomb of a rich man. Both of these things were prophesied hundreds of years before the coming of the Christ. The Jew who knew his Old Testament scriptures should have known this and been even more convinced of the identity of the man who hung upon the cross. "Truly this was the Son of God."

6. Following the burial of the Christ, the chief priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate and asked for permission to place a guard at the tomb of Jesus. Note that they said: "Sirm we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." These same comments were brought up in the trial of Jesus and these same men allowed them to be misinterpreted so as to relate to the temple in Jerusalem. Now, following the death and burial of Christ, they seemingly understand that Jesus referred not to the temple in Jerusalem, but rather to his own body. It is quite likely that they realized that such was the original intention of Jesus even during the trial, but allowed lies to be told in order that they might have "reason" to convict Jesus. At their request, Pilate granted permission to make the sepulcher sure and to set a watch (guards).

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

1. In this the last chapter of the book of Matthew, we learn of the resurrection of the Christ. Note that when the women came to the tomb, the angel of the Lord rolled away the stone from the door. It is evident that Jesus arose from the grave without having removed the stone from the door himself. Such indeed would have been miraculous. The women, upon hearing the Jesus had risen, left to go tell the others with fear and joy.
2. Notice also that the keepers of the tomb witnessed these events. They went into the city and showed the chief priests all the things that were done. In order to deal with these acts, the chief priests, the elders, and others took counsel and paid the soldiers not to tell anyone what really happened. They were, instead, to tell others that the disciples came and stole the body of Jesus while they slept. They certainly should have realized that they could have been held responsible for sleeping while they were on guard duty, but that seemed to be the "lesser of two evils." It was either that or tell the truth, and the Jewish leaders did not want that to be made known.
3. In the last section of the chapter we read of the "great commission" which Jesus gave to his disciples. That same great commission applies to us today. The responsibility to teach and preach to the world lies upon the Lord's church. The truth will not be preached by those religious people who hold to denominational doctrines. The truth will not be preached by communists, atheists, humanist, and others. The obligation to deliver the truth to the world belongs exclusively to the church. This was God's plan, his purpose, his scheme from eternity. We have no authority to change it, though we may think we have something better. Only God's plan will work. That is why he gave us his plan. It, and it alone, is the way that we should follow.

#### MATTHEW: A REVIEW

The gospel according to Matthew provides us with a most unique look at the life and teachings of the Christ. It is in a good position, immediately following the Old Testament, for its Old Testament influence is greater than in the other accounts of the life of Christ. Matthew begins by identifying the Christ in relation to two most important persons to the Jews, David and Abraham. There are some 40 or more references to the Old Testament within the gospel of Matthew. Numerous times we note Old Testament scriptures referred to and, in many cases, even quoted by Matthew. Matthew has as its theme the exaltation of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. All of the accounts of Jesus life give credence to the deity of the Christ, but each of them has a little twist to it that separates it from the remaining biographies of the Christ. Dickson's Analytical Bible says: "There is no question as to the design of this Gospel. It is suggested by the opening statement- "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The lineal descent of our Lord is carried to Abraham, and this is the Gospel for the Jew. It sets forth Christ, not only as the greatest Prophet and Lawgiver, but as fulfilling eh Law and the Prophets, that He is the Messiah of Old Testament predictions, the fulfillment of the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, and the King of the true Israel in the Davidic line." [Dickson, p.1087] Wayne Jackson, in THE LIVING MESSAGES OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (p.35), said: "The design of Matthew is to demonstrate (primarily to the Jews, but ultimately to all men) that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament Scriptures and the author of the kingdom of God in which all peoples of the earth may be saved." Because we have enumerated basic principles in Matthew as we went,

we will not pursue a further explanation of them. [For your further study see OUTSTANDING FACTS at the conclusion of Matthew in the Dickson Analytical Bible, the chapter on Matthew in Tidwell's book, THE BIBLE BOOK BY BOOK, and the chapter by Jackson in THE LIVING MESSAGES OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.]

## MARK

The writer of this account of the life of Christ is also known as John Mark (Acts 12:12). At different points in his life he was affiliated with the works of the apostles Paul (Acts/Colossians 4:10, et al.) and Peter (I Peter 5:13). Though he was of Jewish origin (at least his mother was a Jew) he was not one of the twelve apostles of the Christ. "He was peculiarly Roman in training and development" (Dickson, p.1129), a fact that contributed greatly to the writing and understanding of his account of the life of the Christ.

## CHAPTER ONE

1. Where this account of the life of Christ is similar to the gospel account of Matthew it will not be necessary to repeat comments made about the same subjects. You will find it helpful, therefore, to compare Mark with those passages in Matthew which are similar. For your convenience, you might find the book THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL by MacGarvey and Pendleton quite helpful. That book is arranged with all of the four gospels in order, comments included. By studying the life and times of the Christ in this fashion, it is possible to study all four of the accounts at the same time without having to consult four different Bibles or turning the same Bible to four different accounts. Only those differences common to Mark will be elaborated upon.
2. The first of these differences is quite apparent at the outset. Matthew immediately begins the story of his account by presenting the genealogy of the Christ through David and Abraham. Following that account we note the birth and early life of Jesus receiving at least some discussion. Such is not the case with the gospel according to Mark. This account of the life of Christ begins immediately with the account of John's ministry, the subject matter of the third chapter and following of Matthew. The reason, of course, lies within the differences of purpose of the two writers. Matthew, a Jew, wrote to the Jews about a Jew. His account of the life of Christ has, therefore, quite a Jewish flavor, as we have already indicated. Mark, however, does not write from this same perspective. Though he maintains the deity of Christ just as strongly, it is presented not from the Jewish point of view, but rather from the Roman point of view. The Romans were a people concerned with power and action. The gospel according to Mark is written in such a way as to appeal to the Roman mind. The number of discourses are minimal while the number of miracles and "action events" are great.
3. Note in vs. 2-3 that John the Baptist is presented as the fulfillment of the prophets to be the "voice of one crying in the wilderness". (cf. Isaiah 40; Malachi 3,4)
4. Mark's account proceeds quickly from the ministry of John to the baptism of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry. Only two verses are devoted to the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Matthew devotes much more space to this account.
5. In vs. 14-20 we witness the account of the calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John. [Notice the use of the word "straightway" in verse 20. The word means immediately and is used some 50 times in the account of Mark. The use of the word further emphasizes that Mark is an account of "action" designed primarily for the Roman mind.]
6. Mark's first miracle is the casting out of demons (vs.21-28). Following that account he presents us with the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus ministry in Galilee casting out devils, and the cleansing of a leper (vs.40-45).

## CHAPTER TWO

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-12) is found within Matthew 9. See the notes on that section.
2. Verses 13-14 provide us with an account of the call of Levi (called Matthew in the gospel according to Matthew; cf. Mt. 9).
3. Jesus eating with the sinners is found in Matthew 9:10ff. See notes on that section.
4. Verses 18-22 and the question of fasting is found in Matthew 9:14ff.
5. Verses 23ff on the question of the sabbath is dealt with in Matthew 12:1ff.