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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Alphabetical Order of the
Books of the Bible, vii

Abbreviations, viii

About the *NIV Essentials*
Study Bible, ix

Preface, xii

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Spotlight on Genesis, 1

Genesis 3

Spotlight on Exodus, 67

Exodus 69

Spotlight on Leviticus, 119

Leviticus 121

Spotlight on Numbers, 155

Numbers 157

Spotlight on Deuteronomy, 201

Deuteronomy 203

Spotlight on Joshua, 243

Joshua 245

Spotlight on Judges, 275

Judges 277

Spotlight on Ruth, 305

Ruth 307

Spotlight on 1 and 2 Samuel, 314

1 Samuel 317

2 Samuel 355

Spotlight on 1 and 2 Kings, 388

1 Kings 391

2 Kings 435

Spotlight on 1 and 2 Chronicles, 473

1 Chronicles 475

2 Chronicles 509

Spotlight on Ezra
and Nehemiah, 548

Ezra 550

Nehemiah 566

Spotlight on Esther, 584

Esther 586

Spotlight on Job, 597

Job 599

Spotlight on Psalms, 637

Psalms 639

Spotlight on Proverbs, 753

Proverbs 755

Spotlight on Ecclesiastes, 792

Ecclesiastes 794

Spotlight on Song of Songs, 805

Song of Songs 807

Spotlight on Isaiah, 816

Isaiah 819

Spotlight on Jeremiah, 898

Jeremiah 900

Spotlight on Lamentations, 975

Lamentations 977

Spotlight on Ezekiel, 985

Ezekiel 987

Spotlight on Daniel, 1046

Daniel 1048

Spotlight on Hosea
and Amos, 1067

Hosea 1069

Spotlight on Joel
and Obadiah, 1082

Joel 1085

Amos 1091

Obadiah 1102

Spotlight on Micah, 1111

Spotlight on Philippians, 1489

Spotlight on Matthew, 1169

Spotlight on Philemon, 1537

Table of Weights
and Measures, 1627
Reading Plans, 1628
Subject Index, 1635
Concordance, 1655

spotlight on MATTHEW

key concepts

- ✦ Jesus is the promised Messiah, whose death brings salvation from sin.
- ✦ Jesus' birth, life and death on the cross fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament.
- ✦ Jesus' resurrection vindicated his claims and brought in a new era of salvation for all who believe in him.

about

Matthew's Gospel confirms to Christian believers that Jesus is indeed the Jewish Messiah and that through his life, death and resurrection Jesus has fulfilled the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). The church of Jesus Christ, made up of Jews and Gentiles, represents the true people of God in the new age of salvation.

Matthew is structured around Jesus' five major discourses, or teaching sections: the Sermon on the Mount (see Mt 5–7), the commissioning of the 12 disciples (see Mt 10), the parables of the kingdom of heaven (see Mt 13), church life and discipline (see Mt 18), and woes against the religious leaders and end-time teaching on the Mount of Olives (see Mt 23–25). Each of these discourses ends with a similar formula: "When Jesus had finished saying these things ..." Some have suggested that Matthew imitated the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy), presenting Jesus as the new Moses.

The Four Gospels

The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are called "Gospels," meaning "good news." Each tells the story of Jesus from a unique perspective, emphasizing different aspects of who he is and what he came to accomplish.

The first three (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are called the "Synoptic Gospels." *Synoptic* means "viewed together," and these three share a similar structure and relate many of the same stories.

The Gospel of John is more theological, with a greater stress on the identity of Jesus and the spiritual significance of his life.

Strictly speaking, the authors of all four Gospels are anonymous since they do not identify themselves in the text. Their authorship comes from the titles on early manuscripts ("according to Matthew," "according to Mark," etc.) and early church traditions.

key verses

Matthew 5:17: Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Matthew 7:21: Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 11:28: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 22:37: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Matthew 28:19–20: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

key teachings

- ✦ Jesus is the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures.

- + Jesus is the teacher, a new Moses for the new age of salvation.
- + Jesus is the son of David and Son of God.
- + Jesus is the new Israel, bringing the message of God’s salvation to the world.

key terms

Gospel — Means “good news” and refers to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

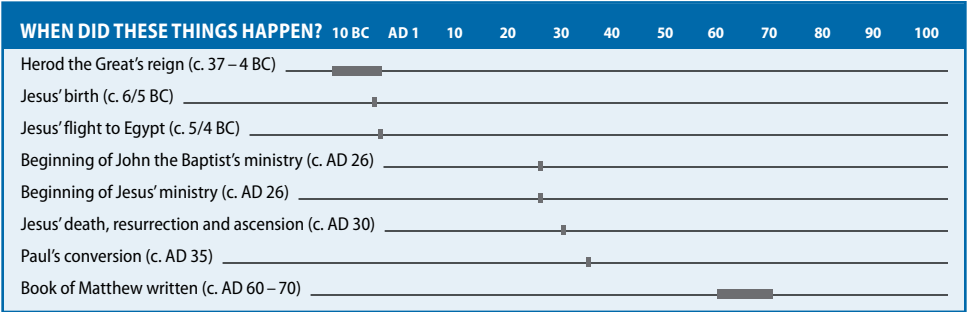
Great Commission — The command to spread the message of salvation and make disciples of all nations.

Immanuel — Another name for the Messiah. It means “God is with us.”

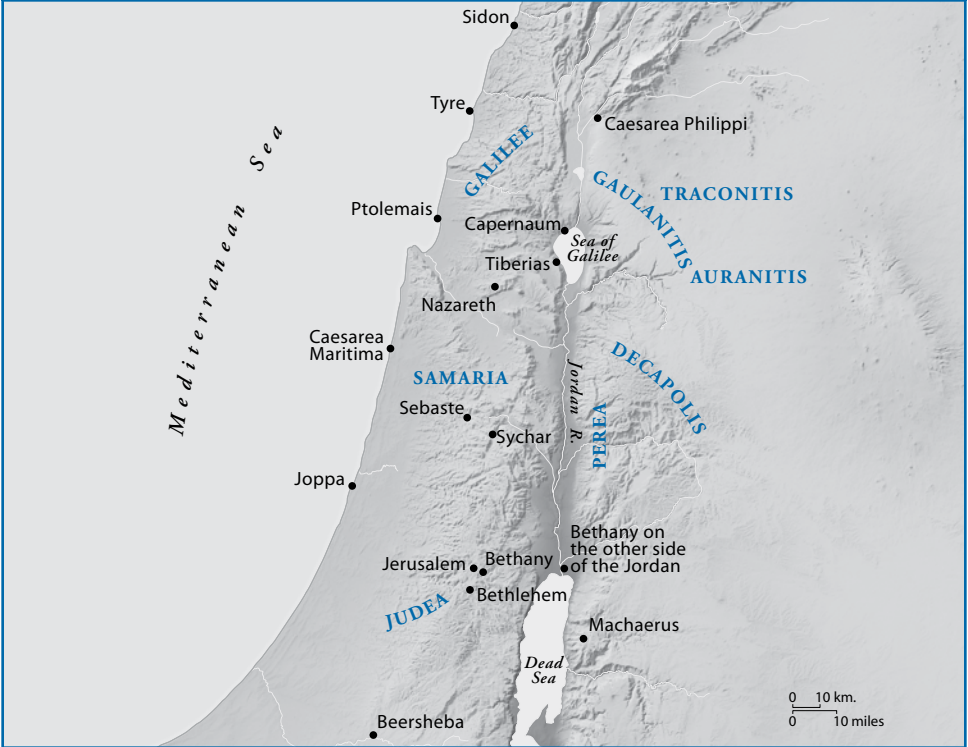
Kingdom of heaven — The Jewish way of referring to God’s reign.

people to know

Joseph (p. 1173)	The Herods (p. 1195)
John the Baptist (p. 1189)	



ISRAEL DURING THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD



MATTHEW

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1:1-17pp — Lk 3:23-38

1:3-6pp — Ru 4:18-22

1:7-11pp — 1Ch 3:10-17

1 This is the genealogy^a of Jesus the Messiah^b the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah,
whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,

⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother
was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother
was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

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

⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,

⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,

¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah^c and
his brothers at the time of the exile to
Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon:

Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,

¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,

¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the hus-
band of Mary, and Mary was the
mother of Jesus who is called the Mes-
siah.

^a 1 Or is an account of the origin ^b 1 Or Jesus Christ.

Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One;
also in verse 18. ^c 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12

SHADY ANCESTORS

+ (Mt 1:2–16) +

Matthew's list differs from many Jewish
genealogies by including women, and a
surprising selection of women at that.
Tamar, a Gentile, tricked and seduced her
father-in-law, then bore illegitimate twins
(see Ge 38); Rahab, another Gentile, once
worked as a prostitute (see Jos 2; 6); Ruth
also grew up as a pagan Gentile (see Ru 1–4);
and Uriah's wife Bathsheba committed
adultery with King David (see 2Sa 11–12).
Many of the men listed had unsavory pasts
as well; as a group, these ancestors of Jesus
vividly demonstrate God's ability to work
with all sorts of people. **SB**

1:1 *son of David.* A Messianic title (see note on 9:27) found several times in this Gospel (in 1:20 it is not a Messianic title). Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant (see 2Sa 7:5–16 and note on 7:11). *son of Abraham.* Because Matthew was writing to Jews, it was important to identify Jesus in this way. In Jesus fulfills the Abrahamic covenant (see Ge 12:2–3; 15:9–21; 17; Zec 9:10 and note).

1:3 *Tamar.* In Matthew's genealogy five women are named: Tamar (here), Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), Bathsheba (not by name but by description — "Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife," v. 6) and, of course, Mary (v. 16). At least three of them were Gentiles (Tamar, Rahab and Ruth). Bathsheba was probably an Israelite (1Ch 3:5) but was closely associated with the Hittites because of Uriah, her Hittite husband. By including these women (contrary to custom) in his genealogy, Matthew

may be indicating at the very outset of his Gospel that God's grace is not limited to men or to the people of Israel.

1:8 *Jehoram the father.* Matthew calls Jehoram the father of Uzziah, but from 2Ch 21:4–26:23 it is clear that, again, several generations were assumed (Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah) and that "father" is used in the sense of "forefather" or "ancestor" (see NIV text notes on 1Ch 1:5,10).

1:11 *Josiah the father.* Similarly (see note on v. 8), Josiah is called the father of Jeconiah (i.e., Jehoiachin; see NIV text note), whereas he was actually the father of Jehoiakim and the grandfather of Jehoiachin (2Ch 36:1–9).

1:16 *husband of Mary.* Matthew does not say that Joseph was the father of Jesus but only that he was the husband of Mary and that Jesus was born of her. In this genealogy

Genealogies in Ancient Israel (Mt 1)

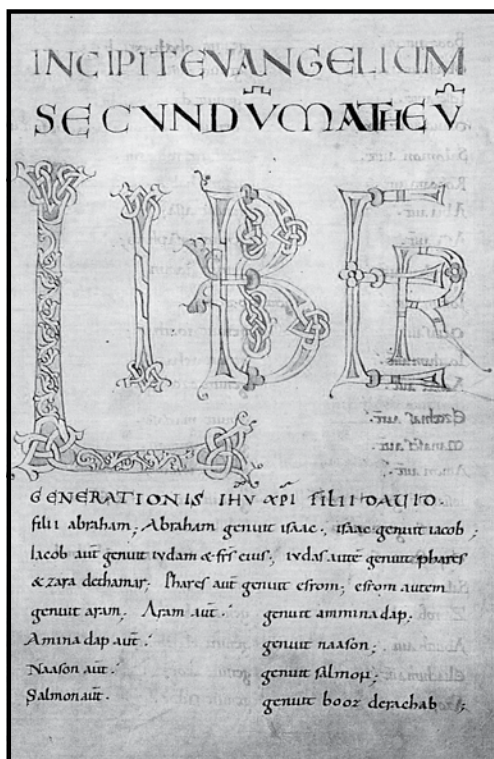
IN SOCIETIES ORGANIZED AROUND KINSHIP, GENEALOGIES (LISTS OF names tracing the ancestry of a given individual or group) serve as public records that document history, establish identity and/or legitimate office. The key to legitimacy and identity is a direct, irrefutable familial tie with the past. Such lists may ascend from the individual, using the formula “x the son of y, the son of z . . .” (see 1Ch 6:33–43; Ezr 7:1–5; Lk 3:23–38) or descend from a common ancestor, using the pattern “x was the father of y, y the father of z . . .” (see Ge 5:1–32; Ru 4:18–23; Mt 1:1–17). These two basic types of genealogies can be combined (cf. Mt 1:1 and 1:2–17). In addition, genealogical rolls may either contain a simple succession of names or may be supplemented with expansive content pertaining to the deeds of certain prominent individuals on the list.

Genealogies feature prominently in both the early and later history of Israel. There are ten principal genealogical lists in Genesis alone (e.g., “the written account of Adam’s line” in Ge 5). These records served to establish and protect identity in that they regulated a variety of social interactions, including marriage and land inheritance (see Dt 25:5–10; Ezr 10:18–43). Thus the registration of families who had returned from exile was a profound concern during the postexilic period (see 1Ch 1–9; Ezr 8:2–14; Ne 7:7–63). Genealogies were especially important in ancient Israel because the right to hold important offices was a hereditary privilege. For example, the priesthood was assured to the sons of Levi (see Ex 6:16–26; Nu 3:10; 1Ch 6:1–53), while kingship was reserved for the descendants of Judah (see Ge 49:10) and more specifically for the sons of David (see 2Sa 7:12–16; Ps 89:29; Isa 9:7; 11:1–3).

In the New Testament era certain genealogical records were stored in a public archive in the temple mount, while others were maintained by private families. Early Christian preaching radically redefined genealogical descent by considering all who identified with Jesus as true, legal descendants of Abraham, “heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29; cf. Mt 3:9; Jn 8:33,39; Ro 4:16).¹

The New Testament preserves two pertinent genealogical lists, both of which present the human ancestry of Jesus as the son of David (see Mt 1:1–17; Lk 3:23–38). The two listings are different, and the reasons for this variation have been extensively debated. It may be that the register in Luke preserves the biological family tree of Joseph, while the one in Matthew records the legal line of descent that authenticated Joseph’s (and Jesus’) claim to David’s throne. Others suggest that the genealogy in Matthew is Joseph’s, while the one in Luke is Mary’s.

ASB



The opening of the Gospel of Matthew in the Liesborn Gospels; Germany, tenth century AD

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¹See “Adoption in the Roman World” on p. 1423.

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

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

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

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

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they

^a 18 Or *The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this* ^b 19 Or *was a righteous man and* ^c 21 *Jesus* is the Greek form of *Joshua*, which means *the LORD saves*.

Matthew shows that, although Jesus is not the physical son of Joseph, he is the legal son and therefore a descendant of David (see Lk 2:33; Jn 1:45 and notes).

1:18 *pledged to be married*. There were no sexual relations during a Jewish betrothal period, but it was a much more binding relationship than a modern engagement and could be broken only by divorce (see v. 19). In Dt 22:24 a betrothed woman is called a “wife,” though the preceding verse speaks of her as being “pledged to be married.” Matthew uses the terms “husband” (v. 19) and “wife” (v. 24) of Joseph and Mary before their marriage was consummated (see note on Joel 1:8). *the Holy Spirit*. The common NT way of referring to the divine Spirit, who in the OT was almost always called “the Spirit of God” or “the Spirit of the LORD.” See Ps 51:11 and note. Christian reflection on the Biblical word about him (see

3:16–17; 28:19; 2Co 13:14 and notes) led to the understanding that he is one of the three persons of the Trinity.

1:19 *divorce her quietly*. He would sign the necessary legal papers but not have her judged publicly and stoned (see Dt 22:23–24).

1:20 *Joseph son of David*. See notes on 1:1,16; perhaps a hint that the message of the angel related to the expected Messiah. *take Mary home as your wife*. They were legally bound to each other, but not yet living together as husband and wife. *what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit*. This agrees perfectly with the announcement to Mary (Lk 1:35), except that the latter is more specific (see note on Lk 1:26–35).

1:21 *save*. See Lk 2:11 and note.

1:22 *fulfill*. Twelve times (here; 2:15,23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17;

PEOPLE IN FOCUS



JOSEPH

STEPFATHER

Stepparents take on one of the hardest tasks in life—raising a child who isn’t biologically theirs. When Joseph first learned that his fiancée Mary was bearing someone else’s child, he must have felt deep heartache. By law, he had the right to accuse Mary of adultery and have her executed. Then an angel brought instructions in a dream: Joseph was to stay with Mary, for her child was from God.

Three times Joseph received angelic messages in dreams, and each time they called for moves he had not planned and would not wish for. First he was called to care for a wife he had never slept with and a child who was not his. Then he was ordered to flee as a refugee to far-off Egypt. Finally an angel told him to return home, where skeptical neighbors probably remembered that Mary had been pregnant before her marriage.

We know one thing about Joseph: He

obeyed, following the angel’s orders in each difficult case. A dutiful stepfather, he treated his son as his own, raising him according to the Jewish law. As a carpenter, he taught Jesus to hammer and saw. As a righteous man, he modeled for him an obedient life.

We last hear of Joseph when Jesus was 12. After that, the Bible only mentions Jesus’ mother, Mary, and Jesus’ brothers. (Joseph probably died before Jesus began his ministry. From the cross, Jesus committed the care of his mother to one of his disciples [see Jn 19:25–27].) Through his faithfulness as a stepfather, however, Joseph made a lasting contribution to the world.

Life Questions

✦ Has God asked you to do any thankless tasks? What were they, and how did they turn out? **SB**

will call him Immanuel”^a (which means “God with us”).

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

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^b from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

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

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

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

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream

not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

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

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

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

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

The Return to Nazareth

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

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

^a 23 Isaiah 7:14 ^b 1 Traditionally *wise men*

^c 6 Micah 5:2,4 ^d 15 Hosea 11:1 ^e 18 Jer. 31:15

8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 27:9) Matthew speaks of the OT being fulfilled in the events of Jesus’ life.

1:25 *he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth.* Both Matthew and Luke (1:26–35) make it clear that Jesus was born of a virgin.

2:1 *Bethlehem in Judea.* A village about five miles south of Jerusalem. Matthew says nothing of the events in Nazareth (cf. Lk 1:26–56). Possibly wanting to emphasize Jesus’ Davidic background, he begins with the events that happened in David’s hometown. It is called “Bethlehem in Judea,” not only to distinguish it from the town of the same name about seven miles northwest of Nazareth, but also to emphasize that Jesus came from the tribe (Judah) and territory that produced the line of Davidic kings. That Jews expected the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem and to be from David’s family is clear from Jn 7:42. *King Herod.* Herod the Great (37–4 BC), to be distinguished from the other Herods

in the Bible. *Magi.* Probably astrologers, perhaps from Persia or southern Arabia or Mesopotamia, all of which are east of the Holy Land.

2:2 *star.* Probably not an ordinary star, planet or comet, though some interpreters have identified it with the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn or with other astronomical phenomena (cf. Nu 24:17 and note).

2:15 *the death of Herod.* In 4 BC.

2:23 *he called a Nazarene.* These exact words are not found in the OT and probably refer to several OT prefigurations and/or predictions (note the plural “prophets”) that the Messiah would be despised (e.g., Ps 22:6; Isa 53:3), for in Jesus’ day “Nazarene” was virtually a synonym for “despised” (see Jn 1:45–46). Some hold that in speaking of Jesus as a “Nazarene,” Matthew may be alluding to the “Branch” (Hebrew *nešer*) of Isa 11:1, since the word also appears in the Targums (see note on Ne 8:8), rabbinic literature, and the Dead Sea Scrolls as a Messianic title.

Q&A



How Can We Understand the Trinity?

(Mt 3:16–17)

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

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

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

3:2 Repent. Repentance is not merely a change of mind but a radical change in one's life as a whole that especially involves forsaking sin and turning or returning to God. *kingdom of heaven.* A phrase found only in Matthew, where it occurs 33 times. Mark and Luke refer to the "kingdom of God," a term Matthew uses only four times. The "kingdom of heaven/God" in the preaching of Jesus as recounted in the Gospels is the reign of God that he brings about through Jesus Christ — i.e., the establishment of God's rule in the hearts and lives of his people, the overcoming of all the forces of evil, the removal from the world of all the consequences of sin — including death and all that diminishes life — and the creation of a new order of righteousness and peace. The idea of God's kingdom is central to Jesus' teaching and is mentioned 50 times in Matthew alone. *has come near.* See note on Mk 1:15.

3:3 All three Synoptic Gospels quote Isa 40:3 (Luke quotes two additional verses) and apply it to John the Baptist.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3:1–12pp — Mk 1:3–8; Lk 3:2–17

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

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"^a

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

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

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

The Baptism of Jesus

3:13–17pp — Mk 1:9–11; Lk 3:21,22; Jn 1:31–34

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

^a 3 Isaiah 40:3 ^b 11 Or in

3:11 with water for repentance. John's baptism presupposed repentance; he would not baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees because they failed to give any evidence of repentance (vv. 7–8). *baptize you with the Holy Spirit.* See Jn 1:33 and note. *with the Holy Spirit and fire.* Demonstrated in a dramatic way at Pentecost (Ac 1:5,8; 2:1–13; 11:16), though here "fire" may refer to judgment to come (see v. 12). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all God's people was promised in Joel 2:28–29 and at least partially fulfilled in Ac 2:16–21.

3:12 His winnowing fork. For the process of winnowing, see note on Ru 1:22. Here it is figurative for the separation of the righteous ("wheat") from the wicked ("chaff"). *unquenchable fire.* Eschatological judgment (see 25:41 and note; cf. La 1:13 and note). The OT prophets and NT writers sometimes compress the first and second comings of Christ so that they seem to be one event (see, e.g., Isa 61:2 and note).

INSIGHT

Why Come To Earth?

*** Mt 3:17 *** Radio commentator, the late Paul Harvey, told a modern parable about a religious skeptic who worked as a farmer. One raw winter night the man heard an irregular thumping sound against the kitchen storm door. He went to a window and watched as tiny, shivering sparrows, attracted to the evident warmth inside, beat in vain against the glass.

Touched, the farmer bundled up and trudged through fresh snow to open the barn door for the struggling birds. He turned on the lights and tossed some hay in a corner. But the sparrows, which had scattered in all directions when he emerged from the house, hid in the darkness, afraid.

The man tried various tactics to get them into the barn. He laid down a trail of Saltine cracker crumbs to direct them. He tried circling behind the birds to drive them toward the barn. Nothing worked. He, a huge, alien creature, had terrified them; the birds couldn't comprehend that he actually desired to help them.

The farmer withdrew to his house and watched the doomed sparrows through a window. As he stared, a thought hit: If only I could become a bird—one of them—just for a moment. Then I wouldn't frighten them so. I could show them the way to warmth and safety.

At the same moment, another thought dawned on him. He had grasped the reason Jesus was born.

When God Came to Earth

A man becoming a bird is nothing compared to God becoming a man. The concept of a sovereign eternal being, the Creator of the universe, confining himself to a human body was—and is—too much for some people to believe. But how else could God truly communicate with us?

We don't know what God looked like as a man; no Gospel writer described the physical appearance of Jesus. But, in other ways, the four Gospels together

paint a full picture of his humanity. Jesus, who claimed to be God, didn't have a supernatural glow about him. His own neighbors and family marveled that he seemed so, well, normal.

The Bible does not diminish Jesus. It shows the power of a man who healed the sick with a simple touch, the authority of a teacher so captivating that people sat for three days straight, with empty stomachs, just to hear him (see Mt 15:32). Even after Jesus hushed them, people wouldn't stop talking about his miracles.

But the Gospel writers also reveal the full range of Jesus' emotions: a surge of compassion for a person with leprosy, a deep sigh in response to nagging critics, a look of anger and distress at cold-hearted legalists, and then an awful cry from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). Sometimes Jesus was witty; sometimes he cried. He got tired: Several times he left the crowds to seek a quiet place for rest.

Like No One Else

Jesus was like no other person who has ever lived. Twelve men left their jobs and families at a single command to follow him. Yet Jesus was also fully "one of us." He needed food and friends. He got lonely. He showed anger and disappointment. Because Jesus experienced all we experience as human beings, he can understand us completely and share in our joys and sorrows.

Matthew portrays both sides of Jesus—the divine and the human. The disciples needed to see both dimensions before giving their lives to him.

Life Questions

✦ Suppose that Jesus had never come, that God had merely sent an elaborate love note. What difference would that have made? **[SB]**



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

¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descend—

3:15 Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his Messianic ministry. There were several reasons for his baptism: (1) The first, mentioned here, was "to fulfill all righteousness." His baptism indicated that he was consecrated to God and officially approved by him, as especially shown in the descent of the Holy Spirit (v. 16) and the words of the Father (v. 17; cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1). All God's righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus. (2) At Jesus' baptism John publicly announced the

arrival of the Messiah and the inception of his ministry (Jn 1:31–34). (3) By his baptism Jesus completely identified himself with humanity's sin and failure (though he himself needed no repentance or cleansing from sin), becoming our substitute (2Co 5:21). (4) His baptism was an example to his followers.

3:16–17 All three persons of the Trinity are clearly seen here (see 28:19 and note).

3:16 *Spirit of God.* The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus not

ing like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

4:1–11pp — Mk 1:12,13; Lk 4:1–13

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^a by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”^b

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

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot
against a stone.’”^c

⁷Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”^d

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high

mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

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

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Jesus Begins to Preach

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

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles —
¹⁶the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of
death
a light has dawned.”^f

^a 1 The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*.

^b 4 Deut. 8:3 ^c 6 Psalm 91:11,12 ^d 7 Deut. 6:16

^e 10 Deut. 6:13 ^f 16 Isaiah 9:1,2

to overcome sin (for he was sinless) but to equip him (see note on Jdg 3:10) for his work as the divine-human Messiah.

3:17 *voice from heaven.* The voice (1) authenticated Jesus’ Messianic sonship, echoing Ps 2:7 (“This is my Son”), (2) identified Jesus with the suffering servant of Isa 42:1 (“with him I am well pleased”), and perhaps (3) identified Jesus with Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, echoing Ge 22:2 (“whom I love”). This word from the Father must have greatly encouraged Jesus at the very outset of his earthly ministry. *my Son.* See notes on 14:33; Jn 3:16.

4:1–11 The significance of Jesus’ temptations, especially because they occurred at the outset of his public ministry, seems best understood in terms of the kind of Messiah he was to be. He would not accomplish his mission by using his supernatural power for his own needs (first temptation), by using his power to win a large following by miracles or magic (second temptation) or by compromising with Satan (third temptation). Jesus’ temptation was real, not merely symbolic. He was “tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin” (see Heb 4:15 and note). He was confronted by the tempter with a real opportunity to sin. Although Jesus was the Son of God, he defeated Satan by using a weapon that everyone has at their disposal: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). He met all three temptations with Scriptural truth (vv. 4,7,10) from Deuteronomy.

4:1 *led by the Spirit ... to be tempted.* This testing of Jesus (the Greek verb translated “tempted” can also be rendered “tested”), which was divinely intended, has as its primary background Dt 8:1–5, from which Jesus also quotes in his first reply to the devil (see v. 4 and NIV text note). There Moses recalls how the Lord led the Israelites in the wilderness 40 years “to humble you and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether

or not you would keep his commands” (Dt 8:2). Here at the beginning of his ministry Jesus is subjected to a similar test and shows himself to be the true Israelite who lives “on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Dt 8:3). And whereas Adam failed the great test and plunged the whole race into sin (Ge 3), Jesus was faithful and thus demonstrated his qualification to become the Savior of all who receive him. It was, moreover, important that Jesus be tested/tempted as Israel and we are, so that he could become our “merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17; see note there) and thus be “able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18; see Heb 4:15–16). Finally, as the one who remained faithful in temptation he became the model for all believers when they are tempted. *by the devil.* God surely tests his people, but it is the devil who tempts to evil (see notes on Ge 22:1; Jas 1:13; see also 1Jn 3:8; Rev 2:9–10 and notes; Rev 12:9–10). Like the Hebrew for “Satan,” the Greek for “devil” means “accuser” or “slanderer.” The devil is a personal being, not a mere force or influence. He is the great archenemy of God and the leader of the hosts of darkness.

4:4 Just as God gave the Israelites manna in a supernatural way (see Dt 8:3 and note), so also people today must rely on God for spiritual nourishment. Jesus relied on his Father, not his own miracle power, for provision of food (cf. Jn 4:34 and note; 6:27).

4:15–16 Another Messianic prophecy from Isaiah. Jesus spent most of his public ministry “in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali” (v. 13), which is north and west of the Sea of Galilee.

4:15 *Galilee of the Gentiles.* A region that, from the Jewish perspective in Jesus’ day, was “in darkness” and “the land of the shadow of death” (v. 16), probably because it was far removed from the religious influences of Jerusalem and because large numbers of Gentiles lived there. Matthew may have chosen this text (Isa 9:1–2) because

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

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

4:18-22pp — Mk 1:16-20; Lk 5:2-11; Jn 1:35-42

¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

Q&A

* * * * *

Does the Spirit Lead Us Into Temptation?

(Mt 4:1)

God does not tempt us to sin — that’s Satan’s specialty. However, God may see fit to test us. On occasion this testing places us in Satan’s line of fire.

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

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

Not necessarily. Jesus linked “lead us not into temptation” with “deliver us from the evil one” (Mt 6:13). Thus, avoiding temptation means avoiding the devil’s snares and enticements. Avoiding temptation doesn’t mean that we avoid trials that spiritually strengthen us. Jesus wants us to see God as the one who delivers, not the one who tempts. In our prayers, we look to God as the source of victory over the evil one. God tests us not that we might fall into sin but that we might experience victory. **QSB**

of his interest in the universal appeal of the gospel (see 2:1–12; 13:38; 28:19).

4:17 Repent. See note on Mk 1:4. Jesus began his public ministry with the same message as that of John the Baptist (see 3:2 and note). The people must repent because God’s reign was drawing near in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

4:21 boat. In 1986 the remains of a 2,000-year-old typical fisherman’s boat were found off the northwest shore

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

Jesus Heals the Sick

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

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

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

The Beatitudes

5:3-12pp — Lk 6:20-23

He said:

- ³“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
- ⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
- ⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
- ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
- ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
- ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,

^a 25 That is, the Ten Cities

of the Sea of Galilee. Its discoverers named it the Jesus Boat.

5:3 Blessed. The word means more than “happy,” because happiness is an emotion often dependent on outward circumstances. “Blessed” here refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who share in the salvation of the kingdom of God. See notes on Ps 1:1; Rev 1:3.

HEROD'S TEMPLE

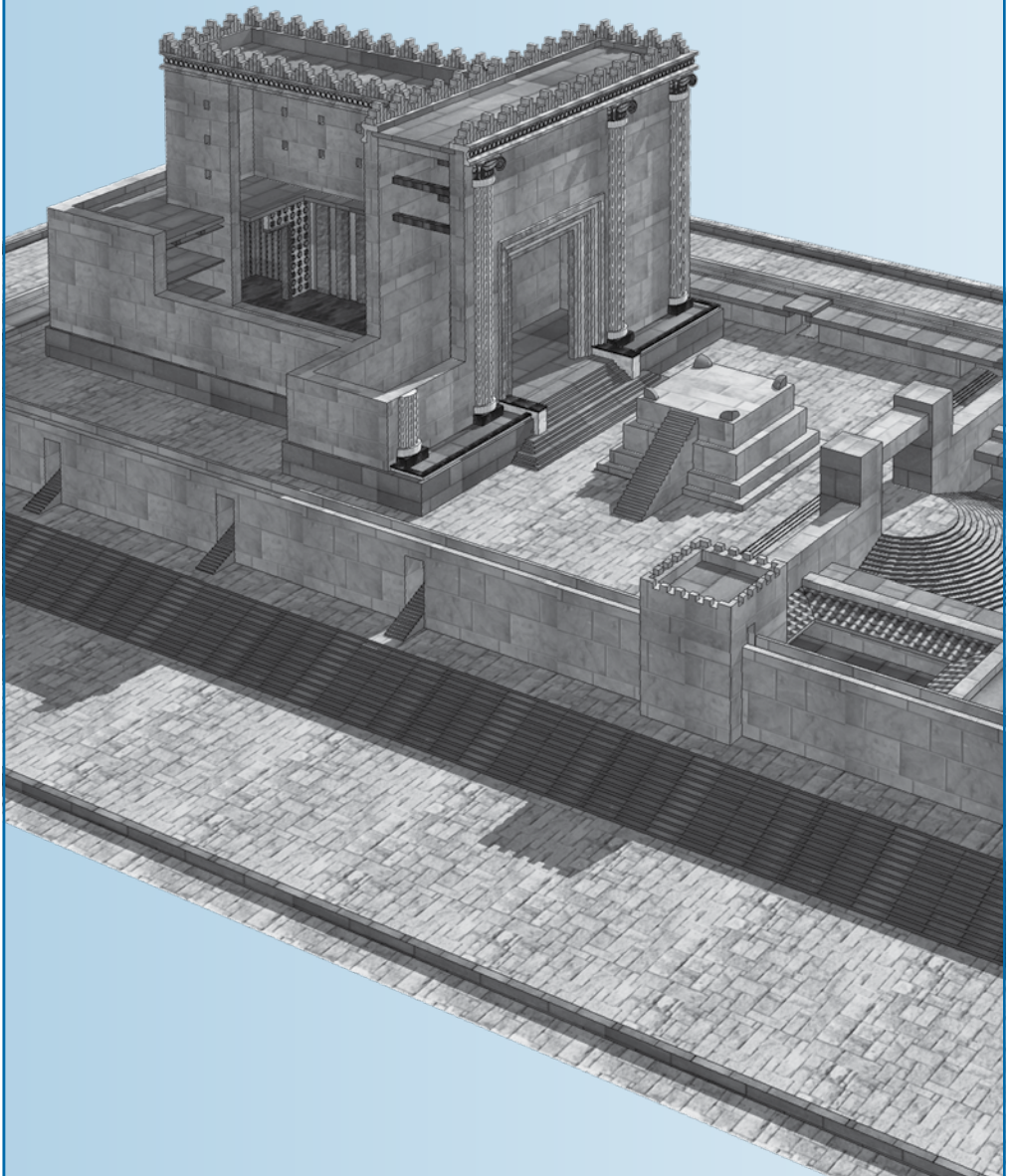
20 BC–AD 70

Begun in 20 BC, Herod's new structure towered 15 stories high, following the floor dimensions of the former temples in the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The high sanctuary shown here was built on the site of the former temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel.

The outer courts surrounding the temple mount were not completed until AD 64. The entire structure was demolished by the Romans in AD 70.

Dimensions of rooms, steps, doorways, cornices and exterior measurements are mentioned in history (Josephus and the Mishnah) but are subject to interpretation.

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for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

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

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

The Fulfillment of the Law

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

Murder

5:25,26pp — Lk 12:58,59

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

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

5:17 *the Law.* The first five books of the OT. *the Prophets.* Not only the Latter Prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which we call Major Prophets, and the 12 Minor Prophets (lumped together by the Jews as “the Book of the Twelve”) — but also the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings). Taken together, “the Law” and “the Prophets” designated the entire OT, including the Writings, the third section of the Hebrew Bible. See 13:35, where Matthew introduces a quotation from the Writings (Ps 78:2) with “what was spoken through the prophet.” *fulfill.* Jesus fulfilled the Law in the sense that he gave it its full meaning. He emphasized its deep, underlying principles and total commit-

²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’^e ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already

^a 21 Exodus 20:13 ^b 22 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23. ^c 22 Some manuscripts *brother or sister without cause* ^d 22 An Aramaic term of contempt ^e 27 Exodus 20:14

Q&A

* * * * *

What Is Hell Like?

(Mt 5:21–30)

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

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

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

ment to it rather than mere external acknowledgment and obedience.

5:22 *court.* Lit. “Sanhedrin” (see note on Mk 14:55). *hell.* The Greek word is *ge(h)enna*, which derives its name from a deep ravine south of Jerusalem, the “Valley of (the Sons of) Hinnom” (Hebrew *ge’ hinnom*). During the reigns of the wicked Ahab and Manasseh, human sacrifices to the Ammonite god Molek were offered there. Josiah desecrated the valley because of the pagan worship there (2Ki 23:10; see Jer 7:31–32; 19:6). It was perhaps because of this desecration that the term came to be used for the place of final punishment (see notes on Isa 66:24; Jer 7:31).

committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

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

Oaths

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

Eye for Eye

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^c ³⁹But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^d and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you

love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

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

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

Prayer

6:9-13pp — Lk 11:2-4

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

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us today our daily bread.
¹²And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our
debtors.

^a 31 Deut. 24:1 ^b 37 Or from evil ^c 38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21 ^d 43 Lev. 19:18

5:43 *hate your enemy.* Words not found anywhere in the OT. However, hatred for one’s enemies was an accepted part of the Jewish ethic at that time in some circles (cf., e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls work *The Rule of the Community*, 1.4,10). See note on Lev 19:18.

5:45 *the evil and the good.* God shows his love to people without distinction.

5:48 *Be perfect.* Christ sets up the high ideal of perfect love (see vv. 43–47) — not that we can fully attain it in this life. That, however, is God’s high standard for us.

6:1 *practice ... righteousness.* This verse introduces the discussion of three acts of righteousness: (1) giving (vv. 2–4), (2) praying (vv. 5–15) and (3) fasting

(vv. 16–18). Jesus’ concern here is with the motives behind such acts.

6:9 *hallowed.* God is already holy (see Lev 11:44 and note; 1Pe 1:15), so the prayer is not that God be made holy but that he be regarded as holy. By his saving and judging acts in history he proves himself holy (see Lev 10:3; Eze 36:23 and notes). This petition is that he so achieve his saving purposes in the world that his holiness is displayed before the eyes of the world’s people and acknowledged by them — which will happen only as his kingdom comes. *name.* See notes on Ps 5:11; Eze 20:9.

Fasting in the Bible (Mt 6:16–18)

Fasting in the Old Testament

While the Day of Atonement was the only required day of fasting in the Old Testament, there were occasions throughout the year for voluntary fasting. Rather than avoiding specific foods, fasting usually involved abstinence from all food for a predetermined period of time. It was always accompanied by prayer and was used to express grief, penitence or humble devotion to God. Fasting was encouraged at times of national crisis as an indication that Israel or Judah was wholeheartedly dedicated to the Lord (see Jdg 20:26; Joel 1:14). Individuals in particular distress also fasted (see 1Sa 1:7; 2Sa 12:22). The duration of a given fast ranged from several hours to as long as 40 days. After the exile there were at least four commonly practiced periods of fasting (see Zec 8:19). For example, a tradition began of fasting on the ninth of Ab (the fifth month, spanning our July and August). This fast was intended to commemorate the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and it became customary to read Lamentations on that day.¹



Fasting in the New Testament and the Church

Fasting remained common throughout the New Testament era. The Pharisees fasted twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays (see Lk 18:12). Jesus, the disciples of John the Baptist and Paul practiced substantial fasts as well. Matthew 6:16–18 indicates that fasting remains a legitimate form of worship for Christians. During the first few centuries of the Christian church a theology of asceticism with heroic acts of prolonged fasting arose. But Jesus' words also provide a reminder that true fasting is directed toward God, not toward impressing others. Like the prophets before him (see Isa 58:1–12; Jer 14:10–12; Zec 7), Jesus proclaimed that true fasting is an indication of the heart's inclination toward God. **ASB**

¹See "Sackcloth and Ashes: Rituals of Lamentation" on p. 661.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,^a
but deliver us from the evil one.^b

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

Fasting

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

Treasures in Heaven

6:22,23pp — Lk 11:34-36

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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

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

Do Not Worry

6:25-33pp — Lk 12:22-31

²⁵"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much

^a 13 The Greek for *temptation* can also mean *testing*.

^b 13 Or *from evil*; some late manuscripts *one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

^c 22 The Greek for *healthy* here implies *generous*.

^d 23 The Greek for *unhealthy* here implies *stingy*.

6:13 *lead us not into temptation.* That is, do not lead us through trials so deep that they would tempt us to be unfaithful to you (see 1Co 10:13 and note). God does not

tempt (in the sense of enticing to sin; see Jas 1:13 and note).

Q&A



How Can I Tell If I Have Too Much “Stuff”?

(Mt 6:19–34)

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

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

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

more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?^a

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

Judging Others

7:3–5pp — Lk 6:41,42

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

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

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

Ask, Seek, Knock

7:7–11pp — Lk 11:9–13

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

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

^a 27 Or single cubit to your height

7:6 Teaching about the kingdom should be given in accordance with the spiritual capacity of the learners.

7:12 The so-called Golden Rule is found in negative form in rabbinic Judaism and also in Hinduism, Bud-

dism and Confucianism. It occurred in various forms in Greek and Roman ethical teaching. Jesus stated it in positive form. *the Law and the Prophets*. See note on 5:17.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

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

True and False Prophets

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

7:22 *that day.* The day of judgment (cf. Mal 3:17–18). *prophecy.* In the Bible this verb primarily means to give a message from God, not necessarily to predict.

True and False Disciples

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

The Wise and Foolish Builders

7:24-27pp — Lk 6:47-49

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet

7:24 *rock.* The Bible often speaks metaphorically of God or Christ as a “rock” (see Ge 49:24; Ps 18:2; 1Co 10:4 and notes).

INSIGHT

Letting the Inside Match The Outside

★ **Mt 7:14** ★ Almost all of us live two lives: what other people see on the outside and what is really going on inside of us. In school we learn what outward signs of attention will please the teacher. At a job we learn to “put up a good front” whenever the boss happens to stroll by. As if putting on masks, we style our hair, choose our clothes and use body language to impress those around us. Over time, we learn to excel at hiding truly serious problems.

People tend to judge by outward appearances and so can easily be fooled. Acquaintances are often shocked when a mass-murderer is arrested. “He seemed like such a nice man!” they insist. The outside appearance did not match the inside reality.

A Blast at Hypocrites

Matthew 5–7 announces that the time has come for us to change not just the outside but also the inside. In Jesus’ day, religious people tried to impress each other with showy outward behavior. They wore gaunt and hungry looks during a brief fast, prayed grandiosely if people were watching and went so far as to wear Bible verses strapped to their foreheads and left arms.

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus blasted the hypocrisy behind such seemingly harmless practices. God is not fooled by appearances. We cannot fake behavior to impress him. He knows that

inside the best of us lurk dark thoughts of hatred, pride and lust — internal problems only he can deal with. Jesus presented a truly radical way of life, free of pretense.

Familiar Yet Startling Words

Matthew 5–7, among the most analyzed in the entire Bible, present a fresh view of the world. In one sense, Jesus said, the truths presented here are not new: They fulfill, rather than abolish, the Old Testament law. In another sense, the way of life Jesus described is more radical than anything before or since. Jesus’ words turn many normal assumptions upside down. With statements like, “Blessed are the poor in spirit ... those who mourn ... the meek ... the peacemakers ... those who are persecuted” (Mt 5:3–5,9–10), Jesus attacked those who strove to build a good image by appearing powerful, successful and assertive.

Perhaps most radical of all, the Sermon on the Mount introduces the possibility of living solely for God and not for appearances. At last we can get our inner and outer lives in sync.

Life Questions

★ Do other people see what you’re really like inside? How do your friends try to impress each other? **SB**



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

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

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

8:2-4pp — Mk 1:40-44; Lk 5:12-14

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

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

The Faith of the Centurion

8:5-13pp — Lk 7:1-10

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

⁷Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

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

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

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

Jesus Heals Many

8:14-16pp — Mk 1:29-34; Lk 4:38-41

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw

Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.¹⁵ He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

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

“He took up our infirmities
and bore our diseases.”^b

The Cost of Following Jesus

8:19-22pp — Lk 9:57-60

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

²⁰Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

²¹Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

²²But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Jesus Calms the Storm

8:23-27pp — Mk 4:36-41; Lk 8:22-25

8:23-27Ref — Mt 14:22-33

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

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

²⁷The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Jesus Restores Two Demon-Possessed Men

8:28-34pp — Mk 5:1-17; Lk 8:26-37

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

^a 2 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin. ^b 17 Isaiah 53:4 (see Septuagint) ^c 28 Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; other manuscripts *Gerasenes*

8:11 The universality of the gospel is one of Matthew’s themes. *feast ... in the kingdom of heaven.* The eschatological Messianic banquet that symbolizes

the blessings of an intimate relationship with God (see Isa 25:6).

MATTHEW’S FULFILLMENT QUOTATIONS

TEN FULFILLMENT STATEMENTS		OTHER FULFILLMENT CITATIONS	
1:22 – 23	Jesus’ virgin birth fulfills Isaiah 7:14.	2:5 – 6	Jesus’ Bethlehem birth fulfills Micah 5:2.
2:15	The escape to and return from Egypt fulfills Hosea 11:1.	3:3	John the Baptist fulfills Isaiah 40:3.
2:17 – 18	The murder of the male infants of Bethlehem fulfills Jeremiah 31:15.	5:17	Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets.
2:23	Jesus’ childhood in Nazareth fulfills an unknown prophecy.*	10:34 – 35	The division of families fulfills Micah 7:6.
4:14 – 16	Jesus establishes his ministry in Galilee, fulfilling Isaiah 9:2.	11:2 – 6	Jesus performs Messianic signs, fulfilling Isaiah 35:5; 61:1, etc.
8:17	Jesus heals disease, fulfilling Isaiah 53:4.	11:10	John the Baptist fulfills Malachi 3:1.
12:17 – 21	Jesus fulfills the role of the Servant of Isaiah 42:2.	13:14 – 15	Parables conceal the truth from the hard-hearted (Isa 6:9).
13:35	Jesus speaks in parables, fulfilling Psalm 78:2; 2 Chronicles 29:30.	15:7 – 9	Israel’s disobedience fulfills Isaiah 29:13.
21:4 – 5	Jesus enters Jerusalem as the humble king of Zechariah 9:9.	21:13	The temple is a den of robbers (Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11).
27:9 – 10	Jesus is betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, fulfilling Zechariah 11:12 – 13.	21:16	Praise from the lips of children is predicted in Psalm 8:2.
		21:42	The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone (Ps 118:22).
		26:31	The shepherd is struck down and the sheep scattered (Zec 13:7).

*“He would be called a Nazarene” may be a reference to the “Branch” (*nešer*) of Isaiah 11:1, or a general statement of the humble origins of the Messiah. Adapted from *Four Portraits, One Jesus* by MARK L. STRAUSS. Copyright © 2007 by Mark L. Strauss, p. 218. Used by permission of Zondervan.

³⁰Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. ³¹The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” ³²He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. ³³Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man
 9:2-8pp — Mk 2:3-12; Lk 5:18-26

9 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. ²Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” ³At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!” ⁴Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ⁶But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” ⁷Then the man got up and went home. ⁸When the crowd saw this, they were filled

with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

The Calling of Matthew

9:9-13pp — Mk 2:14-17; Lk 5:27-32

⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’” ¹⁴For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jesus Questioned About Fasting
 9:14-17pp — Mk 2:18-22; Lk 5:33-39

¹⁴Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

^a 13 Hosea 6:6

9:3 blaspheming. Here the term includes usurping God’s prerogative to forgive sins (see notes on Mk 2:7; Lk 5:21).

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

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

9:18-26pp — Mk 5:22-43; Lk 8:41-56

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

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

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

²³When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶News of this spread through all that region.

Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

²⁸When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

“Yes, Lord,” they replied.

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

³²While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. ³³And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke.

9:27 *blind men.* Isaiah predicted the healing of the blind in the Messianic age (Isa 35:5). *Son of David.* A popular Jewish title for the coming Messiah (e.g., 12:23; 20:30; 21:9; 22:41–45; see note on 1:1).

9:32 *could not talk.* Isaiah also (see note on v. 27) predicted that the mute would talk in the Messianic age (Isa 35:6).

9:36 *compassion.* Jesus’ compassion for people is often noted in the Gospels (see 14:14; 15:22; 20:34; Mk 1:41; 6:34; 8:2).

The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”

³⁴But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

The Workers Are Few

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

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

10:2-4pp — Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Ac 1:13

10:9-15pp — Mk 6:8-11; Lk 9:3-5; 10:4-12

10:19-22pp — Mk 13:11-13; Lk 21:12-17

10:26-33pp — Lk 12:2-9

10:34, 35pp — Lk 12:51-53

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

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

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

⁹“Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts — ¹⁰no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. ¹²As you enter the home, give it your greeting. ¹³If the home is deserving, let

^a 8 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

10:5 *Do not go.* The good news about the kingdom was to be proclaimed first to Jews only. After his death and resurrection, Jesus commanded the message to be taken to all nations (28:19; cf. 21:43). *Samaritans.* A mixed-blood race resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites left behind when the people of the northern kingdom were exiled and Gentiles who were brought into the land by the Assyrians (2Ki 17:24). Bitter hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’ day.

your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

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

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

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

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

³²"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in

heaven. ³³But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to turn

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

³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' ^b

³⁷"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

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

Jesus and John the Baptist

11:2-19pp — Lk 7:18-35

11 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. ^c

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

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

^a 29 Or will; or knowledge ^b 36 Micah 7:6 ^c 1 Greek in their towns ^d 5 The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

10:18 Anticipates the mission to the Gentiles. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes the universality of the gospel (see note on 8:11).

10:25 *Beelzebul*. The prince of demons (12:24); the Greek form of the Hebrew name Baal-Zebul ("Exalted Baal" or "Baal the Prince"). Baal-Zebub ("lord of flies") is a parody on and mockery of the actual epithet, Baal-Zebul (see note on Jdg 10:6). The name came to be used of Satan.

10:28 *soul*. The true self (see note on Ps 6:3). Body and soul are closely related in this life but are separated at death and then reunited at the resurrection (cf. 2Co 5:1–10 and notes; Php 1:23–24). *the One*. God. He alone

determines the final destiny of us all. *hell*. See note on 5:22.

10:34 At first glance this saying sounds like a contradiction of Isa 9:6 ("Prince of Peace"), Lk 2:14 ("on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests") and Jn 14:27 ("Peace I leave with you"). It is true that Christ came to bring peace—peace between the believer and God, and peace among humans. Yet the inevitable result of Christ's coming is conflict—between Christ and the antichrist, between light and darkness, between Christ's followers and the devil's followers. This conflict can occur even between members of the same family (vv. 35–36; Mk 10:29–30).

PEOPLE IN FOCUS



JOHN THE BAPTIST

SOMETHING NEW

Those who scramble to keep up with the latest trends often have one goal in mind: Turn as many heads as possible. Whether it's sporting the latest fashion, carrying the newest smartphone or being first in line for the next-generation gadget, the new must stand out to gain attention.

John the Baptist was something new, and he certainly stood out from his surroundings. Though he could have been a priest like his father, he exchanged those linen robes for a garment of coarse camel's hair. He took to the wilderness, scavenging grasshoppers and wild honey rather than settling in Jerusalem where he could have savored a portion of the offerings people presented to God.

John's unusual style helped direct attention to his burning message: The Messiah was about to arrive, and people must change their ways. Crowds flocked to hear John, and he baptized them in the Jordan River as a sign of their repentance, thus earning for himself the nickname "the Baptist."

No less an authority than Jesus said that John was as great as any man who had ever lived (see Mt 11:11). In the same breath Jesus

added that the lowest-ranking person in the kingdom of God, now drawing near, was even greater than John. Although John represented the best of the old order, the new order of God's kingdom would outshine his greatness by far.

John had no difficulty accepting this comparison. When he saw Jesus, he recognized "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). He considered himself unworthy even to untie Jesus' sandals. John the Baptist did not intend to attract attention to himself; rather, he pointed to Jesus.

When Herod Antipas arrested and executed John (see Mt 14:1–12), most of John's disciples followed Jesus. It took a long time, however, for some who lived in far-off parts of the world to get the full message about Jesus (see Ac 18:24–26; 19:1–7). They, too, quickly adopted the Christian way. Despite John's great influence, it was a mark of his success that he left no distinctive "church" of his own. His followers were ready for Jesus.

Life Questions

- ✦ How can your lifestyle help prepare people for Jesus? **SB**

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

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."^a

¹¹Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days

of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence,^b and violent people have been raiding it. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵Whoever has ears, let them hear.

¹⁶"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the market-places and calling out to others:

¹⁷" 'We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.'

^a 10 Mal. 3:1

^b 12 Or *been forcefully advancing*

11:13 *the Prophets and the Law.* The entire OT prophesied the coming of the kingdom. John represented the end of the old covenant era.

11:14 *he is the Elijah who was to come.* A reference to Mal 4:5, which prophesied the reappearance of Elijah before the day of the Lord. Some of the people remembered

the prophecy and asked John the Baptist, "Are you Elijah?" He answered, "I am not" (Jn 1:21). John was not literally the reincarnation of Elijah, but he did fulfill the function and role of the prophet (see Mt 17:10–13 and note on Lk 1:17).

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Woe on Unrepentant Towns

11:21-23pp — Lk 10:13-15

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

The Father Revealed in the Son

11:25-27pp — Lk 10:21,22

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

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

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

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

12:1-8pp — Mk 2:23-28; Lk 6:1-5

12:9-14pp — Mk 3:1-6; Lk 6:6-11

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

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

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

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

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

God’s Chosen Servant

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

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

Jesus and Beelzebul

12:25-29pp — Mk 3:23-27; Lk 11:17-22

²²Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed

^a 23 That is, the realm of the dead ^b 7 Hosea 6:6

^c 21 Isaiah 42:1-4

12:18–21 Another fulfillment passage (see note on 1:22). This one is from Isaiah’s first servant song (see Isa 42:1–4 and note) and is the longest OT quotation in Matthew’s Gospel. It summarizes the quiet ministry of the Lord’s servant, who will bring justice and hope to the nations.

12:18 *my servant*. Jesus is called God’s servant only here and in Ac 3:13,26 (see note on 3:13); 4:27,30. *the one I love, in whom I delight*. See note on 3:17. *put my Spirit on him*. See Isa 11:2; 61:1 and notes.

him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

²⁴But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”

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

²⁹“Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

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

³³“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

The Sign of Jonah

12:39-42pp — Lk 11:29-32

12:43-45pp — Lk 11:24-26

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

³⁹He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh will stand up

at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

⁴³“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴Then it says, ‘I will return to

Q&A

What Is “Blasphemy Against the Spirit”?

(Mt 12:31–32)

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

Some other helpful points to keep in mind:

Mark notes that Jesus gave this teaching because his opponents claimed he had an “impure spirit” (Mk 3:30). The Pharisees were so hard-hearted that they observed the miraculous works of God’s Son and then accused him of being Satan’s coworker — a tragic, calloused contradiction of the truth.

Many people expressed honest uncertainty about Jesus during his earthly ministry because his identity as the Messiah only gradually dawned on them. Words spoken against the Son of Man could therefore be forgiven. Since the day of Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit’s ongoing ministry through the revealed Word offers people the opportunity to repent and accept the gospel. Thus, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to reject all that God is doing to bring us to salvation through Christ Jesus. “Blasphemy against the Spirit” is unforgivable not because of something done unintentionally in the past but because of something being done deliberately and unrelentingly in the present. Jesus’ warning was motivated by love. If we are willing to repent, God is willing to forgive (see 1Jn 1:9). **QSB**

12:36 *day of judgment.* At Christ’s second coming; sometimes referred to as “that day” (7:22; 2Ti 1:12,18), “the day of slaughter” (Jas 5:5; see note there).

12:39 *adulterous.* Referring to spiritual, not physical, adultery, in the sense that their generation had become unfaithful to its spiritual husband (God; see

note on Ex 34:15). *sign of the prophet Jonah.* See note on Lk 11:30.

12:40 *three days and three nights.* Including at least part of the first day and part of the third day, a common Jewish reckoning of time. See note on Lk 24:46. *Son of Man.* See note on Mk 8:31).

The Family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus (Mt 12:46–50)

THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS PROVIDE LIMITED DETAILS ABOUT JESUS' immediate family. We know, of course, that he was born to Mary and that his stepfather was Joseph. A carpenter by trade, Joseph is mentioned only in the narratives of Jesus' birth and early childhood, leaving many to believe that he died prior to the time of Jesus' public ministry. The Gospels record the names of four of Jesus' brothers — James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (see Mt 13:55) — and mention sisters without providing names.

Those who believe that Mary remained a virgin throughout her entire life suggest that these siblings were Joseph's children from a previous marriage. Scripture itself, however, makes no claim that Mary maintained her virginity following Jesus' birth, and it is more likely that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were simply the natural children born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus' birth. In ancient Jewish culture it would have been unthinkable for a man and woman to live together in a permanently unconsummated marriage. Matthew 1:25 in fact implies that Mary and Joseph did have normal sexual relations after Jesus' birth.

Although the relationship between Jesus and his family was characterized by tension and misunderstanding (e.g., Mk 3:31–34), at least two of his brothers later became his followers. James, a leader of the Jerusalem church (see Ac 12:17), was martyred in the early sixties. Tradition ascribes the New Testament epistle of James to him. Similarly, Jude's letter is attributed to Jesus' brother Judas.

ASB



A carpenter's shop

© Baker Photo Archive. Eretz Israel Museum.

the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

12:46-50pp — Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21

⁴⁶While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

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

The Parable of the Sower

13:1-15pp — Mk 4:1-12; Lk 8:4-10

13:16,17pp — Lk 10:23,24

13:18-23pp — Mk 4:13-20; Lk 8:11-15

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

¹⁰The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

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

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

¹⁴In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

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

Q&A

Why Did Jesus Speak in Parables?

(Mt 13:10–13)

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

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

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

¹⁵For this people's heart has become
calloused;

they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their
eyes,

hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.^a

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

¹⁸"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²²The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word,

^a 15 Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)

but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

The Parable of the Weeds

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

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

²⁸“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

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

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

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

13:31,32pp — Mk 4:30-32

13:31-33pp — Lk 13:18-21

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

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

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

“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the
creation of the world.”^b

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the

devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

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

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

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

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

The Parable of the Net

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

⁵¹“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

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

^a 33 Or about 27 kilograms

^b 35 Psalm 78:2

NO RESPECT AT HOME

+ (Mt 13:57) +

Jesus had opened his hometown ministry in a synagogue, an occasion marked by a near riot (see Lk 4:16–31). When he returned, he aroused great curiosity but little belief.

The townsfolk couldn’t fathom how one who’d been raised in their midst by a carpenter was now teaching like a rabbi and performing miracles.

Because of their lack of faith, Jesus was reluctant to display his supernatural power for them and quietly withdrew. **SB**

A Prophet Without Honor

13:54-58pp — Mk 6:1-6

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. ⁵⁴Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. ⁵⁵“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not

without honor except in his own town and in his own home.”

⁵⁸And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

John the Baptist Beheaded

14:1-12pp — Mk 6:14-29

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

³Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, ⁴for John had been

13:55 *carpenter’s son*. See note on Mk 6:3. Apparently Joseph was not living at the time of this incident. *broth-*

ers. Sons born to Joseph and Mary after the virgin birth of Jesus (see note on Lk 8:19).

PEOPLE IN FOCUS



THE HERODS

LOWER AUTHORITY

The Herod family weaves its way through the background of the New Testament, like minor supporting characters in a play. Oddly enough, in their own minds — and in the minds of most people then — they were major players.

Like the Bushes or the Kennedys in American politics or the many royal families in European history, the Herods were a family dynasty. They ruled on behalf of the Romans with nearly absolute power. Such power did not impress the early Christians, however. They worshiped a higher authority, one whom the Herods were too spiritually dense to recognize.

Three different rulers go by the name of Herod in the New Testament. (A fourth, Agrippa, descended from the same family [see “Agrippa,” p. 1405].) All three clashed with Jesus or his followers.

Herod the Great reigned as king when Jesus was born. He met the Magi, pointed them toward Bethlehem and then, when they disappeared without identifying the baby king, had all the baby boys in the area slaughtered (see Mt 2:1–12). Other historical sources suggest that such behavior was all too typical of this Herod — he even had his own sons murdered when he thought they threatened his power.

Herod the tetrarch, also known as Herod Antipas, was among Herod the Great’s sons who survived the violence. At his father’s death, he took command over Jesus’ home

area of Galilee. When John the Baptist offended Herod and Herodias by criticizing their morals (see Mk 6:18), Herod imprisoned John and later had him beheaded. Jesus himself fell into this Herod’s hands during his trial. Herod had heard of Jesus and hoped to see him do a miracle; when Jesus wouldn’t cooperate, Herod ridiculed him and sent him back to Pilate (see Lk 23:6–12).

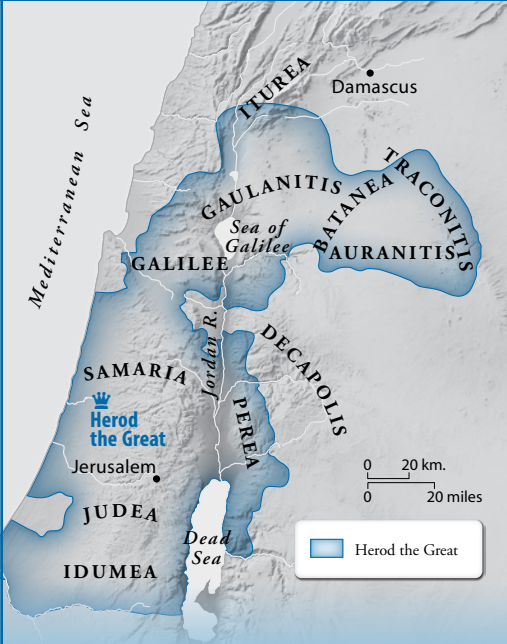
Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, continued the pattern into the next generation. He ruled Jerusalem when the church first began growing there. He clamped down on the early Christians, executing James and arresting a number of others, including Peter. When Peter “escaped” with God’s help, Herod had the guards executed (see Ac 12). Acts tells us that Herod Agrippa died a sudden death because he “did not give praise to God” when a crowd of admirers hailed him as divine (Ac 12:23).

Today we tend to focus on the Herods’ brutal behavior, but most rulers behaved brutally in those days. What was worse, according to the Bible, was the Herods’ failure to recognize the real power on earth — that belonging to God.

Life Questions

- ✦ What dangers do Christians in the modern world face from the “lower authority” of politicians and rulers? **[SB]**

HOUSE OF HEROD



1ST GENERATION



Herod the Great King of Judea, Galilee, Iturea, Tracónitis (37–4 BC)

Birth of Jesus (Mt 2:1–19; Lk 1:5)

KEY:



King



Ethnarch/Tetrarch

BERNICE

italic capitals denote females

Antipater

bold type: bloodline of Herod the Great

Felix

light type: non-bloodline



2ND GENERATION



Herod Philip II (*MOTHER: CLEOPATRA*) Tetrarch of Iturea and Tracónitis (4 BC–AD 34) (Lk 3:1)



Archelaus (*MOTHER: MALTHACE*) Ethnarch of Judea, Idumea and Samaria (4 BC–AD 6); when Mary and Joseph left Egypt, they avoided Judea and settled in Nazareth (Mt 2:19–23)



Aristobulus (*MOTHER: MARIAMNE*) (died 10 BC)



Herod Antipas (*MOTHER: MALTHACE*) Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (4 BC–AD 39) (Lk 3:1); second husband of Herodias; he put John the Baptist to death (Mt 14:1–12; Mk 6:14–29); Pilate sent Jesus to him (Lk 23:7–12)



Herod Philip I (*MOTHER: MARIAMNE*) He did not rule; first husband of Herodias (Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17) (died c. AD 34)



Antipater (*MOTHER: DORIS*)

saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.” ⁵Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

⁶On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much ⁷that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he

ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. ¹²John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

14:13–21pp — Mk 6:32–44; Lk 9:10–17; Jn 6:1–13
14:13–21Ref — Mt 15:32–38

¹³When Jesus heard what had happened, he



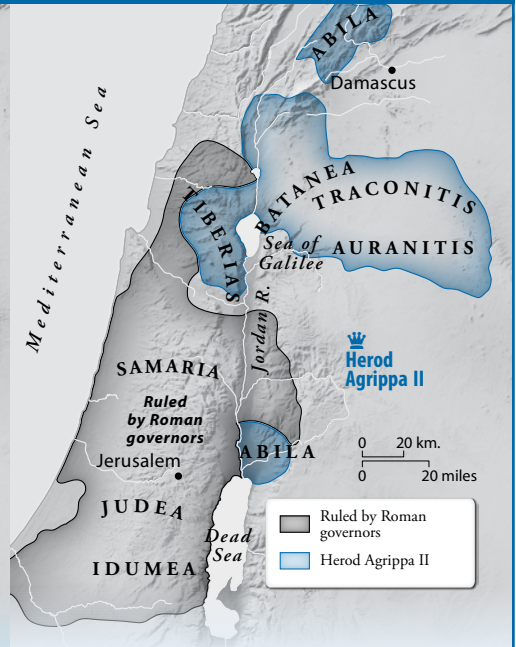
3RD GENERATION

Herod of Chalcis

👑 **Herod Agrippa I** King of Judea (AD 37–44); killed James; put Peter into prison; struck down by an angel (Ac 12:1–24)

HERODIAS Married her uncle Herod Philip I, and then a second uncle, Herod Antipas (Mt 14:3; Mk 6:17)

..... Denotes Herodias's marriage to Herod Antipas
 --- Denotes Herodias's marriage to Herod Philip I and daughter of that marriage



4TH GENERATION

Felix (Governor of Judea)

DRUSILLA
 Married Felix, governor of Judea (AD 52–59);
 Felix tried Paul (Ac 24:24)

👑 **Herod Agrippa II**
 King of Judea; Paul makes a legal defense before him (Ac 25:13–26:32)

BERNICE
 With her brother at the time of Paul's defense (Ac 25:13)

SALOME
 Daughter of Herodias and Herod Philip I; danced in exchange for the head of John the Baptist (Mt 14:1–12; Mk 6:14–29)

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

¹⁵As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so

they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

¹⁶Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

¹⁷“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

¹⁸“Bring them here to me,” he said. ¹⁹And he directed the people to sit down on the grass.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Water

14:22-33pp — Mk 6:45-51; Jn 6:16-21

14:34-36pp — Mk 6:53-56

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

²⁸“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

²⁹“Come,” he said.

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

³¹Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

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

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

That Which Defiles

15:1-20pp — Mk 7:1-23

15 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ²“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!”

³Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?

⁴For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’^a and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’^b ⁵But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ ⁶they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

⁸“ ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

⁹They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’^c”

¹⁰Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. ¹¹What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

¹²Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

¹³He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ¹⁴Leave them; they are blind guides.^d If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.”

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

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

15:21-28pp — Mk 7:24-30

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

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

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

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

^a 4 Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16 ^b 4 Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9

^c 9 Isaiah 29:13 ^d 14 Some manuscripts *blind guides of the blind*

14:33 *Son of God.* This is the first time the disciples use the full title in addressing Jesus (cf. 3:17, where God called him “my Son”; see also Jn 3:16 and note).

Galilee in Jesus' Time (Mt 15:29–39)



JESUS GREW UP IN NAZARETH (MAP 9), ABOUT 15 MILES (24 KM) FROM THE Sea of Galilee.¹ This region had been settled by Jews since ancient times and had remained a bastion of Judaism down through the centuries. Certain aspects of this area help to define the cultural environment in which Jesus lived, spoke and acted:

- Economically, the region benefited from the fish of the Sea of Galilee, trade with the Phoenician coastal cities and reasonably productive agricultural yields, including wheat, grapes, figs and olives.
- In terms of religion, although cut off from Judea by Samaria, Galilean Jews appear to have been as orthodox as their Judean counterparts. Galilee did experience upheaval in the Jewish revolt of AD 66–70, but the region was not necessarily marked by revolutionary sentiment before that time.
- Politically, Galilee lay within the territory of Herod Antipas. While the Gospels say little about Antipas, the incidents surrounding the death of John the Baptist profoundly distressed the common people. Certainly Jesus realized that preaching would be unsettling to worldly monarchs like Antipas.
- Galilee is thought to have had a strong Gentile presence. The city of Sepphoris, just a few miles from Nazareth, is believed by many to have been largely Hellenized. However, it is doubtful that Gentile customs had any major influence on Jesus' preaching; the cultural separation between a city like Sepphoris and a Galilean village was much greater than the physical distance. Furthermore, we have no suggestion in the Gospels or other records that Jesus frequented urban centers like Sepphoris or Tiberias. **[ASB]**

reliability
artifacts
archaeology
history
people

¹See "Nazareth" on p. 1229.

²⁶He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁷"Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

²⁸Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

15:29–31pp — Mk 7:31–37

15:32–39pp — Mk 8:1–10

15:32–39Ref — Mt 14:13–21

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

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

³³His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

³⁴"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."

³⁵He told the crowd to sit down on the ground.

³⁶Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. ³⁷They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ³⁸The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

The Demand for a Sign

16:1–12pp — Mk 8:11–21

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

²He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' ³and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times." ⁴A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none

^a 2,3 Some early manuscripts do not have *When evening comes . . . of the times.*

will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

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

⁷They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

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

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

16:13-16pp — Mk 8:27-29; Lk 9:18-20

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

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

16:16 *Messiah*. See second NIV text note on 1:1; see also note on Jn 1:25. The Hebrew word for *Messiah* (“anointed one”) can be used of anyone who was anointed with the holy oil, such as the priests and kings of Israel (e.g., Ex 29:7,21; 1Sa 10:1,6; 16:13; 2Sa 1:14,16). The word carries the idea of being chosen by God, consecrated to his service, and endowed with his power to accomplish the assigned task. Toward the end of the OT period the word assumed a special meaning. It denoted the ideal king anointed and empowered by God to rescue his people from their enemies and establish his righteous kingdom (Da 9:25–26). The ideas that clustered around the title

Jesus Predicts His Death

16:21-28pp — Mk 8:31–9:1; Lk 9:22-27

²¹From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

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

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

^a 18 The Greek word for *Peter* means *rock*. ^b 18 That is, the realm of the dead ^c 19 *Or will have been*

Q&A

Why Didn’t Jesus Want Anyone to Know He Was the Messiah?

(Mt 16:20)

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

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

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

Messiah tended to be political and national in nature. Probably for that reason Jesus seldom used the term. When he did accept it as applied to himself, he did so with reservations (cf. Mk 8:27–30; 14:61–63).

16:18 *Hades*. The place of departed spirits, generally equivalent to the Hebrew *Sheol* (see note on Ge 37:35). The “gates of Hades” (see note on Job 17:16) here may refer to the powers of death, i.e., all forces opposed to Christ and his kingdom.

16:23 *Satan*. A loanword from Hebrew, meaning “adversary” or “accuser” (see NIV text note on Job 1:6; see also notes on Mk 8:33; Rev 2:9).

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

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

The Transfiguration

17:1-8pp — Lk 9:28-36

17:1-13pp — Mk 9:2-13

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

¹¹Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” ¹³Then the disciples under-

stood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

17:14-19pp — Mk 9:14-28; Lk 9:37-42

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

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

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁰He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” ^{[21]b}

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

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

The Temple Tax

²⁴After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?”

²⁵“Yes, he does,” he replied.

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

²⁶“From others,” Peter answered.

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

^a 25 The Greek word means either *life* or *soul*; also in verse 26.

^b 21 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 9:29.

16:27 *Son of Man*. See note on Mk 8:31. *is going to come*. The second coming of Christ. *in his Father’s glory*. See note on Mk 8:38; cf. Jn 17:1–5. *according to what they have done*. See Ps 62:12; see also notes on Ro 2:1–16; 2:6–8.

17:1 *six days*. Mark also says “six days” (Mk 9:2), counting just the days between Peter’s confession and the transfiguration, whereas Luke, counting all the days involved, says, “About eight days” (Lk 9:28).

17:3 *Moses and Elijah*. Moses the lawgiver appears as the representative of the old covenant and the promise of

salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus. Elijah the prophet appears as the appointed restorer of all things (Mal 4:5–6; Mk 9:11–13). Lk 9:31 says that they talked about Christ’s death. See note on Lk 9:30.

17:10 Traditional Jewish eschatology, based on Mal 4:5–6, held that Elijah must appear before the coming of the Messiah. The disciples reasoned that if Jesus really was the Messiah, as the transfiguration proved him to be, why had not Elijah appeared?

17:22 *Son of Man*. See note on Mk 8:31.

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

18:1-5pp — Mk 9:33-37; Lk 9:46-48

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

²He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Causing to Stumble

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

The Parable of the Wandering Sheep

18:12-14pp — Lk 15:4-7

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

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

Dealing With Sin in the Church

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

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

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

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

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

²²Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.^f

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

²⁶“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^h He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

²⁹“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

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

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

³⁵“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

^a 11 Some manuscripts include here the words of Luke 19:10.

^b 15 The Greek word for brother or sister (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verses 21 and 35. ^c 15 Some manuscripts *sins against you*

^d 16 Deut. 19:15 ^e 18 Or *will have been* ^f 22 Or *seventy times seven* ^g 24 Greek *ten thousand talents*; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer’s wages. ^h 28 Greek *a hundred denarii*; a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see 20:2).

Divorce

19:1-9pp — Mk 10:1-12

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

reflect and respond



our influence

From the moment we become believers we are told to pray. But why?

read *

We pray because, when we pray, we share our hearts with God and he shares his heart with us. We bond. We pray because good friends talk.

But there's another reason we pray. We have the opportunity to sit in the presence of the ultimate Power and influence what he does in the world. We pray because we have the ear of the King of the universe at all times. As we pray, he listens — and acts.

That's how God chose to design our relationship with him. God made us in his image so that we could think, reason and feel. He made us that way — like himself (see Genesis 1:27) — so we could communicate and interact with him. God has chosen to listen to our thoughts and opinions, and he often acts on them when we ask him to.

think **

Our prayers really influence what God does. When Jesus taught his followers to pray, he said, "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'" (Matthew 6:9–10). Why would Jesus say to pray for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth if God was going to go ahead and accomplish it all anyway? God's will coming to pass on earth is somehow dependent on us praying about it.

live ***

However, it's not like God needs our prayers in order for him to act. He's all-powerful, and he can do anything he wants. And he has a plan for the universe that will be carried out even if we don't pray. But ... there's a realm in which God has chosen not to move unless we pray. Our prayers play a significant part in God's will being done on earth. So pray!

next level ****

When you pray today, picture God listening intently. He is. **TGR**

For your next devotional, go to page 1246.

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

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

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

⁸Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

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

The Little Children and Jesus

19:13-15pp — Mk 10:13-16; Lk 18:15-17

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

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

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

19:16-29pp — Mk 10:17-30; Lk 18:18-30

¹⁶Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

¹⁷"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good.

^a 4 Gen. 1:27 ^b 5 Gen. 2:24

19:12 *born that way. Impotent. made eunuchs.* By castration. *choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.* Those who have voluntarily adopted a celibate lifestyle in order to give themselves more completely to God's work. Under certain circumstances celibacy is recommended in Scripture (cf. 1Co 7:25–38), but it is never presented as superior to marriage.

19:17 *There is only One who is good.* The good is not something to be done as meritorious in itself. God alone is good, and all other goodness derives from him — even the keeping of the commandments, which

If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

¹⁸“Which ones?” he inquired.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^c or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius^d for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, ‘You also go and work

in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹²“These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

¹³“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

¹⁶“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

20:17-19pp — Mk 10:32-34; Lk 18:31-33

¹⁷Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, ¹⁸“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

^a 19 Exodus 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20 ^b 19 Lev. 19:18

^c 29 Some manuscripts do not have *or wife*. ^d 2 A denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer.

Jesus proceeded to enumerate (vv. 18–20). *If you want to enter life, keep the commandments*. “To enter life” is the same as “to get eternal life” (v. 16). The requirement to “keep the commandments” is not to establish one’s merit before God but is to be an expression of true faith. The Bible always teaches that salvation is a gift of God’s grace received through faith (see Eph 2:8–9 and notes). **20:1–16** This parable occurs only in Matthew’s Gospel. In its original setting, its main point seems to be the sovereign graciousness and generosity of God extended to latecomers (the poor and the outcasts of society) into

God’s kingdom. It is addressed to the grumblers (v. 11) who just cannot handle this amazing expression of God’s grace. They almost certainly represent the religious leaders who opposed Jesus.

20:17–19 See Mk 10:32–34; Lk 18:31–33.

20:19 *will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified*. An additional statement in this third prediction of the passion. Jesus would not be killed by the Jews, which would have been by stoning, but would be crucified by the Romans. All three predictions include his resurrection on the third day (16:21; 17:23).

A Mother's Request

20:20-28pp — Mk 10:35-45

²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹"What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

²²"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

²³Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

²⁴When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."

²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

20:29-34pp — Mk 10:46-52; Lk 18:35-43

²⁹As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³²Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³³"Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

³⁴Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

20:22 *drink the cup.* A figure of speech meaning to "undergo" or "experience." Here the reference is to suffering (cf. 26:39). The same figure of speech is used in Jer 25:15; Eze 23:31–32; Hab 2:16; Rev 14:10; 16:19; 18:6 for divine wrath or judgment. See note on Mk 10:38.

20:23 *drink from my cup.* James was martyred (see Ac 12:2 and note); John was exiled (see Rev 1:9 and note).

20:28 *Son of Man.* See note on Mk 8:31. *ransom.* The Greek word was used most commonly for the price paid to redeem a slave. Similarly, Christ paid the ransom price of his own life to free us from the slavery of sin. *for.* Emphasizes the substitutionary nature of Christ's death. *many.* Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all people" (1Ti 2:6). Salvation is offered to "all," but only the "many" (i.e., the elect) receive it. See note on Mk 10:45.

20:30 *Two blind men.* The other Synoptics mention only one (see note on Lk 18:35). *Son of David.* A Messianic title (see note on 9:27).

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

21:1-9pp — Mk 11:1-10; Lk 19:29-38

21:4-9pp — Jn 12:12-15

21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵"Say to Daughter Zion,

'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna^b to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"^c

"Hosanna^b in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

¹¹The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Jesus at the Temple

21:12-16pp — Mk 11:15-18; Lk 19:45-47

¹²Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He

^a 5 Zech. 9:9 ^b 9 A Hebrew expression meaning "Save!" which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 15

^c 9 Psalm 118:25,26

21:12–17 In the Synoptics the clearing of the temple occurs during the last week of Jesus' ministry; in John it takes place during the first few months (Jn 2:12–16). Two explanations are possible: (1) There were two clearings, one at the beginning and the other at the end of Jesus' public ministry. (2) There was only one clearing, which took place during Passion Week but which John placed at the beginning of his account for theological reasons—to show that God's judgment was operative through the Messiah from the outset of Jesus' ministry. However, different details are present in the two accounts (the selling of cattle and sheep in Jn 2:14, the whip in Jn 2:15, and the statements of Jesus in Mt 21:13; Jn 2:16). From Matthew's and Luke's accounts we might assume that the clearing of the temple took place on Sunday, following the so-called "Triumphal" Entry (21:1–11). But Mark (11:15–19) clearly indicates that it was on Monday. Matthew often compressed narratives.

overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³“It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’^a but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’^b”

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

¹⁶“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,

“‘From the lips of children and infants
you, Lord, have called forth your
praise’?”

¹⁷And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree

21:18-22pp — Mk 11:12-14, 20-24

¹⁸Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.

²⁰When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.

²¹Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. ²²If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

21:23-27pp — Mk 11:27-33; Lk 20:1-8

²³Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

²⁴Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁵John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’” ²⁶But if

we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

The Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

²⁹“‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

³¹“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

The Parable of the Tenants

21:33-46pp — Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19

³³“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ³⁴When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

³⁵“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. ³⁷Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

³⁸“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ ³⁹So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

⁴⁰“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

⁴¹“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

^a 13 Isaiah 56:7 ^b 13 Jer. 7:11 ^c 16 Psalm 8:2 (see Septuagint)

21:18–22 See note on vv. 12–17; another example of compressing narratives. Mark (11:12–14, 20–25) places the cursing of the fig tree on Monday morning and the disciples’ finding it withered on Tuesday morning. In Matthew’s account the tree withered as soon as Jesus cursed it, emphasizing the immediacy of judgment.

21:35–37 The tenants represent the Jewish lead-

ers. The servants represent the OT prophets, many of whom were killed. The son represents Christ, who was condemned to death by the religious leaders.

21:41 *other tenants.* Gentiles, to whom Paul turned when Jews, for the most part, rejected the gospel (Ac 13:46; 18:6). By the second century the church was composed almost entirely of Gentiles.

INSIGHT

Out To Get Jesus

★ **Mt 21:45–46** ★ The mere birth of Jesus had threatened King Herod so much that he ordered a bloody slaughter of boy babies. The pattern of opposition continued. Early on, Jesus openly predicted his own death.

Beginning in chapter 19, Matthew explains some of the escalating tensions between Jesus and the groups who resisted him. Enemies followed him from town to town, setting traps. Even so, Jesus neither tempered his words nor tried to hide. Instead, he used the occasions of conflict to warn his disciples and the watching crowds against those enemies, whose fury only increased.

Matthew 22 shows Jesus confronting three different groups of enemies on the same day: two religious sects, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, as well as the political Herodians. Jesus easily avoided their carefully devised verbal traps. In fact, he succeeded so brilliantly that Matthew concludes, “From that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions” (Mt 22:46).

What Did Jesus Have Against the Pharisees?

Students of history have often puzzled over why Jesus lashed out so strongly at one Jewish sect, the Pharisees — a group the New Testament mentions about 100 times. At first glance, they seem like people Jesus should have liked. They were the most religious people of the day. More than any other group, they strove to follow the letter of the Old Testament law. Their very name, meaning “separatists,” hinted at their desire to rise above normal behavior.

Pharisees were legalists. Besides unduly focusing on minute details of the law, they embellished it with their own strict traditions. For example, a person could ride a donkey without breaking the Sab-

bath rules, but if he carried a switch to speed up the animal, he would be guilty of laying a burden on it.

A Pharisee could give to a beggar on the Sabbath only if the beggar stuck his hand inside the home of the Pharisee so that the Pharisee needn’t reach outside. A woman couldn’t look in the mirror on the Sabbath — she might see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out.

Matthew 23 records Jesus’ eloquent verdict on the Pharisees. He chastised them for being proud and cliquish and petty and for refusing to admit their wrongs. External, showy forms of legalism, he said, tend to divert attention away from a person’s inner attitude toward God and other people.

Are There Pharisees Now?

As he entered into the last weeks of his life on earth, Jesus polarized people. He boldly contrasted his own teaching with that of his opponents. In addition, he warned his followers about what to expect after his death. Opposition from enemies like the Pharisees wouldn’t fade away when he departed. Rather, it would crescendo until the day of final judgment.

Jesus singled out the Pharisees as an example of legalism carried to an extreme. But he wasn’t talking merely against an ancient Jewish sect. His words describe persistent tendencies of human beings, then and now. The errors he mentioned have characterized the church throughout its history. Christians still battle against pride and intolerance and a religion based on deeds.



Life Questions

★ Jesus described characteristics of Pharisees in the first century. But what about our own time? What Pharisee-like qualities exist in your church? In you? **SB**

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

“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes”^a?

⁴³“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴Anyone

who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”^b

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. ⁴⁶They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

^a 42 Psalm 118:22, 23

^b 44 Some manuscripts do not have verse 44.

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22:2-14Ref — Lk 14:16-24

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

⁴“Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵“But they paid no attention and went off — one to his field, another to his business. ⁶The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

22:15-22pp — Mk 12:13-17; Lk 20:20-26

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax^a to Caesar or not?”

¹⁸But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

²¹“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

^a 17 A special tax levied on subject peoples, not on Roman citizens

Q&A

How Involved Should the Church Be in Politics?

(Mt 22:21)

There is no easy answer to this question. Perhaps the most straightforward reply is that it depends. It depends mostly on what you mean by the church’s involvement.

When we speak of the “church,” if we are thinking of each individual believer bearing witness to God’s truth in public debates on critical political and moral issues, then it seems clear that the level of involvement should be high, as God’s people should “give ... to God what is God’s” (Mt 22:21). This often takes the form of checking the state’s messianic ambition. But if we understand church involvement in politics to be formal representatives of a denomination taking official stances on political issues, then the line becomes quite a bit more obscured for two important reasons.

First, Scripture teaches that we are to maintain a “clear conscience toward God” (1Pe 3:21), which implies that each individual believer is responsible for his or her actions, political affiliations and beliefs. Aside from the obvious issue in this country of a church’s tax-exempt status being jeopardized by engaging in party politics, the more important matter relates to the binding of consciences that can take place when church officials take positions on behalf of their members. Second, a great many stances on political issues fall into the category of prudential judgment, and this is an area in which God’s people are free to lovingly disagree while they “give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Mt 22:21). The question is not *how much* political involvement is appropriate, but *which kind* of political involvement is appropriate.

So how involved should Christians become in the politics of our nation and culture? There is no set answer, but we are to observe at least two principles. First, we must show respect for our political leaders (see Ro 13:1–7) and work together with them in caring for our society. Second, we must remind the state not to play God and resist any messianic ambitions that politicians announce (see Ac 5:29). **Q&B**

22:14 A proverb-like summary of the meaning of the parable. God invites “many” (perhaps “all” in view of the Semitic usage of “many”; cf. Mt 20:28; 26:28; Ro 5:15,19) to be part of his kingdom, but only a comparative “few” are

chosen by him. This does not mean that God chooses arbitrarily. The invitation must be accepted, followed by appropriate conduct. Proper behavior is evidence of being chosen.

²²When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Marriage at the Resurrection

22:23-33pp — Mk 12:18-27; Lk 20:27-40

²³That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ²⁴“Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷Finally, the woman died. ²⁸Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?”

²⁹Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’^a? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

22:34-40pp — Mk 12:28-31

³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’^b ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^c ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Whose Son Is the Messiah?

22:41-46pp — Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44

⁴¹While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴²“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

⁴³He said to them, “How is it then that David,

Q&A

* * * * *

What Does It Mean to Love My Neighbor?

(Mt 22:37–40)

Henri Nouwen once said that true community is the place where the individual we least like always lives next door. This is certainly a Biblical principle. Jesus taught that our neighbor might be the person least like us—consider the parable of the Good Samaritan (see Lk 10:25–37). We are called to be like the Samaritan rather than the religious leaders who passed by their Jewish countryman who had been beaten, robbed and left for dead along the road. They didn’t lift a hand to help him.

In contrast, the despised Samaritan did not walk past the Jewish man but cared for him—paying out of his own pocket for the man’s needs, not expecting repayment. This Samaritan loved radically, sacrificially and at great risk to himself. He acted decisively; he didn’t question what his fellow Samaritans would think or what might happen if the robbers were still nearby.

Loving our neighbor involves caring for those in need who cross our path. This applies certainly to friends, but *especially* to those least like us and to those we like the least.

Those who experience eternal life with Jesus must love like Jesus loves. So, just as Jesus loves his neighbor—like the Samaritan loved the Jewish man who was attacked by robbers—we too must love our neighbor, even though they might not like us or be able to pay us back. Jesus loves unconditionally and we should too. **QSB**

speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

⁴⁴“‘The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.”’^d

⁴⁵If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

^a 32 Exodus 3:6 ^b 37 Deut. 6:5 ^c 39 Lev. 19:18

^d 44 Psalm 110:1

22:24 *Moses told us.* Jesus quoted from the Pentateuch when arguing with the Sadducees, since those books had special authority for them. The reference (Dt 25:5–10) is to the levirate law (from Latin *levir*, “brother-in-law”), which was given to protect the widow and guarantee continuance of the family line.

22:37 *with all your heart... soul... mind.* With your whole being. The Hebrew of Dt 6:5 (see note there) has “heart

... soul ... strength,” but some manuscripts of the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT) add “mind.” Jesus combined all four terms in Mk 12:30. *soul*. See note on 10:28.

22:40 *The Law and the Prophets.* The entire OT (see note on 5:17).

22:41–46 See notes on Mk 12:35–37; Lk 20:44.

A Warning Against Hypocrisy

23:1-7pp — Mk 12:38,39; Lk 20:45,46
23:37-39pp — Lk 13:34,35

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ²“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries^a wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

⁸“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

¹³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. ^{14b}

¹⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

¹⁶“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ ¹⁷You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ ¹⁹You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it

and by the one who dwells in it. ²²And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

²³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

²⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

²⁷“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

²⁹“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

³³“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? ³⁴Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

³⁷“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,

^a 5 That is, boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on forehead and arm ^b 14 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.

23:23 *justice, mercy and faithfulness.* See Mic 6:6,8 and notes.

23:33 *hell.* See notes on 5:22; Lk 12:5.

23:35 *Abel to ... Zechariah.* Jesus was summing up the history of martyrdom in the OT. The murder of Abel is recorded in Ge 4:8 and that of Zechariah’s son (perhaps grandson, since he is here called “son of Berekiah”; see NIV text note on 1Ch 1:5; see also note on Da 5:1)

of Jehoiada in 2Ch 24:20–22 (Chronicles comes at the close of the OT according to most Hebrew manuscripts). The expression was somewhat like our “from Genesis to Revelation.”

23:36 *will come on this generation.* Jesus’ contemporaries; a prophecy fulfilled, at least in part, in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 (see vv. 37–38).

and you were not willing. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’^a”

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

24:1-51pp — Mk 13:1-37; Lk 21:5-36

24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ²“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

STONES OVERTURNED

+ (Mt 24:2) +

Jesus’ prediction came true four decades after his death, in AD 70, when the Roman army crushed a Jewish rebellion in Jerusalem. Soldiers knocked down the massive stones of the temple in search of the melted gold that had run down between the stones as the temple burned. The largest stones weighed over 400 tons, but General Titus’s soldiers leveled them all. **[SB]**

³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

⁴Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹“Then you will be handed over to be perse-

cuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹²Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’^b spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — ¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again.

²²“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹“Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”^c

^a 39 Psalm 118:26 ^b 15 Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11

^c 29 Isaiah 13:10; 34:4

24:2 *not one stone ... left.* Fulfilled literally in AD 70, when the Romans under Titus completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple buildings. Stones were even pried apart to collect the gold leaf that melted from the roof when the temple was set on fire. *stone.* See note on Mk 13:1. *thrown down.* Excavations in 1968 uncovered large numbers of these stones, toppled from the walls by the invaders.

24:15 *the abomination that causes desolation.* The detestable thing causing the desolation of the holy place. The primary reference in Daniel (see NIV text note for references) was to 168 BC, when Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar to Zeus in the temple of Jerusalem. According to some, there were still two more stages in the progressive fulfillment of the predictions in Daniel

and Matthew: (1) the Roman destruction of the temple in AD 70, and (2) a still future setting up of an image of the antichrist in Jerusalem (see 2Th 2:4; Rev 13:14–15; see also note on Da 11:31).

24:16 *mountains.* The Transjordan mountains, where Pella was located. Christians in Jerusalem fled to that area during the Roman siege shortly before AD 70. Some believe a similar fleeing will occur in a future tribulation period (identified with the 70th “seven” in Da 9:27).

24:21 *great distress, unequaled.* Josephus, the Jewish historian who was there, describes the destruction of Jerusalem in almost identical language. Some believe the reference is also to a future period of great distress (see note on v. 16; see also Da 12:1; cf. Rev 6–18).

JEWISH SECTS

PHARISEES

Their roots can be traced to the Hasidim of the second century BC (see note on Mk 2:16).

- (1) Along with the Torah, they accepted as equally inspired and authoritative all the commands set forth in the oral traditions preserved by the rabbis.
- (2) On free will and determination, they held to a mediating view that did not allow either human free will or the sovereignty of God to cancel out the other.
- (3) They accepted a rather developed hierarchy of angels and demons.
- (4) They believed in the immortality of the soul and in reward and retribution after death.
- (5) They believed in the resurrection of the dead.
- (6) The main emphasis of their teaching was ethical rather than theological.

SADDUCEES

They probably had their beginning during the Hasmonean period (166–63 BC). Their demise occurred c. AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

- (1) They considered only the books of Moses to be canonical Scripture, denying that the oral law was authoritative and binding.
- (2) They were very exacting in Levitical purity.
- (3) They attributed everything to free will.
- (4) They argued that there is neither resurrection of the dead nor a future life.
- (5) They rejected the idea of a spiritual world, including belief in angels and demons.

ESSENES

They probably originated among the Hasidim, along with the Pharisees, from whom they later separated (1 Maccabees 2:42; 7:13). The Hasidim were a group of zealous Jews who took part with the Maccabees in a revolt against the Syrians c. 165–155 BC. A group of Essenes probably moved to Qumran c. 150 BC, where they copied scrolls and deposited them in nearby caves.

- (1) They strictly observed the purity laws of the Torah.
- (2) They practiced communal ownership of property.
- (3) They had a strong sense of mutual responsibility.
- (4) Daily worship was an important feature along with daily study of their sacred scriptures.
- (5) Solemn oaths of piety and obedience had to be taken.
- (6) Sacrifices were offered on holy days and during their sacred seasons, but not at the temple, which they considered to be corrupt.
- (7) Marriage was avoided by some but was not condemned in principle.
- (8) They attributed to fate everything that happened.

ZEALOTS

They originated during the reign of Herod the Great c. 6 BC. A group of Zealots were among the last defenders against the Romans at Masada in AD 73.

- (1) They opposed payment of taxes to a pagan emperor because they believed that allegiance was due to God alone.
- (2) They were fiercely loyal to Jewish tradition.
- (3) They endorsed the use of violence as long as it accomplished a good end.
- (4) They were opposed to the influence of Greek pagan culture in the Holy Land.

Josephus and the Fall of Jerusalem (Mt 24)



THE JEWISH HISTORIAN JOSEPHUS IS OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION about the fall of Jerusalem. During the Jewish revolt of AD 66–70 Josephus began as a rebel leader, but midway he switched his allegiance to the Roman side of the conflict. He accompanied the Roman general Titus to the siege of Jerusalem and was thus an eyewitness of the harrowing events of the city's fall.

As the Romans slowly crushed the revolt in outlying areas, refugees flooded into Jerusalem for the climactic battle of the war. The Jews inside the city were torn by internal dissent, with various rebel groups vying for control. There was horrendous loss of life, and conditions worsened as the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem in the spring of AD 70. Titus's troops took the outer wall around May and captured the strategic Fortress of Antonia. The destruction of the temple was imminent, but many of the Jewish defenders likely believed that God would defend them and his temple at the last.¹ Nonetheless, at the end of August the Romans successfully attacked the temple, setting fire to its gates and overwhelming its defenders. With the sanctuary fallen, the Jews lost hope, and carnage ensued.

Josephus described it thus: "No pity was shown on account of age or out of respect for anyone's dignity — children and elderly, lay people and priests alike were slain. The battle surged ahead and surrounded everybody, including both those who begged for mercy and those who resisted. The flames spread out to a great distance and its noise mixed with the groans of the perishing; and such was the height of the ridge and the magnitude of the burning that one would have imagined the whole city was aflame" (Wars, 6.5.1). Thus was Jesus' prophecy regarding the destruction of the temple fulfilled (see Mt 24:2). **ASB**

¹See "Herod's Temple" on p. 1179.

³⁰"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^a will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.^b ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it^c is near, right at the door. ³⁴Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

24:37-39pp — Lk 17:26,27

24:45-51pp — Lk 12:42-46

³⁶"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,^d but only the Father. ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all

away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

⁴⁵"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' ⁴⁹and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹He will cut him to pieces and assign him a

^a 30 Or the tribes of the land ^b 30 See Daniel 7:13-14.

^c 33 Or he ^d 36 Some manuscripts do not have nor the Son.

24:34 this generation. See note on Lk 21:32.

24:35 Jesus' words are more certain than the existence of the universe.

place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

⁷“Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

⁹“‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

¹²“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

¹³“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

25:14-30Ref — Lk 19:12-27

¹⁴“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^a each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

²⁰The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²²“The man with two bags of gold also came.

‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²⁴“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’

²⁸“‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, what-

^a 15 Greek *five talents . . . two talents . . . one talent*; also throughout this parable; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer’s wage.

25:29 The main point of the parable. Being ready for Christ’s coming involves more than playing it safe and

doing little or nothing. It demands the kind of devoted service that produces results (see note on Lk 19:26).

Q&A



Are Good Works Necessary for Eternal Life?

(Mt 25:35–36)

Jesus did not teach that good deeds form the basis of our salvation. The Bible shows clearly that eternal life results from what *God* does, not what *we* do (see Titus 3:4–7). We are saved by God's grace, not by our works. Still, God intends that those who receive his grace do good works (see Eph 2:8–10).

True faith is more than just claiming to have faith. Genuine love for God will be expressed through service to others (see 1 Jn 3:16–18)—not to earn salvation but because a heart that truly loves God will be filled with compassion for others. Jesus wants his followers to set the pace by helping those who are hurting. Good works that come from people grateful for God's grace are at the heart of true religion (see Jas 1:27). **QSB**

ever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

The Plot Against Jesus

26:2-5pp — Mk 14:1,2; Lk 22:1,2

26 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ²"As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him.

⁵"But not during the festival," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

26:6-13pp — Mk 14:3-9

26:6-13Ref — Lk 7:37,38; Jn 12:1-8

⁶While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

⁸When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. ⁹"This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

¹⁰Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹The poor you will always have with you,^a but you will not always have me. ¹²When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

26:14-16pp — Mk 14:10,11; Lk 22:3-6

¹⁴Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests ¹⁵and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Last Supper

26:17-19pp — Mk 14:12-16; Lk 22:7-13

26:20-24pp — Mk 14:17-21

26:26-29pp — Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:17-20; 1Co 11:23-25

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹⁸He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'"¹⁹So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

^a 11 See Deut. 15:11.

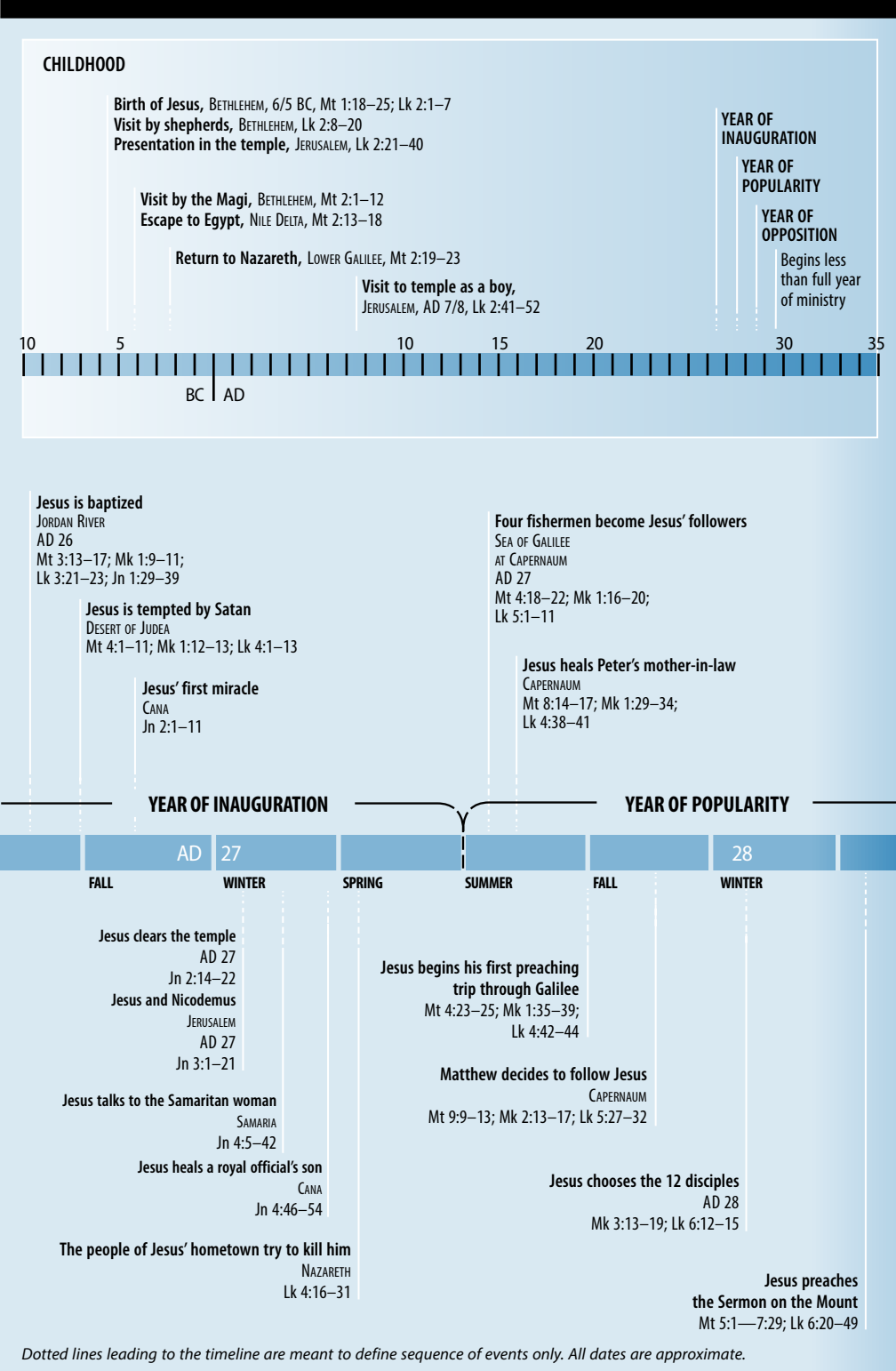
25:41 *eternal fire prepared for the devil.* See Rev 20:10, fire. See Jude 7; Rev 19:20 and notes; 20:15.

26:3 *Caiaphas.* High priest AD 18–36 and the son-in-law of Annas (see Jn 18:13 and note), a former high priest, who served AD 6–15. In 1991 an ossuary (a limestone

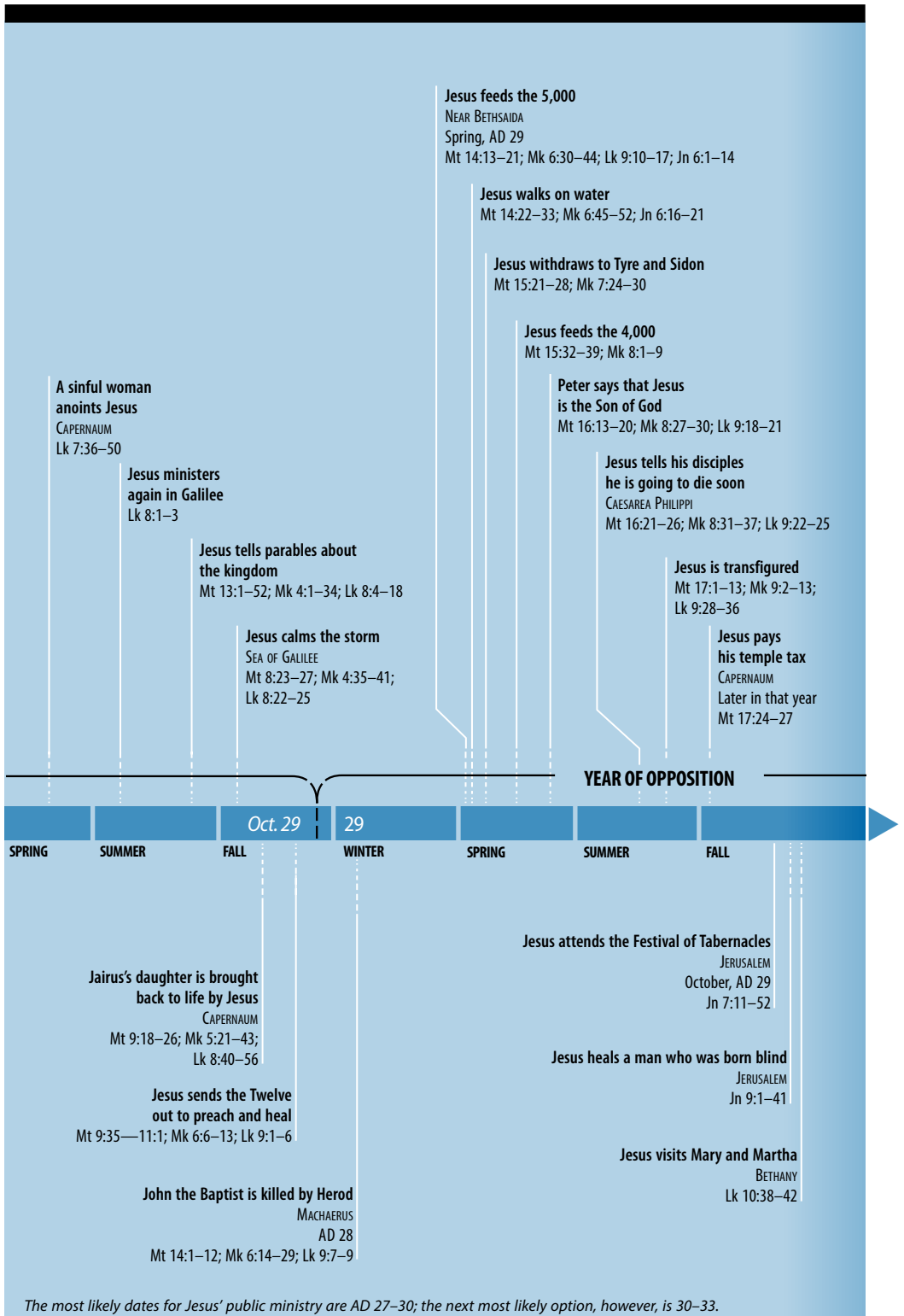
chest containing the bones of the dead) was found in Jerusalem inscribed with the name Caiaphas.

26:15 *thirty pieces of silver.* Equivalent to 120 denarii. Laborers customarily received one denarius for a day's work (20:1–16). See note on Zec 11:12.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST



THE LIFE OF CHRIST (CONT.)



THE LIFE OF CHRIST (CONT.)

Jesus begins his last trip to Jerusalem
AD 30
Lk 17:11

Jesus blesses the little children
ACROSS THE JORDAN
Mt 19:13–15; Mk 10:13–16; Lk 18:15–17

Jesus talks to the rich young man
ACROSS THE JORDAN
Mt 19:16–30; Mk 10:17–31; Lk 18:18–30

Jesus again predicts his death and resurrection
NEAR THE JORDAN
Mt 20:17–19; Mk 10:32–34; Lk 18:31–34

Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus
JERICHO
Mt 20:29–34; Mk 10:46–52; Lk 18:35–43

Jesus talks to Zacchaeus
JERICHO
Lk 19:1–10

Jesus returns to Bethany to visit
Mary and Martha
BETHANY
Jn 11:55—12:1

THE LAST WEEK

The “Triumphal” Entry, JERUSALEM, Sunday
Mt 21:1–11; Mk 11:1–10; Lk 19:29–44; Jn 12:12–19

Jesus curses the fig tree, Monday
Mt 21:18–19; Mk 11:12–14

Jesus clears the temple, Monday
Mt 21:12–13; Mk 11:15–18

The authority of Jesus questioned, Tuesday
Mt 21:23–27; Mk 11:27–33; Lk 20:1–8

Jesus teaches in the temple, Tuesday
Mt 21:28—23:39; Mk 12:1–44; Lk 20:9—21:4

Jesus anointed, BETHANY, Tuesday
Mt 26:6–13; Mk 14:3–9; Jn 12:2–11

The plot against Jesus, Wednesday
Mt 26:14–16; Mk 14:10–11; Lk 22:3–6

The Last Supper, Thursday
Mt 26:17–29; Mk 14:12–25; Lk 22:7–20; Jn 13:1–38

Jesus comforts the disciples, Thursday
Jn 14:1—16:33

Gethsemane, Thursday
Mt 26:36–46; Mk 14:32–42; Lk 22:40–46

Jesus’ arrest and trial, Thursday night and Friday
Mt 26:47—27:26; Mk 14:43—15:15;
Lk 22:47—23:25; Jn 18:2—19:16

Jesus’ crucifixion and death, GOLGOTHA, Friday
Mt 27:27–56; Mk 15:16–41;
Lk 23:26–49; Jn 19:17–30

The burial of Jesus, JOSEPH’S TOMB, Friday
Mt 27:57–66; Mk 15:42–47;
Lk 23:50–56; Jn 19:31–42

30				31		
WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER
	AFTER THE RESURRECTION					
	The empty tomb, JERUSALEM, Sunday Mt 28:1–10; Mk 16:1–8; Lk 24:1–12; Jn 20:1–10					
	Mary Magdalene sees Jesus in the garden JERUSALEM, Sunday Mt 16:9–11; Jn 20:11–18					
	Jesus appears to the two going to Emmaus Sunday Mk 16:12–13; Lk 24:13–35					
	Jesus appears to 10 disciples JERUSALEM, Sunday Mk 16:14; Lk 24:36–43; Jn 20:19–25					
	Jesus appears to the 11 disciples JERUSALEM, One week later Jn 20:26–31					
	Jesus talks with some of his disciples SEA OF GALILEE, One week later Jn 21:1–25					
	Jesus ascends to his Father in heaven MOUNT OF OLIVES, 40 days later Mt 28:16–20; Mk 16:19–20; Lk 24:44–53					
Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead BETHANY Winter, AD 30 Jn 11:1–44						

²³Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²⁵Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so."

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

²⁷Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the^a covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

³⁰When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

26:31-35pp — Mk 14:27-31; Lk 22:31-34

³¹Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be
scattered."^b

³²But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

³³Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

³⁴"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

³⁵But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

Gethsemane

26:36-46pp — Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:40-46

³⁶Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is

overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴²He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

⁴³When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Jesus Arrested

26:47-56pp — Mk 14:43-50; Lk 22:47-53

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." ⁴⁹Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

⁵⁰Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."^c

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁵²"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

⁵⁵In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with

^a 28 Some manuscripts *the new* ^b 31 Zech. 13:7 ^c 50 Or "Why have you come, friend?"

26:24 *as it is written about him.* See note on Mk 14:21. *Son of Man.* See note on Mk 8:31.

26:28 *blood of the covenant . . . poured out for many.* See note on Mk 14:24.

26:29 *drink it new . . . in my Father's kingdom.* At the Messianic banquet (see Lk 22:16 and note).

26:38–39 Jesus did not die serenely as many martyrs have. He was no mere martyr; he was the Lamb of God bearing the penalty of the sins of the entire human race.

The wrath of God was turned loose on him. Only this can adequately explain what took place at Gethsemane. **26:39** *cup.* A symbol of deep sorrow and suffering. Here it refers to his Father's face being turned away from him when he who had no sin was made sin (perhaps a sin offering) for us (see 27:46; 2Co 5:21 and note).

26:54 *Scriptures be fulfilled.* In view of v. 56 probably a reference to Zec 13:7 (see note on Mk 14:49).

swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

26:57-68pp — Mk 14:53-65; Jn 18:12,13,19-24

⁵⁷Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

⁵⁹The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward ⁶¹and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

⁶²Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶³But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

⁶⁴“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”^a

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶What do you think?”

^a 64 See Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13.

26:63 *Messiah.* See note on 16:16.

26:65 *tore his clothes.* Ordinarily the high priest was forbidden by law to do this (Lev 10:6; 21:10), but this was

considered a highly unusual circumstance. The high priest interpreted Jesus’ answer in v. 64 as blasphemy (see note on Mk 14:64).

APPOINTMENT WITH DESTINY

BETRAYAL IN A QUIET GARDEN

In a stroke of bitter irony, the intimate scene of the Last Supper butts up against the brutal scene of betrayal in Gethsemane. The ordeal began with Jesus praying in a quiet, cool grove of olive trees, with three of his disciples waiting sleepily outside. Inside the garden, all was peaceful; outside, the forces of hell were on the loose.

An armed mob made its way toward the garden to seize and torture Jesus. He felt afraid and abandoned. Lying facedown on the ground, he prayed for some way out. The future of the human race — more, the universe — came down to this one weeping figure whose “sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Lk 22:44).

Blustery Peter was prepared to fight evil in the traditional way — by force. When he hacked off a guard’s ear, however, Jesus stopped the violence and performed, notably, his final miracle: He healed the guard (see Lk 22:50–51).

No Rescue Plan

Although Jesus had the power to defend himself — he could have dispatched squadrons of angels to fight his battles — he did not use it. When the disciples realized that they could expect no last-minute rescue operations from the invisible world, they all fled. Fear extinguished their last flicker of hope. If Jesus would not protect himself, how would he protect them?

Matthew’s account of what transpired in Gethsemane and before the Sanhedrin shows that, in an odd inversion, the “victim” dominated all that took place. Jesus — not Judas, not the mob and not the high priest — acted like the one truly in control. “Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God,” the high priest demanded. Jesus finally answered, “You have said so” (Mt 26:63–64).

That admission condemned Jesus to death, for the members of the Sanhedrin had a different expectation of the Messiah. They wanted a conqueror to set them free by force. Jesus knew that only one thing — his death — would truly set them free. For that reason he came to earth.



**GUIDED
TOUR**

Mt 26

✦ Life Questions ✦

- ✦ How would you respond if your life were threatened because you were a follower of Christ? **SB**

"He is worthy of death," they answered.

⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?"

Peter Disowns Jesus

26:69-75pp — Mk 14:66-72; Lk 22:55-62;
Jn 18:16-18,25-27

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.

⁷⁰But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

⁷¹Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷²He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

⁷³After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

⁷⁴Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Judas Hangs Himself

27 Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ²So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

³When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴"I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."

"What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility."

⁵So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." ⁷So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. ⁸That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces

of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, ¹⁰and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."^a

Jesus Before Pilate

27:11-26pp — Mk 15:2-15; Lk 23:2,3,18-25;
Jn 18:29-19:16

¹¹Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

¹²When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" ¹⁴But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.

¹⁵Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus^b Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

²¹"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

²²"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked.

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

²³"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

²⁵All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!"

²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them. But he

^a 10 See Zech. 11:12,13; Jer. 19:1-13; 32:6-9. ^b 16 Many manuscripts do not have *Jesus*; also in verse 17.

26:67–68 Mark (14:65) and Luke (22:64) report that they blindfolded Jesus, which explains the mocking command: "Prophecy . . . Who hit you?"

27:2 *handed him over to Pilate.* The Sanhedrin had been deprived by the Roman government of the right to carry out capital punishment, except in the case of a foreigner who entered the sacred precincts of the temple. So Jesus had to be handed over to Pilate for execution.

For additional information about Pilate, see note on Lk 3:1.

27:9 *Jeremiah.* The quotation that follows seems to combine Zec 11:12–13 and Jer 19:1–13 (or perhaps Jer 18:2–12 or 32:6–9). But Matthew attributes it to the better-known prophet Jeremiah, just as Mark (1:2–3) quotes Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 but attributes them both to the better-known prophet Isaiah (see note on Mk 1:2).

had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

27:27-31pp — Mk 15:16-20

²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

27:33-44pp — Mk 15:22-32; Lk 23:33-43; Jn 19:17-24

³²As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). ³⁴There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁸Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' " ⁴⁴In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

27:45-56pp — Mk 15:33-41; Lk 23:44-49; Jn 19:29-30

⁴⁵From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli,^a lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").^b

⁴⁷When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵²and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and^c went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

A CURTAIN IS TORN

+ (Mt 27:51) +

At Jesus' death, the massive, thick curtain in the temple in Jerusalem ripped in two. This curtain sealed off the Most Holy Place. No one except the high priest was allowed into the presence of God in that Most Holy Place. And the high priest was permitted in only once a year, on a special day. The author of Hebrews looked on the miraculously torn curtain as symbolic, signifying the immediate access to God made possible by Jesus' death (see Heb 10:19–20). **[SB]**

⁵⁴When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph,^d and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

The Burial of Jesus

27:57-61pp — Mk 15:42-47; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:38-42

⁵⁷As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹Joseph took the

^a 46 Some manuscripts *Eloi, Eloi* ^b 46 Psalm 22:1

^c 53 Or *tombs*, and after Jesus' resurrection they ^d 56 Greek *Joses*, a variant of *Joseph*

27:51 *curtain*. The curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The tearing of the curtain signified Christ's making it possible for believers to go di-

rectly into God's presence (see Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45; Heb 10:14–22 and notes).

27:54 *Son of God*. See note on Lk 23:47.

body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶²The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³“Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’” ⁶⁴So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

⁶⁵“Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

27:62 *The next day, the one after Preparation Day. Saturday, the Sabbath. Friday was the preparation day for the Sabbath (sunset Friday to sunset Saturday).*

27:64 *This last deception will be worse than the first. The first would be that Jesus was the Messiah, the second that he had risen as the Son of God.*

Jesus Has Risen

28:1-8pp — Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-10; Jn 20:1-8

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his

28:2 *There was.* The sense is “Now there had been.” The parallel accounts (Mk 16:2–6; Lk 24:1–7; Jn 20:1) make it clear that the events of vv. 2–4 occurred before the women actually arrived at the tomb. *violent earthquake.* Only Matthew mentions this earthquake and the one at Jesus’ death (27:51,54).

A RUMOR OF LIFE

THE GREATEST MIRACLE TRANSFORMS SOME, BUT NOT ALL

When the greatest miracle of all history occurred, the immediate eyewitnesses were soldiers standing guard outside Jesus’ tomb. The earth shook, an angel appeared, bright as lightning, and the guards trembled and fainted dead away. When they recovered, they fled to the authorities to report what they had witnessed.

But here is an astounding fact: Later that afternoon the soldiers, who had seen overpowering proof of the resurrection, changed their story. The resurrection of the Son of God did not seem nearly as significant as, say, stacks of freshly minted silver.

Both Fear and Joy

A few women, grieving friends of Jesus, were next to learn of the miracle of miracles. Matthew reports that they hurried away, “afraid yet filled with joy” (Mt 28:8). Fear is the reflexive human response to a supernatural encounter. Yet they were filled with joy—the news they heard was the best news of all, news too good to be true, news so good it had to be true.

Jesus was back! He had returned, as he had promised. The dreams of a Messiah all came surging back as the women ran on legs of fear and joy to tell the disciples.

Even as the women ran, the soldiers, having told the chief priests what had happened, were rehearsing their part in an elaborate cover-up. Like everything else in Jesus’ life, his resurrection draws forth two contrasting responses: Those who believe are transformed. Those who choose not to believe find ways to ignore evidence they have seen with their own eyes.

✦ Life Questions ✦

✦ Why do you believe in Jesus? **|SB|**



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Mt 28

disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The Guards' Report

¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So the soldiers

took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

28:17 *doubted.* Belief in the resurrection was not instantaneous for them. After the traumatic experience of the crucifixion, it took time for the disciples to come to full faith (see Lk 24:10–11, 25–26, 36–47).

28:18 *in heaven and on earth.* The scope of Christ's authority is the entire universe.

28:19 *Father ... Son ... Holy Spirit.* The doctrine of the Trinity means that there is one true God, existing eter-

nally as three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see 3:16–17 and note; 1Co 12:4–6; 2Co 13:14 and note; Eph 1:2–13; 4:4–6; 2Th 2:13 and note; Titus 3:4–6; 1Pe 1:2 and note; 1Jn 4:13–14; Rev 1:4–6 and NIV text note on 1:4).

28:20 *with you.* Matthew ends with the reassuring and empowering words of him who came to earth to be “God with us” (1:23).