



MATTHEW:
THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM-I

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INTRODUCTION

The Gospel according to Matthew is not the first book of the New Testament by chance. It is the best suited of the four Gospels to serve as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. It is the Gospel of fulfillment, calling attention numerous times to the fulfillment in Christ of many Old Testament prophecies. Matthew is also the Gospel of the King and His kingdom. Jesus is carefully introduced as the son of David and the royal line traced to Him from David.

The Gospel of Matthew is also unique in respect to the teachings of Jesus which are carefully grouped for presentation. It is often called "the teaching Gospel." The first of these grouped teachings of Jesus is found in chapters 5-7 and called the "Sermon on the Mount." This "sermon" is the first great teaching of the New Testament. We are to appropriate the grace of God and the power of the Spirit to live according to this clear teaching. It is for us, here and now! Also, the kingdom of God is not awaiting some future fulfillment but is now! It is a tragic and fatal mistake to project the kingdom of God to some future millenium when Jesus reigns now. The church has been robbed by those who teach of a future kingdom. Our attitude toward this first teaching of Jesus will in a large measure determine the success or failure of our Christian life. The first twelve verses of the "Sermon on the Mount" are taken as a memory portion for this quarter. May the light of God's Spirit enlighten our understanding as we consider these inspired writings of the King.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This series is now complete. The titles are listed below and are available to any and all:

The Men and Women of Genesis	The Miracles of Jesus
Lessons From Exodus	The Parables of Jesus
Wilderness Examples	The Personal Ministry of Jesus
Possessing the Land of Promise	According to Luke - I & II
The Days of the Judges	We Beheld His Glory (John-I)
Israel's Early Kings	Full of Grace & Truth (John-II)
Lessons From the Kings	Holy Ghost Acts - I
The Captivity and Return	Holy Ghost Acts - II
Matthew: The King and His Kingdom - I & II	

THE KING IS BORN

Read: Matthew 1 & 2

Memory Verse: And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: Matthew 5:1

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus is set forth in the first gospel as the King.*
2. *The gospel of Matthew is the teaching gospel. It is based on the sayings of Jesus.*
3. *Matthew shows how the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Christ.*
4. *The incarnation was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption.*

I The Gospel of the King and His Kingdom: The Gospel of Matthew is not first in the New Testament by chance. It deserves its place at the beginning of the New Testament. It is the one Gospel which emphasizes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and promises of Christ and His kingdom. It is a bridge from the Old Testament to the New. Though many modern scholars think that the Gospel of Mark was written first and that the Gospel of Matthew was expanded from that at a later date, it is entirely possible and indeed seems more likely that it was the other way around. The Gospel of Mark may well have been condensed from the work of Matthew. Condensed editions of books usually are published after the larger work, in modern literature. Matthew, from the earliest times is almost always first in the order of New Testament writings.

The author, Matthew, also called Levi, was a publican, that is a tax collector. He would be called a "customs officer" in our society. The qualifications and experience of this occupation enabled him to be a recorder for the Lord Jesus. He was used to taking notes and keeping records. The fishermen-disciples were less likely to be scribes and historians.

Above all else, Matthew declares Jesus Christ to be the King, the Son of David, and records the Lord's teaching concerning the Kingdom of God. More than fifty times the kingdom is mentioned. The word kingdom appears more often only in the book of Daniel, but there it is most often used to denote earthly kingdoms, while Matthew is concerned with the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Eight times in his gospel, Matthew gives Jesus the royal title: the son of David.

The book of Matthew is artistically written. Five major teaching discourses of the Lord Jesus are recorded by Matthew. At the close of each of those discourses are the words, "And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings". The five major discourses are: the sermon on the mount (chs.5-7), the proclamation of the Kingdom (ch.10), the nature of the Kingdom (ch.13), the fellowship of the Kingdom (ch.18), and the consummation of the Kingdom (chs.24-25).

The book of Matthew is a teaching book. Twice the author outlines the ministry of Jesus as: teaching, preaching, and healing (see ch.4:23 & 9:35). The work of teaching took first place in Jesus' ministry and it ought to take first place in the church today. Sound teaching makes for disciples who are solidly rooted and grounded in the faith.

At least eleven times Matthew specifically notes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies (see Ch.1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9, 35).

II The Royal Line: Matthew divides the genealogy of Christ into three sections. From Abraham to David, from David to the captivity, and from the captivity to the birth of Christ. The lineage from David to the Babylonian captivity follows the kings of Judah. It was to David that God promised the posterity that would reign forever. Matthew establishes the royal lineage of Christ.

Of special interest in the list of kings is the jump from Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat to Uzziah the fourth in the line of descent. The reason for this jump is to be found in the affinity of Jehoshaphat with Ahab the wicked, idolatrous, Baal-worshipping king of the ten northern tribes. Jehoshaphat's son had the daughter of Ahab for his wife. Thus the son of this marriage affinity, Ahaziah, is not regarded by the inspired Matthew as a son of David at all. He is ignored and disregarded as are his son Joash and his grandson Amaziah. Thus we have in the inspired record a perfect example of the warning against idolatry given with the second commandment: "visiting

the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Ex.20:5).

Another very interesting side-light concerning the genealogy is that the three women named therein (aside from Mary the wife of Joseph) are all Gentiles. Noteworthy, also is the particular ancestry of Obed the father of Jesse and grandfather of David. Obed's mother was Ruth the Moabitess and we may safely assume that her parents were Moabites and certainly not Israelites. Obed's father was Boaz whose parents are listed in Matthew as Salmon and Rahab. Although it is likely that these were the grandparents of Boaz rather than the direct parents, it is extremely interesting to note that both grandparents of Obed on the maternal side were Gentiles and the grandmother, as recorded by Matthew, on the paternal side is also a Gentile. This would make Obed to be of three fourths Gentile blood. So although our Savior was born an Israelite of the line of David, He, in a very literal sense, is also the son of man to be identified with all nations.

III That It Might Be Fulfilled: The birth of Jesus took place exactly according to the Divine plan. The Old Testament is full of types and figures and promises and prophecies of the coming Messiah. From the "seed of the woman" in Genesis to the "messenger of the covenant" in Malachi the great subject of the Old Testament is the coming Messiah. The leading characters of the Old Testament are those in the royal line which leads from Adam to Abraham to David and the kings and thence through the obscure period of the captivity and the time between the Old and New Testaments, to Joseph, the earthly father of our Lord. Matthew, in his Gospel, underlines the many events surrounding Jesus which fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament. The first of these remarkable fulfillments concerns the mother of Jesus. Isaiah foretold that the Savior would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). When Joseph discovered that his intended wife was expectant he thought of "putting her away privily". But the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and revealed to him that Mary had not been unfaithful to him, but that the child she carried had been conceived of the Holy Spirit. The angel told Joseph to name the child "Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Joseph must have been totally convinced of this for he did exactly as the angel had instructed him.

Some time later wise men from the east came to Jerusalem in search of the newborn king. They had seen a star in the east,

by which, somehow they discerned that the long awaited prince had been born. It is likely that some of their wisdom had come from the writings of Daniel, who himself, though a Jew, had been a wise man in the Babylonian and Medo-Persian governments. His writings had pinpointed the time of the coming of the Prince (see Daniel 9:24-27). After observing the star they set out for Jerusalem presuming that there they would find the child. King Herod by this time was little more than a madman. Jealousy had driven him to execute his lovely wife Mariamne and two of his sons. When he heard of a newborn king, immediately he began to plot the death of the "intruder". He demanded of the priests and scribes where Christ was to be born. They told him that it must be in Bethlehem, for Micah had prophesied clearly: "thou Bethlehem---out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people, Israel" (Matt.2:6 from Micah 5:2).

Before Herod could act, the angel of the Lord once again warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt. This also was to bring about the fulfillment of a prophecy which we would not have recognized but for Matthew's inspired explanation. When, after the death of Herod, once again the angel of the Lord instructed Joseph in a dream to return to the land of Israel, it fulfilled another obscure prophecy: "Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matt.2:15 from Hosea 11:1). Meanwhile, the egomaniac, Herod, attempted to eliminate the newborn king by slaughtering all the babes in and near Bethlehem. According to secular history, thirty-two babies died in this outrage, and another prophecy was fulfilled. Jeremiah had foretold of a weeping of Rachel for her children (see Matt.2:18 & Jer.31:15). Rachel's sepulchre was at Bethlehem, so the figure was appropriate.

The final prophecy used by Matthew to convince us of the fulfillment in Christ of the Old Testament prophecies, promises, types and figures, is that "which was spoken by the prophets: 'He shall be called a Nazarene'." This was fulfilled in the choice of residence by Joseph and his family in Nazareth. But when we look for the Old Testament prophets (note the plural in this instance only) we cannot find such a prophetic utterance. The most likely explanation of this is to be found in the root of the name Nazareth. That root meaning is Branch. Now several different prophets foretold of the Branch out of the stem of Jesse (David) so that this becomes a plausible explanation (see Isa.11:1; Jer.23:5; 33:45; Zech.3:8, & 6:12).

All paths of the Old Testament lead to Christ, and Matthew marks those pathways clearly. God did not miss one step in the

fulfillment of His plan of redemption. Today that plan is still unfolding its last steps. Let us be alert to God's working and filled with expectation until the full redemption of the purchased possession is consummated.

NOTES:

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Read: Matthew 3; Isaiah 40:1-8; Malachi 4:5, 6

Memory Verse: And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:2 & 3

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *John the Baptist fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.*
2. *John announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.*
3. *Repentance opens the gates to the kingdom of God.*
4. *Why John reprovved the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to be baptized.*
5. *John's introduction of Jesus was significant.*
6. *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were manifested at Jesus' baptism.*

I John Fulfills Prophecies: Both Isaiah and Malachi had foretold of one who would precede the Messiah to prepare the way for Him. Isaiah called the predecessor, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isaiah 40:3). Malachi calls him "Elijah the prophet" and explained that his ministry would be to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children (Mal.4:5-6). John spent some time in the wilderness seeking God, preparing and being prepared for his ministry. His was a ministry inspired by God. When he suddenly appeared on the scene preaching repentance he was dressed in an unusual manner. The religious leaders of Israel wore fine robes with broad borders but John dressed in crude leather and camel's hair. Elijah was known also to wear leather clothing (II Kings 1:8). John never claimed to be Elijah but Jesus said of him, "If you will receive it this is Elijah

which was for to come" (Matt.11:14). John himself explained to the Pharisees that he was only a voice crying in the wilderness (John 1:23). His eating habits were also unusual for he ate locusts and wild honey. The former, though unappetizing to us, was classified as clean food for Israel (Lev.11:22).

II His Ministry: There are those who teach that John's ministry was intended to usher in a political kingdom which would overthrow the yoke of Rome and set up a Jewish monarchy over which the Messiah would reign. Yet from the earliest record we find John speaking of repentance and One who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. If it were true that John was to prepare the way for an earthly kingdom for the Messiah to reign over, then his ministry was a complete failure. But Paul by the inspiration of the Spirit declares that John "fulfilled his course" (Acts 13:25). No, the kingdom John announced was the same kingdom Jesus spoke of and taught of. His kingdom was not of this world. It was and is a spiritual kingdom in the hearts and lives of His believers. John's ministry was a total success.

Like Elijah, John awakened Israel to return to the Lord. Elijah brought the fire down from God on Mount Carmel. John pointed to the one who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. Great crowds attended John's outdoor services. His ministry brought them under conviction so that they confessed their sins and were baptized by John in the river Jordan.

When this great servant of the Lord saw the Pharisees and Sadducees attending his preaching, he rebuked them. He demanded that they "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." He called them a "generation of vipers." This was a very strong rebuke for those who prided themselves on keeping the law and being experts in it. John recognized their hypocrisy. Jesus, also, in the following 3½ years reproved the religious leaders for hypocrisy. It was their besetting sin. Sincerity and faith in Christ as the Son of God our Savior, are the requirements for effective water baptism.

But John went further than rebuking their hypocrisy, he struck at their national pride. Far from announcing the restoration of national prestige, John warned them not to trust their ancestry from Abraham as an guarantee of God's blessing and foretold that the (Olive) tree of Israel was about to be chopped down and cast into the fire because it bore no good fruit (Matt.3:9-10). He told them that God could raise up children of Abraham from the stones. Indeed, the Lord did

raise up true sons and daughters of Abraham from amongst the gentiles after the Holy Spirit was given.

III The Greater Baptizer: When John first spoke of Jesus, he introduced Him as the One who would "baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (vs.11). The significance of this first introduction cannot be overemphasized. Why did God arrange that this should be the very first thing said of Jesus when He began His earthly work? It is as if God is saying, "This is the great aim and goal of the mission of Christ to mankind." Yes, Jesus came to save us from our sins. That salvation opens the way for this baptism of the Spirit and fire. By this baptism the Lord intends that we shall totally come under His control; body, soul and spirit. Let us be sure to claim the full baptism that the Lord has provided for us and let us be sure that we submit our bodies as well as our spirits to the control of the Holy Spirit. That must also be at home and everywhere, and not only in meetings. The fire connected with the ministry of the Holy Ghost is intended to burn up all dross and chaff in our lives. Let us expect reality in the baptism, and reality in the quality of holiness the Spirit produces in our lives, as well as any gifts the Lord may bestow.

IV Fulfilling All Righteousness: John protested when Jesus came to be baptized of him in Jordan. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" he observed. But Jesus set a good example and determined to fulfill all the steps of righteousness which we must take. So Jesus went into the river Jordan and was baptized by John. Modern Christians who follow "covenant theology" think it unnecessary for the children of Christian parents to be baptized. They are already "children of the covenant," they presume. If ever there was a child of the covenant, it was Jesus. He insisted however, on fulfilling all righteousness by being baptized. So ought every Christian to do. Some who receive the baptism of the Spirit feel water baptism is unnecessary, yet Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptized after they had received the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus was baptized (praying all the while, Luke 3:21) the heavens were opened as He came up out of the water and He saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descend upon Him. Here was the baptism of the Spirit which empowered Jesus for His earthly ministry. Before this, Jesus did not perform any miracles or make any disciples. As soon as this anointing

of the Spirit took place Jesus was ready to commence that brief but intense ministry of which He could say after only $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Not only did the Holy Spirit descend in the form of a dove upon Jesus, but also the Father's voice from heaven was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Our Lord's willingness to fulfill all righteousness was pleasing to the Father. A Methodist bishop was put to shame by an illiterate Virgin Islander who desired to be baptized by immersion. The bishop explained that the sprinkling of water was representative of baptism by immersion. The aged candidate was not satisfied, however, and taking a Bible from his pocket which had been carefully marked for him, he pointed to this passage of the Father's voice from heaven. His logic was irresistible. "If the Father in heaven was pleased when our Lord was baptized in Jordan, I'm sure He won't be angry with me if I insist on being baptized by immersion." The bishop would not permit it but the wise old man found a minister who did baptize him by immersion.

It is interesting that at this scene Jesus the Son was present, the Holy Spirit was manifested in the form of the dove, and the Father also was revealed by the voice from heaven. So, at this early scene in Jesus life, all three members of the Trinity were manifested at once: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

If Jesus required the anointing of the Spirit in order to fulfill the ministry committed to Him, how much more do we need a full measure of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to do faithfully what our Lord requires of us. Let us ask and receive full measure.

NOTES:

JESUS OVERCOMES TEMPTATION AND BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

Read: Matthew 4; Deuteronomy 6, & 8:1-3;
Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14-16

Memory Verse: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Matthew 5:4-5

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We must remember that temptation is not sin.*
2. *The Word of God is the best defence against temptation.*
3. *Especially after great spiritual blessings we must be alert for the enemy's attack.*
4. *We have great help in our High Priest at the right hand of God the Father.*
5. *A fruitful ministry is rooted in an overcoming life.*

I Tempted of the Devil: Immediately after the Holy Spirit descended upon the Lord Jesus, and the Father declared audibly from above, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. There Satan attacked the Son of God in a fiendish effort to prevent or mar the ministry of Jesus before it began. There is an obvious lesson here for us: if the Son of God was subject to temptation of the devil we ought not to be surprised when temptation comes our way. We must always remember that temptation is not sin, but the yielding to temptation is the danger. Satan sometimes sends temptation and then attempts to bring condemnation on the believer for being tempted. There is an appropriate witty proverb, "You cannot stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from making a nest in your hair." So we cannot prevent all temptation, but we can be totally victorious over it if we use the God-given means at our disposal. We must note here, however, that we

can eliminate considerable unnecessary temptation by avoiding certain places and people and activities which are prone to lead us into temptation.

Great spiritual experiences are no guarantee that we are immune to temptation. Jesus was tempted right after the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Let us beware when great outpourings of blessing fall on us, that we do not become presumptuous and let down our guard.

These three great temptations in the wilderness were certainly not the only temptations which Jesus endured. He was tempted in all points like as we are. When, some years ago, an English journalist and poet of considerable talent wrote a fictitious book about the life of Jesus between the ages of 12 to 30, he was almost universally condemned for describing the young Son of God in situations where He was tempted with impurity. Yet, aside from perhaps a too vivid imagination, the author (pen name, John Oxenham) was in harmony with the scriptures which state that "He was tempted in all points, like as we are; Yet without sin" (Heb.4:15). As a boy Jesus suffered those temptations common to boys. As an adolescent He must have encountered those temptations which are unique to that age. Throughout His ministry temptations came His way as they do to all of us. The jealousy of the scribes and Pharisees must have fostered many a temptation to anger and impatience. The slowness of His disciples also must have caused the Lord the temptation to despair. "Ye are they," Jesus commended His disciples, "which have continued with me in my temptations" (Luke 22:28). Finally, at the cross Satan unleashed every device at his disposal to mar the perfect Son of God and make void the all atoning sacrifice. But Jesus was totally victorious and therefore death and the grave could not hold Him.

II Doubts: Jesus must have grown up with an inner sense that He was different. At twelve He had startled His parents by saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Often through those hidden years there must have been deep thoughts about the responsibility of being "the Son of God." We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. The Holy Spirit and the Holy Scriptures alert us to his wiles. He is a master at shooting the darts of doubt into the mind. Jesus must have been tempted often to think, "Why should I think myself to be so different. Am I deluding myself to think that I am the Son of God?" Yet again and again the witness in His heart confirmed the conviction. Now when Jesus was baptized the

Father spoke in an audible voice confirming the unique relationship: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In the wilderness Satan attacked this assertion. His first words to Jesus were, "If thou be the Son of God." This fiery dart of doubt was repeated in the second of these three temptations. God said, "This is my beloved Son," and Satan said, "If thou be the Son of God." This is one of Satan's chief occupations: to cast doubt upon the Word of God. He began in Eden when he asked Eve, "Hath God said?" Let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices nor surprised when he attempts to make us doubt the reality of sins forgiven or of our standing of righteousness by faith in Christ, or the eternal life which is promised those who believe. Remember, we are believers. Doubt your doubts as you remember their source (Satan) but believe God.

III The Use of Scripture: Someone has said, "You can prove anything from the Bible." This is true only if the scripture is taken out of context and quoted in ways for which it was obviously not intended. For instance, the fact that the scripture says that "All things are yours," does not entitle us to help ourselves to free samples at the bank. Scripture must be used properly. Satan abused the Holy Writ. He quoted it to Jesus, quoting Psalm 91:11&12. He wanted Jesus to jump from a pinnacle of the temple and asserted that if Jesus was the Son of God, He would not be hurt by the fall. "He will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Obviously the Psalmist is speaking of unavoidable dangers in life, but Satan twisted the promise in order to tempt the Lord presumptuously to jump from the pinnacle and expect God's protection for deliberate acts of self-destruction. Our Lord fought fire with fire. He used the scripture properly and so overcame the enemy every time.

Perhaps the Lord had most recently studied Deuteronomy for all His quotations were from its sixth and eighth chapters. In time of temptation, we too, should use the scriptures for our defence. If we do as the first Psalm advises: if we avoid unnecessary fellowship with the ungodly and meditate in God's word day and night we will surely prosper in our efforts to overcome temptation.

IV Eden and The Wilderness: In the garden of Eden where every condition was ideal, man failed miserably to obey the one single prohibition given by the Creator. Here in the

wilderness under the worst imaginable circumstances, the Lord Jesus, the second Adam, gloriously overcame Satan's temptation. By the disobedience of Adam sin and death became the heritage of all men. But now by the obedience of one man (Jesus) many are made righteous and reign in life (over temptation Rom.5:12-21). The paradise which was forfeited so easily in Eden, was regained by the Lord Jesus in the wilderness (and in the perfect obedience of His entire life). By His perfect overcoming we are made righteous as we believe.

V Jesus Begins His Ministry: Matthew begins his narrative of the ministry of Jesus, as do Mark and Luke, with the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Only the apostle John relates the incidents in the earliest portion of our Lord's short work. When Jesus heard that John was imprisoned by Herod, He left Judea and went to Galilee. Matthew notes that His ministry there fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Matthew also records the first teaching of Jesus. Significantly, the very first commandment of the New Testament is a call to repentance. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt.4:17). Today there is much evangelical and charismatic emphasis on believing to the neglect of the subject of repentance. Such believing without earnest repentance is shallow. Deep repentance develops solid faith. The great sin to be repented of is unbelief.

In Galilee Jesus found the four fishermen and called them to follow Him. John and Luke reveal more extensive information about the four in their Gospel accounts. Jesus had known and met them before. At least one of them had been a disciple of John the Baptist. Now Jesus began ministering in the synagogues of Galilee. There he taught, preached, and healed the sick and the suffering. Like John, the Lord preached about the kingdom of God. Great crowds followed Him especially because of the healing miracles. The ministry in this day ought also to follow the same pattern: 1. teaching the word of God, 2. preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and 3. healing the sick and the suffering. May God grant us this threefold ministry.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT-I

Read: Matthew 5:1-20

Memory Verse: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Matthew 5:6

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Sermon on the Mount is directed to disciples.*
2. *It describes the victorious life made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant.*
3. *In a sense, the Sermon on the Mount is the constitution of the Kingdom of God.*
4. *True followers of Christ will be very careful to obey the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount and to teach obedience thereto.*

I Jesus Teaches His Disciples: The three chapters of Matthew (5, 6 & 7) which have come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount are probably a combination of several of Jesus' sermons. The author of this Gospel groups the teachings, the parables, and the healings of our Lord. The very first words of this passage are very important. Jesus left the crowds and taught His disciples. The Sermon on the Mount does not teach how to be saved. It teaches already born again believers how to live an overcoming and blessed life.

The Sermon sets a very high standard of holiness for believers in the kingdom of God. Apart from the gracious power of the Holy Spirit, obedience to its precepts is unattainable. Theologians, who have not accepted the baptism of the Holy Spirit, deny that the teaching of these chapters is for the church today. It is commonly taught in many fundamental churches today, that the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is not for us, but for the reestablished Jewish nation in the millennium. Every premise of such an assertion is wrong. Plainly Jesus said, we were to do and keep even the least of these commandments. Certainly Jesus did not come into the world to

give us the words of God which were irrelevant for us in this Gospel age. He who does not build his Christian life on the solid foundation of obedience to Jesus' teaching is in danger of suffering the total collapse of his faith. The commandments of the Sermon on the Mount are not "law" as distinguished from "grace." Every one of them is full of grace, for each commandment brings with it grace for obedience. The word "grace" is terribly abused by Christians. Grace was never intended to be a coverup and whitewash for sin and failure. The real substance of the grace of God brings us power for obedience. All the power necessary for perfect obedience is offered to us in the true meaning of the grace of God, and in the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

II The Constitution of the Kingdom: Every nation has its laws. The kingdom of God must also have its laws. Further, every nation is known by its laws. The government is good or bad according to its laws and their enforcement. The utter silliness of teaching that all laws are done away because of the grace of God, ought to be apparent to anyone with a grain of common sense. We may not kill, steal and lie because we live under grace. No, the law is not abolished, but the problem of our human weakness is solved by the provision of the power of the Holy Spirit. The benefits of the heavenly kingdom become ours as we appropriate the provision made for us to live according to this constitution of the kingdom of God.

Rewards in the kingdom of God are offered to believers for, 1. overcoming temptations and faults in character, and 2. services rendered for our Lord in obedience to the leading of the Spirit. Salvation, and the eternal life that is the result of it are the free gift of God. This is freely given to all who believe. But rewards are to be given to overcomers and to those who give even so little as a cup of water in the name of the Lord.

The constitution of the kingdom teaches that God expects of His regenerated believers, 1. absolute humility, 2. absolute purity, 3. absolute honesty, and 4. absolute loving generosity. Every Christian may be like that. That is what the new birth is for: that the old things in our natures, which are contrary to these four absolutes, might pass away and the new life of Christ which is perfect in all these respects might be lived out through us. We dare not lower the standard. We must not make provision for the flesh.

III The Beatitudes: The last word of the Old Testament is the word "curse." The first word of Jesus in this first teaching discourse in the New Testament is, "blessed." Under the Old Testament economy, the people were "cursed" because that, although they had the law of God, they were unable to obey and fulfill it. Under the New Testament provision, believers are blessed because regeneration by the grace of God and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit make it possible for us to live by, and delight in, fulfilling all obedience to His commandments.

The characteristics described in the beatitudes are those which are to be developed in every true disciple. All of them should be the possession of every follower of Christ. They are not describing different characteristics in various Christians: one has poverty of spirit, while another is meek and still another is pure in heart. No, this passage is describing the complete believer. Since we are complete in Jesus and He is the perfect example of all these characteristics, we can expect the development and fulfillment of them in our lives as we appropriate His provision for us.

Particularly, Christians recognize that there is no good thing in themselves and that without Him they can do nothing. They have no confidence in the flesh and therefore must be truly poor in spirit. The earnest Christian repents deeply for every fault and sin. He cannot easily rationalize away his guilt, or by comparing himself with others excuse his own failures. The true follower of Christ has Jesus for his example. He cannot laugh over his shortcomings, but his deep repentance brings the comfort of a thorough cleansing. A faithful follower of Christ is always willing and anxious to learn. He is willing to be taught from any source: the word of God, the preaching and teaching of his minister and even from friends. He will always be submissive to the will of God. He will never reject God's dealing and think that he knows better. The true disciple is not only willing to learn but hungry and thirsty to know and experience the reality of God's power in him. He will be merciful and patient with others, but have one single purpose for his own life: to live for the glory of God alone. The purity of the heart of God's elect includes, but goes beyond moral purity, to always seek for only one thing: to be governed in everything by the King. The faithful follower of Christ will use all at his disposal to avoid misunderstandings. He knows when to speak and when to be quiet, especially concerning the faults of others. Most of all he intercedes for the salvation of souls that they might be reconciled to God. He

can rejoice when he is mocked and persecuted by the children of this world because the kingdom of heaven is real to him and indeed has already begun in his soul.

Such a description is utter foolishness to this world. Their values are governed by the philosophy of pleasure and materialism. They are not afraid to trample the rights of others to satisfy their own selfish desires. They try to develop self-confidence and indeed count it a virtue. In short the characteristics of God's own people are diametrically opposed to the ideas of the society of this day.

When Christians really live as set forth in this teaching of Jesus, they are so different from the people of the world that they stand out in bold relief. Like a city on a hill, they cannot be hid. On the other hand, those claiming to be Christians who deny the necessity to live in obedience to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, appear no different from the people of the world. The sole difference is that they name the name of Christ. Our righteousness cannot be in word only. It is a matter of reality.

In conclusion, we must consider the commandment to let our light shine before men in such a way that when they see our good works they will recognize the grace of God the Father in our lives. As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ I have no desire to teach people to believe something that is not so. To attempt to convince people that they are righteous in the sight of God because of "grace", when all those around them know in truth that sin reigns in their actions, is the most presumptuous teaching imaginable. God has a better way. He gives power! Power for a new life! The power of the Holy Spirit will enable us to live a holy life. We ought to be concerned not with abstract theory, but with living reality. Reality in the Christian life brings true joy and happiness. This is God's provision - Blessedness - Happiness.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT-II

Read: Matthew 5:21-48 (daily)

Memory Verse: Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Matthew 5:7

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Our manner of life must be more righteous than that taught and practiced by the scribes and Pharisees.*
2. *Jesus is not voiding the law of Moses, but expounding the true spiritual interpretation.*
3. *Jesus speaks these words with the authority of God.*
4. *In the six illustrations which Jesus used, the common principles are of utmost importance.*

I Jesus vs. The Scribes and Pharisees: The scribes and Pharisees taught the Jewish people their religious duty. During the captivity the majority of the people lost the Hebrew language. In Jesus' lifetime they spoke Aramaic. This meant that they could not read the scriptures for themselves. They became dependent on the scribes and Pharisees for their religious instruction. The Pharisees, however, emphasized the traditions of old Rabbis, often at the expense of the plainly stated commandment of God. In their interpretations of the law they were concerned only with the outward letter of the law. This is also the way the scribes and Pharisees lived.

The entire Sermon on the Mount is a repudiation of the teaching and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus is telling the people that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus, Himself, is the firstborn of that kingdom, but there are to be "many brethren." Those born into this kingdom are described in the beatitudes. They are poor in spirit, repentant, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure, and peaceable etc. Such people are bound to be the salt of the earth. They will shine by their distinct manner of life and God will be glorified thereby. Only those who have a higher

standard of righteousness than the scribes and Pharisees can hope to enter this heavenly kingdom.

II "But I Say Unto You": Each of the six illustrations which Jesus uses begins with the expression, "ye have heard that it was said by them of old time." The first thought is that Jesus is dealing with what the people have heard preached. The scribes and Pharisees were their preachers and they expounded the religious duties of the people. What these religious leaders preached was not the law itself, but what ancient Rabbis and supposed authorities taught on many subjects. They gave the people the traditions of men rather than the word of God. This is what Jesus was attacking when He referred to what was "said by them of old time." It is important to understand that Jesus was not saying "Moses told you that, but I tell you this." No, He is saying, "the traditions of your old Rabbis explain the law so; but I say unto you ---"

These last words are full of important implications. Jesus is speaking with authority. Whatever Jesus spoke, came not from his own mind, but from the Father. That is why He could speak with such authority. Jesus could expound the spirit and intent of the law incomparably better than any Rabbi, because in union with the Father He gave the law to Israel through Moses. Jesus, though in a temple of clay, is the Son of God. He is not simply a better expounder of the law. He was infinitely more than that. He was God the Son in the flesh presenting the truth of God. He still speaks with this divine authority and His every word is of crucial importance to us.

III The Letter and the Spirit: What the people heard from their religious teachers concerned only the actual commission of deeds. They were concerned primarily with the negative side of the law. You shall not do this and you dare not do that. As long as this negative teaching was not broken you were fulfilling the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, even though the heart and mind might be filled with hatred, lust, or jealousy.

Jesus emphasized principles to live by and each of His six illustrations contain these principles. This is not to say that our acts are of no consequence, but to show that the acts are the outgrowth of the thoughts and attitudes within. So Jesus deals with the root as well as the fruit. This principle runs through all of the illustrations used here by Jesus: The spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law.

Thoughts, motives, and desires are equally important as deeds. Another principle clearly brought to light by the teaching of Jesus here, is that the law is not only negative, but also positive. The aim of the law is not only to inform us what we should not do in order to please God, but also what we should do. I must not commit murder, but I should love my enemies and pray for them and do good to them where possible. Perhaps the most important principle running throughout the teaching of our Lord on the law, is that it is not intended to keep us in a state of oppressive obedience but rather to promote the free development of our spiritual life. The spiritual observance of the law will bring us to know God better. We will not conclude, at the end of a day: I have not murdered anyone, nor committed adultery or done this or that so all is well and I am alright. No the spiritual follower of Christ takes inventory in a different way, applying principles. Have I lived to the glory and honor of God today? Do I know Him better today than yesterday? Have I done anything unlike Christ in thought or attitude, desire or feeling? We examine ourselves in the light of Christ the person rather than by the mechanical code of rules and regulations.

IV Murder and Anger: The Pharisees' teaching on murder had the effect of reducing it to a misdemeanor. Their warning was that the killer was in danger of the civil authorities. No mention did they make of the wrath of God and the spiritual and eternal consequences of murder. Neither did the teaching include any recognition of the anger or jealousy that fosters murder. Jesus gives us the true spiritual interpretation of the sixth commandment. Cain became a murderer because of jealousy, David because of lust, Moses because of anger. Jesus warns us to overcome these attitudes which can develop into murder. Not even an expression of contempt should we permit to escape our mouths. To be angry with a brother, Jesus equates with the same punishment the Pharisees threatened for murder. John wrote many years later, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15). Let no hatred take root in your heart.

V Adultery and Lust: Here, too, the Pharisees condemned the actual deed but failed to teach the people how to avoid such temptations. How wise the Lord is to warn us to purge our desires from so much as a lustful glance. How relevant is this teaching today when the dress of women and the publication of pornographic pictures and production of obscene films is calculated to induce lustful gazing and usually culminates in unclean

acts. We should rather do violence to the fleshly lusts to mortify unholy desires. Jesus recognized and warned against the unholy desire and look. This is the spirit of the law. If we obey, a new world of vision opens to us, for the pure in heart shall see God.

VI Marriage Vows and Oaths: Divorce in Jesus' day was too frequent, as in our day. The Lord Jesus warned of the consequences of easy divorce. Marriage vows are exchanged and expressed before God and cannot be easily dissolved. Loose divorce promotes moral and psychological confusion.

The Lord also forbade the use of oaths for every matter. The followers of Christ were to speak the truth at all times. We are not to have variable standards of truthfulness and honesty.

VII Forgiveness and Love: The Spirit of the law as taught by Jesus preferred forgiveness to the philosophy of limited retribution. Better to forgive than seek redress. Concerning enemies, also, the follower of Christ was to love them, bless them, do good to them and pray for them. In this way we will become more Christ-like. The more we follow the spirit of the law, not only in these six instances but in every area of life, the more we will draw near to God, and through the life of Christ manifested within us fulfill the righteousness of the law. The key to the entire Sermon on the Mount is: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God." This righteousness is, of course, not our own self-righteousness, but that which is ours by faith in the son of God and lived out in daily life by the enablement which comes to us by the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT-III

Read: Matthew 6:1-34 (daily)

Memory Verse: Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord Jesus desires His followers to perform their religious duties before God the Father, and not like the Pharisees for the praise of men.*
2. *In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus has given us a beautiful and valuable sample prayer from which we may learn a great deal.*
3. *Our daily chores and entire natural lives are to be lived as pilgrims and sojourners on earth, and with the eternal kingdom of God in view.*
4. *If we put the kingdom of God first in our lives, the Lord will certainly provide for our material needs.*
5. *Those who come to know the Father and enjoy the relationship of children to Him, need never worry about the necessities of life.*

I Living in the Presence of God the Father: The last portion of the fifth chapter of Matthew dealt with the Pharisees' perverse teaching and interpretation of the law of Moses. They honored the traditions of old Rabbis more than the clear intent of the law. These traditions were concerned with the letter of the law at the expense of the spirit. Jesus taught with great authority that the law was to be fulfilled in spirit as well as in the letter. He emphasized that the desires and attitudes were as important as the actual deeds. The followers of Christ must possess righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, or they cannot see the kingdom of heaven. In the sixth chapter of Matthew the Lord deals with another fault of the Pharisees. They performed all the irreligious duties for the

praise of men. The disciple of the Lord Jesus is to do his sacred duties for the eyes of the Father who sees in secret and rewards openly. In this chapter and the next, much is made of the believer's relationship to God as his Father. This revelation of God is almost unknown in the Old Testament. Jesus put a great emphasis on this beautiful concept. The sixth chapter instructs the believer to set his priorities straight. Both sections emphasize that everything we do, whether spiritual duties or secular necessities is to be done in the attitude of a blessed relationship with God as our Father.

II Your Righteousness Before Men: The Lord Jesus gives His followers a great principle to live by. We are to do all of our spiritual duties for the eyes of God the Father alone. The word "alms" in the first verse should have been translated "righteousness" as the marginal reading indicates. The Lord takes three illustrations to show how performing these duties in order to be seen and praised of men robs the believer of the reward which the Father delights to give to those who perform them for the glory of God alone. The scribes and Pharisees were especially guilty of this hypocrisy. Human nature has not changed and it is still a very necessary teaching for us today: that we do not our righteous acts to be seen and honored by men. Almsdeeds, prayer, and fasting are the three pious duties which the Lord discusses. By alms, the Lord means more than just our charitable contributions. This includes all deeds of kindness and helpfulness. They are to be done without calling attention to our actions, and once done they are to be forgotten. Jesus upbraided the Pharisees for "sounding a trumpet" to attract attention to their almsdeeds. This is, of course, only a figure of speech. The human heart is so deceitful that it seems to always find a way to "sound a trumpet" to call attention to its generous acts. The true follower of Christ learns to abhor this ostentation. Those who do their alms before men, have their reward in full, while those who do their works for the eyes of God alone will receive their reward of Him. The New Testament has much to say about rewards in the kingdom of God. It is not wrong or selfish to do works of obedience with an eye to the eternal reward. They are obviously mentioned to motivate the believer to do works of obedience.

Prayer is man's highest privilege on earth. Even in this grace, pride may corrupt its use. The scribes and Pharisees began to pray on the street already while going to the temple for prayer, as if they couldn't wait to begin. The Lord dis-

cerned their hypocrisy: they wanted to be seen and commended by men. Prayer is communion with God. We are to enter our closet for prayer and endeavor to avoid public recognition for our prayer life. If we pray aright, the Father which sees in secret will reward us openly. This is not to say that it is improper to pray in public. But all prayer, whether public or private is to be directed to God and not for the recognition of men. It is good to spend much time in prayer, but it is not pleasing to God to let it be known how much we pray. Fasting is not very popular at the present time and yet it is definitely taught in the Word of God. The Pharisees made their fasting obvious by looking sad and disfiguring themselves with ashes, etc. If we do fast it should be in response to the leading of the Lord and then kept between Himself and ourselves. Some think that God will hear their prayers because of much speaking and some expect spectacular manifestations because of their much fasting. The best attitude for us is to leave the rewarding of our righteous acts to the Lord who sees in secret.

The principle set forth in these three illustrations applies to everything we do for God and man. We are to seek no recognition and avoid calling attention to our pious acts so that the Father which seeth in secret may reward us as He sees fit.

III After This Manner Pray: In connection with His teaching on prayer, the Lord Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer as a sample to follow. It is a perfect and complete prayer. He did not intend that this prayer should be recited thoughtlessly. It was to be an example to follow. If recited thoughtfully and sincerely it can certainly be beneficial. But Jesus said, "After this manner therefore pray ye." It is the manner which He is emphasizing. We are admonished here to address God as "Our Father." In other places in the scriptures we are told to approach God with reverence or with boldness. The concept of God, our Father includes both these attitudes. The prayer begins with adoration: "hallowed be Thy name." Our prayers ought to start with recollection and meditation. If when we begin to pray, we first get still and exercise faith to bring us before the throne of grace, and if when we do begin to speak, if we first of all praise and adore Him, then we will have greater confidence that our prayers are indeed heard by the Lord, and not bouncing back down upon our own heads. The first three petitions all concern God and His kingdom. Only after we have prayed for the will of God to be accomplished in earth, and His name to be hallowed, and His kingdom manifested, are we

ready to present our personal petitions. How perfectly the petitions of the Lord's prayer cover every aspect of our earthly life! The "daily bread" includes all of our temporal needs. The petition regarding forgiveness covers all of our human contacts, and the prayer for deliverance from temptation covers our personal spiritual experience. When we pray we may fill in this outline with specific requests as they come to mind. Finally, the prayer closes with the reminder the kingdom, power and glory all are God's forever. This is not all of Jesus' teaching on prayer, but it is the first and most basic. A full study of this subject will profit any diligent student.

IV Where Your Treasure Is: The disciple of Jesus must always keep in view that this life is but a brief sojourn, while an endless eternity awaits us in the resurrection. Therefore, it is utter foolishness to lay up treasures for this world and neglect the precious preparation for the next. The Lord desires that our hearts be in His kingdom, and so advises us to lay up treasure in heaven. "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also," He warned. The Christian is not to lay up treasure here on earth and live for things earthly. This treasure includes not only money, but homes and possessions of all types, and reputations and intellects etc. We are rather to live for the things of the kingdom of God and treasure the rewards He gives for overcoming temptation and obedient service. We cannot live for both materialism and the kingdom of God.

The Lord does not want His followers to be filled with anxious care about the necessities of life. If God is our Father, He will certainly provide these necessities better than an earthly father might. The words, "take no thought," in modern language are better expressed by "don't worry." The children of the Father in heaven do not have to worry about the provision of food and clothing. Think how much we talk about what we eat and what we wear. Think of the magazines which are concerned with eating, drinking and clothing. We are not to be filled with worry about these things because they concern this life only, and further, we have a heavenly Father who has promised to take care of all these things. He knows what things we have need of before we ask. The Lord Jesus uses strong logic when he calls attention to the birds. God created them, but He is not their Father in the sense that believers are. Yet He feeds them. They do not store up and gather into barns and are not filled with worry about the future. If God cares for them, we can rest assured that those

whom He has redeemed at the cost of the life of His only begotten Son will be provided the necessities of life. Jesus also recommends that we consider the lilies. They are dressed so beautifully and yet last for so brief a time. God clothes them with this beauty, though it be so temporary. How much more will the Lord provide the clothing we need both in this life and in that to come. We need not worry about clothing. "After all these things do the unbelievers seek," Jesus warned. If we are to seek anything earnestly in this life let it be that God rule over us and that we obtain the righteousness which is by faith and which will endure for eternity. We are often tempted to fear the future. We perceive that ominous events are on the horizon, but even in this regard we are admonished not to worry. The Lord gives us grace and strength for each day. We need not, we dare not worry about tomorrow. We have a FATHER. He knows and He cares and He will provide.

OVERHEARD IN AN ORCHARD

*Said the Robin to the Sparrow,
 "I should really like to know
 Why these anxious human beings
 Rush around and worry so."
 Said the Sparrow to the Robin,
 "Friend, I think that it must be
 That they have no Heavenly Father
 Such as cares for you and me."*

--Elizabeth Cheney

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT-IV

Read: Matthew 7 (daily)

Memory Verse: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The true followers of Christ should not pass final judgments on others.*
2. *We need spiritual discernment as we witness and teach. It is useless to teach the great doctrines of Christianity to the unsaved. They cannot receive nor understand them.*
3. *We are to seek grace to treat others as we ourselves want to be treated.*
4. *The teaching of this sermon is to be applied at once to our lives. We must enter into the narrow gate and way now.*

I Judgment and Discernment: The Jewish people had suffered great spiritual harm because of the teaching and action of the scribes and Pharisees. They condemned the publicans and harlots outright and would not so much as attempt to teach them the law of God. Jesus warns us here, in this seventh chapter, that we dare not condemn people with a categorical final pronouncement. The deceitful human heart is only too anxious to discover faults in others and censure them with harsh and rash judgment.

The Lord sets forth reasons why we should not do this. First, He warns us that the standard we set for others will be applied against ourselves. This is a sobering thought, for we most readily see faults in others which we recognize from our own natures. Furthermore, the human heart is so deceitful and depraved that it is impossible to make proper and objective evaluation of the actions of others. Pride and jealousy distort the vision. We generally esteem ourselves better than we are, and others worse than they are. The follower of Christ should

be most concerned with getting the "beam out of thine own eye."

This teaching is often carried too far today. We need a proper balance in all things. Our Lord, who knows all things, recognized this danger and in the same passage teaches us that we must exercise discernment in our teaching and witnessing. Some pastors and Christian leaders refuse to point out the sins and errors of those to whom they minister lest they judge them contrary to this teaching of Jesus. But surely what Jesus meant by "judge not" was to pronounce final judgment on individuals as the Pharisee did in his prayer when he condemned the publican praying nearby. James and John were also guilty of this type of judgment which Christ forbids, when they wanted to bring down fire upon the Samaritans who refused lodging to Jesus and His disciples. The Lord rebuked them and reminded them that He had come to save people not to destroy them. It is judging with that final and conclusive attitude which our Lord forbids.

But we are certainly not to overlook or excuse sinful and vile actions and attitudes, and pretend that such individuals are in good standing. The instruction not to give teaching on sacred and holy things to those whom the Lord compared to dogs and swine, takes for granted that we exercise spiritual discernment. It is useless, and a total waste of precious time to attempt to instruct and teach those who resist all instruction and who mock and scorn at the teaching of holiness.

11. Asking, Seeking, and Knocking: The passage from verses 7-11 is presented in the context of this teaching on not judging and yet discerning the spiritual condition of others. What the disciple of the Lord needs is proper balance. We need to know how to have faith and patience with those who seem impossible. We also must be aware that when certain individuals resist and mock at all the holy things of the doctrine of Christ we waste our time attempting to counsel them. In particular it is useless to teach people about holy living unless they have been converted. The unsaved must be convinced of their own sinful natures and hopeless condition, and the full provision of Christ's atonement for their redemption, before they can begin to understand and appreciate the other great doctrines of Christ.

How can we obtain and maintain the proper balance between judgment and discernment? It is impossible apart from the help of God. Therefore, we must ask and seek and knock at the throne of Grace. Our Father, who delights to give good gifts to His children will give to us the wisdom which can be found

nowhere else, that enables us to keep the right attitudes towards all of our fellowmen.

The final instruction on this subject is a great help. Jesus gave a rule of thumb to help us in our actions and reactions toward others. This instruction is often called "The Golden Rule." In it Jesus simply advises us to treat other people in the same way we ourselves would like to be treated if we were in their circumstances. We are generally too permissive with ourselves and too demanding of others. This imbalance would be much safer in the other direction: strict with ourselves, and patient toward others. We are living in the midst of all kinds of people and our attitudes towards them is important to the Lord. He loves the whole world and desires all to be saved. Yet the Lord is very careful that His church should be pure and holy. The Bible is full of warnings concerning those who appear to be God's people and yet practice things which are hateful to God.

III Enter the Strait Gate: The main body of the sermon closes with the Golden Rule (vs.12). The rest of the chapter is the application or call to response concerning what Jesus has taught. Having set forth what true believers are like in the beatitudes, and having clearly instructed the disciples concerning the spiritual nature of the law, having noted that our works of righteousness should be performed for the eyes and approbation of the Father in heaven only, and that the Father surely will care for His children so that they need not be filled with worry and care for the material necessities or desires, and having illustrated clearly the proper attitudes we should have towards our fellow man, the Lord proceeds to admonish us to enter into this life. He emphasizes the narrowness of both the gate and the way. The world and its pleasures and material desires cannot come with us through this narrow gate. This gate is the true conversion experience. The only way to enter is by the new birth. Some today teach that to follow the instructions of this sermon, especially about loving our enemies, is just what the world needs, and by adopting this as the moral ethic the world can be saved. Yet if the law of Moses was beyond the capability of man to fulfill, the Sermon on the Mount is infinitely more impossible to fulfill by our own resolve and purpose. We must experience that infusion of life and power which comes from the new birth and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

IV Beware: Two great deceptions keep many professing believers from entering into the full experience of the reign of God in this life. First, there are "false prophets." These are especially ministers of the "gospel" who present the gospel and the teaching of this sermon in a "broad way." Some teach that the life set forth in this passage is not for believers today. Others emphasize the grace of God at the expense of obedience to the commandments of Jesus. Inevitably this broad doctrine leads to loose living. We again are expected to use discernment concerning these "broad-minded" teachers. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." The end of such teachers is to be "hewn down and cast into the fire."

The second warning is against self-deception. The Lord warns that believing in Him as the son of God and saying "Lord, Lord," is not enough. We must also do the will of God as taught in the Sermon. Our service for the Lord, even preaching and healing of the sick and other wonderful works can never be a substitute for real holy living in obedience to the teaching of Jesus. The warning to us is that we do not deceive ourselves in that, because we confess Christ and are active for Him and His cause, we need not be concerned with unholy attitudes and feelings in our hearts. No, let us not deceive ourselves. He that doeth righteousness is righteous. This must be experienced not in theory and ideals but in fact, both in actions and attitudes.

It is not appearances that count with God, but reality. The false prophets look like true servants of God but it is only the outward "sheep's clothing." Within they are dangerous wolves. The self deceived believer sounds like a real disciple when he says "Lord, Lord" but the end of such is most horrible, when the Lord will say, "I never knew you, depart from me."

Easy salvation is not taught in the Word of God. We must dig deep and lay the right foundation. Often we get through with repentance too quickly and abuse the grace of God too much. We must take care not only how we build, but also how the foundation is laid for the building. Our "house" will stand the tests and trials if we take care concerning the foundation and surely the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is given at the very beginning of the New Testament to help us to get the foundation right. Christ Himself is that foundation.

Though in many areas we may fall far short of the teaching set forth in this sermon, there is hope for us if our true desire is to press on to fulfill all of its instruction and if we are at least making some progress, by the grace of God, in

that direction. God's grace is offered to us not only to cover up our shortcomings, but also to bring us the heaven-born power for obedience. So let us thank God for the Sermon on the Mount and, entering in at the strait gate, take courage.

NOTES:

THE AUTHORITY OF THE KING

Read: Matthew 8 (daily)

Memory Verse: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:10

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It was a manifestation of the authority of the King when Jesus healed all those who came to Him with their needs.*
2. *We should understand the chain of authority like the centurion did. If we want to exercise authority for Christ, we must bow under the authority of the kingdom.*
3. *Healing is included in the atoning work of Christ just as surely as the forgiveness of sins.*
4. *The King's authority extends over the physical forces of nature and over the demon powers.*

I Power to Heal: After Jesus taught His disciples about the nature of the kingdom of heaven and those who would be a part of it, He descended from the mount. Great multitudes, impressed by the authority of His teaching, followed Him. Suddenly, a leper came to Jesus, bowing down to the ground and worshipping Him. The crowd must have quickly fallen back to avoid contact with the unclean victim of this dread disease. He besought the Master, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The Lord Jesus in compassion put forth His hand and touched the diseased man. Probably no one had touched him for a long time. Jesus not only touched him, but also said, "I will; be thou clean!" Immediately, the leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus asked the recovered leper not to advertise his deliverance, but to go to the priest and offer the gift which had been commanded by Moses (see Lev.14:2). Here is another indication that Jesus came to fulfill the law. Neither in word or deed did Jesus ever void the law.

When Jesus came into the city of Capernaum a centurion

came beseeching Him to heal his servant-boy. The lad was seriously ill and paralyzed. Perhaps his sickness was in the nature of infantile paralysis, or polio, as we know it. Jesus responded to the centurion's plea by agreeing to come and heal the lad. But the amazing Roman officer protested that he was unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof. He expressed a confidence that if Jesus would only speak the word the servant would be healed without any physical contact. He explained his confidence in a remarkable and instructive way. He said that because he was an officer in the Roman army, that when he gave orders to his subordinates, they obeyed him at once. The authority of Rome stood behind his commands. This was true because he in turn was subject to his superiors. The chain of command required his obedience to his superiors as well as the obedience of his subordinates to him. This Roman seemed to understand better than the Jews that the authority of Almighty God stood behind the words of Jesus; and this because Jesus Himself was subject to His Father in heaven in all things.

Surely, here is an important lesson for us! God is glorified when He can manifest His power through believers in the healing of the sick and the casting out of evil spirits. This authority is only safe, however, in the hands of those who are absolutely submissive to the authority of our Lord. Let us learn this lesson and do always those things which please Him, that we, too, might know that He heareth us always.

Jesus was astonished at the great faith of this Gentile. He commended him highly. Only one other individual was so remarkably commended by the Lord, and that person, also, was a Gentile. She was the Syro-phenician mother who besought the Lord for the healing of her daughter. Both of these Gentile intercessors showed deep humility as well as great faith. The connection between this humility and faith should be instructive to us.

Jesus did speak the word of healing which the centurion suggested and the servant-boy who was so precious to his master was healed in the same hour, though Jesus never came near to him. The Lord remarked on this occasion that many from the east and west (Gentile nations) would join Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of the kingdom (Israel) would be cast out into darkness and torment. How true this prediction has become. May God grant mercy to Israel that they might repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, their Messiah.

When Jesus entered Peter's house, He found Peter's mother-in-law indisposed by a fever. Luke calls it a great fever

(comparable to pneumonia). Jesus took her by the hand and the fever left her. She immediately rose and served Jesus and His disciples.

Later in the evening many who were sick or possessed with demons were brought to Jesus. The healing of the sick is a great attracting force today, just as it was then. The Lord cast out the evil spirits with His word and healed all who were sick. There is no record of Jesus refusing to heal anyone who applied to Him. He never rejected anyone because of age or because the sickness had progressed too far. He healed all who came. Let us remember: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb.13:8).

II Healing Included in the Atonement: Matthew reveals that this manifestation of the healing power of Christ was a direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, who foretold: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt.8:17). Turning to the prophetic utterance in Isaiah 53:4 we find it pronounced, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." The "griefs and sorrows" of Isaiah are interpreted by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as "infirmities and sicknesses." This passage in Isaiah immediately precedes the wonderful revelation that, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Although this last phrase may refer to the healing of our sin-sick souls, it is impossible to escape the inclusion of physical healing in the atonement, since the New Testament clearly interprets the "griefs and sorrows" of verse 4 as "infirmities and sicknesses" in Matthew 8:17. We should be inspired by this clear evidence to believe Christ for the healing of our sicknesses. When Jesus cried out, "It is finished," the healing of our sicknesses was included and indeed stands upon the same solid ground as the forgiveness of our sins. We do not seek forgiveness of our sins by any other means than the atonement of Christ. Should we not, then, logically, seek healing for our bodies in the same way? The prescription for our healing is in the word of God. Let us seek healing in the prescribed way. We recognize readily that Jesus can heal. What we need to learn is that He will heal all who come to Him in faith on the grounds of His atonement. As surely as "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," applies to the forgiveness of sins, it may be claimed for our application to Christ alone for our healing. Healing for

the body is included in the atoning work of Christ.

III Authority Over Nature and Demons: So many people pressed about Jesus that He had to escape from them by boat over Galilee. Some wanted to go with Him, but He warned them of the difficulties and hardships. Today, too, the glory of a successful ministry attracts people, but it must always be remembered that there are many disappointments and afflictions connected with the ministry. And, once begun, there is no turning back without eternal loss.

As Jesus and His disciples sailed over Galilee, a storm arose. Jesus had fallen asleep in the stern of the ship. The disciples worked to weather the storm, but finally at the point of despair they wakened Jesus and pled, "Lord, save us: we perish." He arose and said, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Then He rebuked the wind and the sea. Immediately there was a great calm. The disciples, who had seen quite a few miracles already, were truly astonished at this manifestation of Jesus' authority. "Even the winds and the sea obey him," they marvelled. Our King has all power in heaven and on earth. Let us learn to trust Him in every situation. "With Christ in the vessel I can smile at the storm."

On the other side of the sea of Galilee, two demon-possessed men met Jesus. They were exceeding fierce. The legion of demons in these poor victims recognized Jesus as the Son of God. They begged not to be cast into the abyss. The Lord ordered the demons to go from the possessed men and enter into a herd of swine that were feeding nearby. Immediately, the pigs ran wildly off a cliff into the sea. The thankful men desired to follow Jesus, but He bade them return to their homes and show what great things God had done for them (see Luke 8:38,39). But the people of that place, caring more for the pigs than for their own souls, besought the Lord Jesus to depart from them.

So we see the Lord revealed in majesty and power. He has authority over all disease and sickness. His word is with power. That authority extends to the realm of nature. Sea and wind must obey His word. The demons also fear before Him and flee at His command. Let us be sure that we honor His word and obey His teaching, for that word will judge us in the last day.

TEACHING, PREACHING, AND HEALING

Read: Matthew 9:1-35

Memory Verse: Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake. Matthew 5:11

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord Jesus has the authority to forgive sin.*
2. *The Lord offered sinners the opportunity to be forgiven and to become disciples.*
3. *The faith which presses through the difficulties will be rewarded.*
4. *The miraculous healings brought crowds to Jesus. He taught them God's truth and healed all that were sick.*

I Power to Forgive Sin: We noted in the previous study that Jesus exercised authority over sickness, and the forces of nature, and over demons. In the ninth chapter of Matthew the authority of Jesus is revealed to include power to forgive sin. Later in the chapter Jesus exercised His authority over death when He brought Jairus' daughter back to life. Truly, all power, in heaven and in earth is given to our Lord. How wonderful it is to realize that with this glorious fact is given the promise "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

The young man who was brought to Jesus was paralyzed. Four friends with faith brought him to the house (probably Peter's) where Jesus was teaching (see Luke 5:17). Finding the house so crowded that they could not get in, the four faithful friends overcame the difficulty by ascending to the roof and there, after removing some roof-tiles, carefully lowered the patient before the Lord Jesus. All three accounts take note of the fact that Jesus recognized the faith of the friends that brought the sick one to Him. We, too, may have a beneficial effect on the sick and suffering if we testify to them or bring them to be prayed for with faith in our hearts.

But the first thing Jesus said to the sick one was, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Perhaps the young man was under great condemnation for some past sin. Jesus was and is ready to forgive our sins. Sin can hinder the healing of our bodies. Jesus took care of the sin problem first. This is still humanity's basic problem. It is just as important today, that the sin question be dealt with first. Many of our other social problems would be taken care of automatically if the sin question were resolved first.

Jesus' words produced the predictable results in the scribes and Pharisees who had been listening to His teaching. They immediately thought in their hearts that He was blaspheming. No one but God had the authority to forgive sin. Jesus read their minds, however, and rebuked them for their evil thoughts. "Which is easier to say," Jesus demanded of them, "thy sins are forgiven or arise and walk." No visible evidence confirmed forgiveness, but instant restoration accompanied Jesus words, "arise and walk." Jesus used this as proof that He, the Son of man did indeed have the authority on earth to forgive sin. This was, of course, before Calvary. If it was true then, how much more now, since the price has been paid for full forgiveness and for perfect physical healing.

The man was instantly restored and the great crowd in the house rejoiced over what they had witnessed. Never before had they seen such miracles. The people rejoiced that such authority had been given to one among them.

II Calling Sinners to Repentance: Jesus invited Matthew, also called Levi, to follow Him. This man was a customs official for the Romans. As such, he was considered by the Pharisees to be a traitor and sinner. He was classified as a publican. Nevertheless, Jesus called him and he immediately responded by resigning his position to become a loyal follower of the Nazarene. Before fully severing all connections with his fellow-workers, he made a supper where many publicans and sinners could come. Jesus ate with them. But the Pharisees criticized Jesus for associating with such people. When Jesus heard it he explained that healthy people do not need the physicians, but the sick. He came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The Pharisees, were constantly looking for something to find fault with in Jesus. There was little chance that the Lord could use them as leaders in His kingdom. Their hypocrisy and unteachableness made them unfit vessels for the "new wine"

of the kingdom. Souls were less valuable to them than their ancient traditions. Jesus had to find new vessels for His kingdom. Fishermen, publicans and other despised men became the princes of His kingdom. Praise God, the door is open to all who will come and learn of Him, to become fruitful in the everlasting kingdom.

III Authority Over Death: Great need often drives people to Jesus. One of these religious rulers, Jairus by name, came to Jesus and worshipped Him. He had a great need. Whatever objections he may have had to Jesus and His teaching were overcome by this great need. He had possibly seen the paralytic healed, or certainly he had heard of the remarkable event. Now his own little daughter lay at the point of death. Nothing could stop this man now from applying to Jesus for healing for the daughter he loved so well. He was confident that if Jesus would lay His hand upon her she would recover. Jesus immediately arose to follow Jairus to his house. The disciples also followed and the crowd about Jesus pressed Him from all sides.

One woman in particular had determined to press through and touch Jesus' garment. She was sure that in so doing, she would be healed from the life sapping hemorrhaging which had afflicted her for twelve years. She had "suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." The doctors had taken all her living without any results for the better. Now she determined to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. Weakness had to be overcome, but with perseverance she pressed through the crowd and at last reached out and touched the hem of His garment. Instantly the healing was given. Jesus stopped and turned about to see who had so touched Him that virtue had noticeably gone out of Him. When the woman realized that she could not hide her act she came forward and told all. "Be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole," Jesus reassured her.

Imagine the mixed emotions of Jairus as he observed the incident which delayed the Lord's arrival at the bedside of his dying daughter. When finally Jesus arrived at the house it appeared to be in vain. The little girl had died and already the mourners were weeping and wailing. Jesus asked them why they were mourning so when the girl was only asleep. But they knew better and laughed Jesus to scorn. Then He put them out. The prayer of faith is hindered by unbelief. It is often futile to pray for a sick one when those who are present do not believe. It is important that all present be in faith and of one

accord. Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus to the sick-room, with the parents. There Jesus took her by the hand and said, "Damsel, I say unto thee arise." Immediately the daughter was restored to her parents and Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Even the prince of terrors, death, had to give up its victim in response to the divine authority of the Son of God. Sin and death are added to the list of things over which the Lord exercises authority. Truly, He is King of kings, and Lord of lords; and He is my Lord and yours! Of course, the story of this mighty miracle spread all over the countryside and more than ever the sick were brought to Him.

IV Teaching, Preaching, and Healing: Two blind men followed Jesus and implored Him piteously, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us." He asked them if they really believed He was able to do this." It is important that we express ourselves that Jesus is really able and willing to meet our needs. All things are possible to him that believeth. With the heart man believeth and with the mouth confession is made. Jesus touched their eyes and their faith proved to be very real for Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you." Their eyes were opened and so were their mouths despite the Lord's earnest plea that they keep quiet about the incident. How could they help telling what had happened. We must forgive them.

Next a dumb (speechless) man was brought to Jesus. The affliction was due to demon possession. Again Jesus exercised His authority over the demons and cast them out. Immediately the dumb man began to speak and the multitudes marvelled.

But the wretched scribes and Pharisees, instead of rejoicing in the deliverance of the sick and suffering attributed the amazing power of Jesus to the power of Satan. Jealousy blinds its victims to the most obvious truths.

So Jesus went from town to town in Galilee, "Teaching, in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matt.9:35). The healings attracted the crowds and gave confirmation to the teaching and preaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God.

SENT TO PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM

Read: Matthew 9:36-38; 10:1-42

Memory Verse: Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Matthew 5:11

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We are commanded to pray for the Lord to send out harvest workers.*
2. *The importance of Jesus' disciples to carry the story of Jesus everywhere.*
3. *Those who bear the Gospel tidings can be assured of His provision and care.*
4. *The faithful follower of Christ must be willing to lay down his life for the cause of Christ.*
5. *The Lord offers eternal rewards for every faithful service rendered in His name.*

I The Need for Harvest Workers: The crowds following Jesus increased as He performed miracles of healing. When Jesus saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion. He realized that they needed to be taught the truths of the kingdom of heaven. The scribes and Pharisees failed utterly in their responsibility to teach the people the way of life. Jesus, Himself, could not reach all of the needy people personally. There was a great need for faithful workers to do the Lord's work. Jesus saw that the multitudes of people were like sheep without a shepherd. They were likely to go in any direction and were vulnerable to the profiteering attacks of the wolf-like Pharisees.

The farmer who has his crops ripe and ready for harvest must have workers to gather the produce in. "The harvest is plenteous," Jesus said, "but the laborers are few." Is not this so today, also? There are, unfortunately, religious leaders who seek personal gain from God's sheep, but all too few who seek to serve the Lord and His people faithfully. The world is full

of people who, like sheep without a shepherd, wander here and there seeking for something. The need was great. The need is great.

II The Prayer for Harvest Workers: The Lord asked His disciples to pray to the Lord of harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. Jesus, Himself, must also have done this. No doubt He spent hours in prayer to the Father that faithful workers would be raised up to carry on the Gospel work. It has been observed that a praying minister begets a praying congregation. The great need we see around us ought to drive us to prayer. Too often today the church reevaluates and revises its methods in order to reach and help more people. What we need is not so much better methods, but better men and women. The worker who prays and seeks the Lord for himself is going to be an effective harvest worker. We who know and have experienced the infilling and guidance of the Holy Spirit need not copy the methods of some "successful" group. We must pray and then work in the way the Lord leads us, He will not fail.

As we see and recognize the need of the masses all about us, let it drive us to our knees. As we sense our own weakness and ineffectiveness, let it drive us to our knees. Fruitfulness will not come as a result of conventions and seminars on new methods, but as a result of intercessory prayer and obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

III The Call of Harvest Workers: The Bible was not written with chapter breaks. It is certainly helpful that we have the Bible so arranged, but some of the passages are broken in unfortunate places. This is true here at the end of Matthew 9 and the beginning of chapter 10. The theme of laborers for the harvest continues on through the entire chapter (10). After Jesus had seen the need for harvest workers, He was moved with compassion. This compassion inspired Him to call on His disciples to pray for harvest laborers. No doubt they responded in some measure and did pray. And when they had prayed, the Lord called them to be the answer to their own prayers. He had chosen twelve men to be with Him. Peter, Andrew, James and John were fishermen; Matthew a custom official (publican). Philip probably was first a disciple of John the Baptist. He brought Nathaniel of Cana, to Jesus. Thomas the twin is remembered most for his doubts unfortunately. James the less, could possibly have been the brother of Matthew. Both are

called "son of Alphaeus." Thaddaeus is listed in Matthew but omitted from other lists of the disciples. Simon is called the Canaanite here but the "zealot" elsewhere. The zealots were a vigorously patriotic party in those days. Judas Iscariot is one of the twelve and is included in the list of those whom Jesus called to go forth and preach the kingdom of heaven with power to heal the sick and to cast out demons. The twelve were sent out 2 by 2 (see Mark 6:7). Their only preparation for this first evangelistic enterprise was that they had been with Jesus and seen His authority. They believed on Him.

IV The Commission of Harvest Workers: To these disciples Jesus gave authority over unclean spirits, and power to heal all kinds of sicknesses and diseases. He not only was able to exercise this authority Himself, as we have noted in our last two lessons, but here we see that Jesus was able to delegate this power to His followers. On this occasion Jesus sent them only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This was the fulfillment of "to the Jews first." The day of ministry to the Gentiles came a little later. The theme of their evangelistic outreach was to preach that, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The authority to heal served a threefold purpose: it attracted the attention of multitudes; it relieved the suffering and misery of many; and it confirmed and gave great might to the message the disciples preached: that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. After Pentecost the disciples prayed that the Lord would confirm the word they preached by stretching forth His hand to heal and to perform signs and wonders in the name of Jesus (see Acts 4:29-30). Signs and wonders and healings today should serve the same purpose. The same Lord who commissioned the twelve original disciples is anxious to send forth others to harvest the fields of the world today. "Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And these signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark 16:15,17).

V The Provision for Harvest Workers: When Jesus sent out the twelve on this occasion He told them to take no silver or gold for their provision. The necessities would be provided for them by those to whom they ministered. Lodging and food could be expected from the most worthy resident of the town in which they ministered. Taking no provision was not an eternal law, but it did give the disciples the opportunity to prove the faithfulness of God in providing for their physical needs. When we do God's work in God's way we may rest assured that every

need will be met. The use of human fund-raising methods to provide for the expenses of evangelization deprives the worker of the privilege of seeing the wonderful providence of God. One of the redemptive names of God is Jehovah-Jireh: the Lord will provide.

VI The Protection of Harvest Workers: The Lord warned His disciples that they would encounter hostility. Where the work of God is going forward the enemy will resist vehemently. The Lord promised that when and if the disciples were brought before civil officials that "the Spirit of your Father" would inspire the words necessary for their defence. They were not to be afraid. Not even a sparrow falls on the ground unknown to the Father and the workers of the Lord are, of course, of much more value than many sparrows. Though the disciple be like a sheep in the midst of wolves, the Lord will protect him from evil. The disciple is to beware and not foolishly invite attack, but he is never to compromise the message.

VII The Consecration of the Harvest Workers: The Lord warned the disciples to expect opposition and persecution. In our service for the Lord we must be willing to pay a price. Jesus foresaw that sometimes there would be serious opposition from the members of the worker's own family. Love for Jesus and consecration to serve Him must take priority over family ties. We are to take up our cross and follow Jesus. He that is unwilling to suffer anything for Jesus' sake is not fit to be His disciple. If we are unwilling to make sacrifices for the Lord's sake we are not worthy of His calling. Our consecration must be complete. Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? All we have, all we are, and all we hope for must be forever consecrated to the Lord.

VIII The Rewards for Harvest Workers: The context here (vss. 40-42) indicates that those who accept and provide for the Lord's harvest workers will surely receive a reward for their kindness. Even for a cup of cold water, a reward shall be given. What we do for the Lord's workers is as if done to the Lord Himself. Certainly if the Lord cannot forget to reward those who provide kindness to His workers, how great shall be the reward of those who consecrate their all to serve the Lord and proclaim the message of the kingdom of God. The Lord promises eternal rewards for overcoming temptation or for holy living, and also for obedient service to the King. What an honor it is to be called to proclaim the kingdom of God!

PRIVILEGE BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY

Read: Matthew 11 (daily)

Memory Verse: Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Matthew 5:12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *How Jesus satisfied John that He was the Messiah.*
2. *Jesus had high regard for John the Baptist.*
3. *Because of the miraculous ministry of Jesus in the cities of Galilee, those people had a responsibility to repent and believe.*
4. *The blessings of the Gospel are not obtained through the intellect.*
5. *A royal invitation is extended to all who feel the burden of sin.*

I Art Thou He? Herod had shut John the Baptist up in prison (see Matt.14:3). Some of John's disciples visited him and told him about the ministry of Jesus. John desired to have a real assurance that Jesus was indeed the One for whom he had been sent to prepare the way. Sitting day after day in a dark prison, questions must have arisen in John's mind and he determined to settle his questions. Two of John's disciples were sent to Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not give them an affirmative or negative response, but told them to go and explain to John what they saw and heard: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." This would prove to John that Jesus was indeed the One for whom they looked. He was not the political Messiah to deliver from the Roman yoke which many had been taught to expect, but He was the Messiah sent to break the yoke of sin

sickness and suffering. The power of the Gospel today is still a valid proof that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah which was to come.

II None Greater than John: Jesus had nothing but praise for John. He questioned the multitudes concerning John. "Why did you all go out to the wilderness?" "To see a reed shaken with the wind?" This is an interesting description. John was only a fragile man who was made powerful and effective by the wind of the Holy Spirit. He was full of the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. The Pharisees wore ornate religious garments, but John wore rough camel's hair. Certainly people were not attracted to John by fancy forms or priestly garments. It was the powerful prophetic message which drew the multitudes. Jesus declared that John was more than a prophet, for he was the one of whom Malachi wrote, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee" (Mal.3:1). Of all men ever born, Jesus declared, that none was greater than John the Baptist. The single exception was "he that is least in the kingdom." The word here translated "least" means "younger" and it seems most probable that Jesus was alluding to Himself, since He was "born of woman" and surely was greater than John and was 3 months younger. To think that the least of New Testament Christians is greater than John who was full of the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb seems ridiculous. But John did mark the end of one era and the beginning of another. All the prophets and law prophesied until John. But he was the first to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He marked the end of the era where the natural Israelites were the people of God. From the preaching of John and thereafter each individual had to repent and seek the Lord for himself to be a child of the kingdom. Malachi had prophesied that God would send Elijah before the day of the Lord. This was the very last prophecy of the Old Testament (see Mal.4:5-6). Jesus at this time declared that John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy. He was "Elijah, which was for to come." We need not look about us for another Elijah today. Christ declared this prophecy to be fulfilled in John.

III The Importance of Response: John's manner of life was one of great self-denial. His clothing was rough. His food was the simplest necessities. The consensus of response to John's manner of life was, "He hath a devil." In modern vernacular, "he's crazy." Jesus, on the other hand did not dress and eat in

such an odd manner. To be sure He fasted occasionally and once for forty days. but His habits were to eat and drink like the normal every day person. He accepted invitations to feasts that John never would have accepted. Yet the same consensus which rejected John as "mad" accused Jesus of gluttony and intemperance. Neither mode of life pleased the Jews. Or was it really the message they resented?

Let no one think that this passage is proof that Jesus drank intoxicating wine. The emphasis is simply that Jesus did not live an ascetic life like John. To conclude that Jesus drank intoxicating wine from this incident would be the same as concluding that Jesus was a glutton.

The truth Jesus brought out here is relevant today. Sometimes the Gospel is preached with the threat of hell-fire held over the listeners. At other times the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel are emphasized. Neither threats nor promises bring the hard hearted unbeliever to repentance. Neither John nor Jesus could awaken the Jewish leaders. Let us be sure we respond to every call of the Gospel.

IV Privilege and Responsibility: The cities of Galilee had the greatest privilege of all the towns of Israel. There, on the shores of Galilee, those who sat in darkness "saw a great light." The light of the world shined brightly in those fortunate towns as Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were possessed of the devil. Three towns were the scene of many of His mighty works. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had this unspeakable privilege. But the mighty manifestation of the power of the Son of God did not produce the effect the Lord Jesus desired. If these same miracles had been wrought in the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus asserted, they would long ago have repented in dust and ashes. Even Sodom would be still standing if it had witnessed the wonder working ministry of the Son of God. Jesus warned them that in the judgment day these heathen cities would be judged less harshly than the cities by Galilee which had enjoyed the ministry of Jesus without any real response of repentance and faith in Him.

Is this not an earnest warning to us in this age of the Holy Spirit. We, too, have seen and many of us have experienced the wonderful healing power personally. We have received gifts and baptisms and anointings of the Holy Spirit and if we do not wholly follow the Lord and die to the world and the flesh, it will be more tolerable for atheistic people than for us. We in Pentecost are an exceedingly privileged people. If

we choose the world and its pleasures our condemnation will be great.

V The Blessing of Simplicity: Jesus thanked the Father at this time that the truths of the kingdom, though hidden from the intellectuals of that day, were revealed to "babes." Some of the most profound truths of the kingdom of God have been grasped and experienced by those of limited intellectual attainments. Great intellect, like great wealth, is usually a hindrance in the Christian life. Just as the rich man tends to trust in his means to meet his every need, so the intellectual tends to trust his ability to reason to obtain everything for himself. We are better off to be like children trusting our heavenly parent for all that we need in this life and the next.

VI The Royal Invitation: These last verses of Matthew 11, have been called the most beautiful passage in the New Testament. The important thing to grasp from this passage is that Jesus invites all who feel the burden of sin, the pressures of life, the condemnation of the evil one, to come to Him. If we only totally commit our lives to Him He will give us rest. How we need the rest of the Lord! Here is relief from the anxiety produced by a world full of sin. Here is deliverance from guilt that would condemn us to the lowest hell. Here is release from the fears of all kinds which make life intolerable. Come unto me, Jesus calls. It is the invitation of our King. No excuse can be tolerated. His invitation is our command. Oh, He is meek and lowly in heart! We need not hesitate to commit our all to such a King. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Let us come to Him and commit all to Him and enjoy the rest He alone can give to our souls.

THE PHARISEES RESIST CHRIST'S MINISTRY

Read: Matthew 12; Jonah 1-4

Memory Verse: Review Matthew 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Christ is Lord even of the Sabbath.*
2. *Those who harbor envy and prejudice in their hearts become blind to truth.*
3. *The scriptures were fulfilled when Jesus tried to avoid publicity concerning his healing miracles.*
4. *Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin.*
5. *We will all be judged for the words which we speak.*
6. *There is great significance in the story of Jonah and the repentance of Nineveh.*
7. *Those who do the will of the Father have a blessed relationship with Him.*

I Christ is Lord of the Sabbath: The Pharisees were always looking for something in Jesus or His disciples that they could condemn. As Jesus and His disciples walked through a field on the sabbath day the disciples plucked the "corn" (wheat). They probably rubbed the "ears" between their hands and blew away the chaff and then popped the kernels into their mouths. This horrified the Pharisees. They immediately protested to Jesus that His disciples were doing "that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath day." The Lord explained to these hard hearted critics that necessity sometimes overrules the tradition developed around the law. He told how David and his men ate the shew-bread in time of great distress. He also pointed out how the priests work on the sabbath day and yet are guiltless. Once again the Lord quoted the scripture from Hosea 6:6, "I will

have mercy and not sacrifice." He explained that if they would keep this principle in mind they would avoid condemning the guiltless. This is what they had done concerning the disciples and the wheat on the sabbath day.

When Jesus went to the synagogue, there was a man with a withered hand there, and the Pharisees wanted to make Jesus say something by which they could formally accuse Him. Possibly they themselves arranged for this man to be present on the sabbath. So they asked Jesus whether it was lawful to heal on the sabbath day. So blind had their envy and jealousy made them that they could not rejoice in the wonderful deliverances wrought by the Lord Jesus, but could only find fault that He healed on the sabbath day. They themselves could heal no one on any day of the week. But Jesus used an illustration that silenced their criticism. He reasoned that if any of them had a sheep which fell into a pit on the sabbath they would most certainly lift it out. If they were willing to do this for an animal certainly it could not be wrong to lift a man out of his sickness and suffering on the sabbath day. Then He healed the man.

Jesus did not condone all manner of labor on the sabbath. The sabbath was made for man. We physically and mentally need a day of rest. The Lord's day (first) has superseded the sabbath (seventh). For our own good this one day in seven should be reserved for worship and rest. If necessity demands some physical labor let us be sure the need is real. It is lawful to do good on the sabbath (or Lord's day). If the sheep falls into the pit every sabbath, then we must either close the pit or get rid of the sheep. The testimony of those who have followed real convictions concerning hallowing the Lord's day is that good health and blessing follow such careful observance.

II Isaiah's Prophecy Fulfilled: The Lord's logic so embarrassed the Pharisees that they immediately conspired how to get rid of Jesus. The Lord was aware of their plot and so withdrew from the place. But the people flocked to Him in great numbers. The compassionate Savior healed them all. After healing them He requested that they should not publicize his ministry. This was, as the inspired author, Matthew, notes, a direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-3. His ministry was to help and uplift the suffering and the fallen. The last phrase is significant: "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." Jesus quoted this from the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament. The Jewish leaders were doing all possible to shut

themselves out from the Kingdom of God and to open the door to the Gentiles. This was prophesied in the Old Testament.

III The Unpardonable Sin: When Jesus miraculously delivered an individual who was both blind and speechless as a result of demon possession, the wicked Pharisees declared that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The people who witnessed this miracle were amazed, and provoked the Pharisees by asking, "Is not this the son of David" (the Messiah)? Jesus discerned the evil thoughts of the Pharisees and explained that if the demons were cast out by the power of Satan, then the kingdom of Satan would collapse, for no kingdom, or city, or house divided against itself can stand. Jesus asked the Pharisees by what power their children cast out demons. They were powerless before the work of Satan and so Jesus reasoned with them that if someone was able to spoil Satan's goods he must have greater power than Satan. The conclusion was inescapable: if Jesus by the power of God was casting out demon powers before which humanity was helpless, then surely "the kingdom of God is come unto you" (vs.28).

But most serious of all the mistakes of the religious leaders was their delcaration attributing the glorious power of the Holy Spirit manifested in the work of Jesus to the power of Satan. Every other sin might be forgiven, but to so blaspheme the Holy Spirit was and is unpardonable. Those who presume today, to relegate speaking in tongues and prophetic messages to the work of Satan put themselves on dangerous ground. There are, to be sure, excesses and sometimes a mixture in the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit because of the weaknesses and failures of the vessels, but the work of the Holy Spirit must never be attributed to the work of Satan.

The Lord attempted to show the Pharisees the evil in their hearts. They needed regeneration. They said such blasphemous and evil things because their hearts were corrupt. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." We will all be judged for the words which we have spoken. We must give an account of every idle word we speak. May God help us to be so renewed in heart that from within will flow words of life and truth.

IV The Sign of Jonah: When certain of the Pharisees asked the Lord to show them a sign (miracle), He referred them to Jonah. No other sign was to be given. People have a way of

explaining away the significance of signs anyway. But the sign of Jonah is most interesting and instructive. Jesus explained that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly so He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (vs.40). Clearly this was spoken of the three days between Christ's death and resurrection. Such a clear statement indicates that the crucifixion took place on Thursday and, of course, Jesus rose early on the first day.

But perhaps there is equal significance in another part of the story of Jonah. When the unwilling prophet finally did preach to the Gentile people of Nineveh, they repented in dust and ashes. From the king to the least of the inhabitants they cried to the Lord in repentance for mercy. No such repentance is recorded anywhere in the scripture. This occurred after the prophet had spent three days and three nights in the whale's belly. It was also after the Lord spent three days "in the heart of the earth," that the Gospel preaching began to bear abundant fruit. The significance that these repentants in Jonah's day were Gentiles, perhaps foretold the marvelous work among the Gentiles begun by Paul and continuing to this day. Jesus warned the Pharisees that the repentant Gentiles of Nineveh would arise in the judgment day to condemn their generation. Also the queen of Sheba, another Gentile, would likewise condemn the evil Pharisees. She came from afar to hear the wisdom of Solomon but the Pharisees refused to listen to the wisdom of the Son of God which by far exceeded the wisdom of Solomon.

It should be noted that Jesus' teaching about evil spirits seeking to reenter the place from which they had been cast out, was not given to warn some person whom Jesus had recently delivered, but was applied to the generation of religious leaders of the Jews. The last estate of such an individual, Jesus explained is worse than before. "So shall it be even unto this evil generation" (vs.45).

V A Blessed Relationship: While Jesus was speaking to a group of people He received word that His mother and brothers were outside wishing to speak with Him. Jesus stretched out His hand toward His disciples and exclaimed "Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Whoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister, and mother." What a blessed privilege is offered to us. If we do the will of God the Father we can experience and enjoy the wonderful family relationship to Jesus and the Father in heaven. More important is our obedience to the will of the Father, than our physical relationship.

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Read: Matthew 13; Isaiah 6:9-10; Psalm 78:2

Memory Verse: Review Matthew 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Why Jesus taught the people with parables.*
2. *Some who hear the word of the kingdom will believe, and some will not.*
3. *It is important to hear and understand the word.*
4. *The church in this age has a mixture of true believers and false in it.*
5. *The phenomenal growth and influence of the church.*
6. *God loves the church and paid a great price for its redemption.*
7. *There will be a final separation of the bad from the good at the close of the gospel age.*

I Teaching by Parables: Theology did not interest the common people of Jesus' day any more than it does most people in our day. In order to teach the people the important truths of the kingdom of God, Jesus used parables. It has accurately been defined that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The stories or parables which Jesus told contain important truths. Jesus explained that He had to teach the word of God through parables because the people were dull of hearing. The prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled (Isa.6:9-10). Israel in general had become dull of hearing, blind, and slow of heart to understand the truths of God which lead to conversion. Matthew notes that Jesus used parables that the prophecy of the Psalmist might be fulfilled: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt.13:35, Ps.78:2).

The paramount subjects of Matthew's gospel are the Kingdom and the Kingdom. The parables of Matthew 13 illuminate the various important truths about the Kingdom of God. The people could readily understand these parables. They were taught on the shore of Lake Galilee. From the boat where Jesus sat and taught He could possibly see a sower casting his seed into the field. The people knew about good fish and bad, for the fish of the lake were a staple part of their diet, and at least four of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. The women in the audience were sure to understand the illustration about the leaven. They were all illustrations from real life, for real people to learn about the real kingdom of God.

11 The Word of the Kingdom: The first parable is an introduction to the other parables. It does not begin with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." as the other parables of Matthew 13 do. The emphasis in this parable is on the results of preaching the kingdom of God. The sower scatters his seed and that seed, Jesus explained, is "the word of the kingdom." The seed fell on the wayside or pathway, and on stony ground; it fell in amongst thorns and briars, and of course, some fell on good ground. The Lord Himself was the first sower of the word of the kingdom. The apostles and preachers who followed down through the ages are also sowers of the word of the kingdom, as is every witness for the Lord today. The enemy, represented by the birds, was able to swallow up the seed which fell on the wayside. This was the word which was not understood. We must do all in our power to understand the word preached to us. The seed which fell on stony ground sprang up and prospered until the hot sun scorched it. Those who accept the word and follow its teaching until difficulties and persecution or opposition arises are represented by this second category. The third portion of seed fell in amongst thorns and briars and although it took root it was soon choked by the weeds. The cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things are represented by the choking weeds. Thank God that some seed fell on good, prepared ground and brought forth fruit, some 30, some 60, and some 100 fold. This parable clearly teaches that the preaching of the kingdom will have different results. Some will lose it at once, others follow the word for a little while, others continue longer, and some will become mature fruitbearing disciples. This was true of Jesus' teaching and preaching and it is true of our sowing of the seed as well. Not all our preaching of the

word of the kingdom brings forth fruit, but some does. Jesus drove home a lesson in connection with this parable that is exceedingly important: "Take heed how ye hear." It is necessary in the school room to listen attentively and follow instructions if one desires to learn the subject well. Even more important is our attention to the word of the kingdom from the Bible, and from our teachers and preachers. Let us ask the Lord to give us a hearing ear.

III The Greatest Parable: The Lord Jesus Himself interpreted the first two parables. This gives us the key for understanding all the parables (vs.13). The parable of the tares was told to the great crowd on the shore of Galilee but its interpretation was given only to the disciples in the house after Jesus left the crowd. This is the greatest of the parables of Matthew 13. It covers the entire era of the Gospel age. It begins with the sowing of the good seed and ends with the final judgment of the false disciples, and the rewarding of the truly righteous.

After the man sowed good seed in his field the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. The two plants look alike until the grain ripens. But there is a very great difference in the fruit. The wheat, of course, is wholesome and good, while the tares are toxic and cannot be eaten. The man would not allow his servants to pull out the tares for fear of pulling out the wheat by mistake. The clear implication is that throughout the gospel age the church will consist of both true believers (wheat) and of pretenders (tares). The Lord calls them children of the wicked one. So Jesus then foretold that there would be hypocrites in the church.

In the end, however, the reapers gather first the wicked into bundles and burn them, and then the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Note the order here expressed: "first the tares" are gathered and burned (vs.30) and then the wheat are gathered and rewarded. This is contrary to the popular teaching that the righteous will be first "caught up."

This important parable warns us of the mixed character of the church in this gospel age. The practical value is to inspire us to be sure that we are good seed. We must be real disciples not pretenders or presumers.

IV Growth and Influence of the Kingdom: The parable of the mustard seed illustrates two characteristics of the kingdom. The first is its phenomenal growth. The mustard seed is very small

plant grows into a large bushy tree. From the unpromising 12 disciples PAGE 58 following Jesus in the obscurity of Galilee there has sprung up the kingdom that has grown all over the world. Like the parable of the tares, this parable also warns of the mixed character of the church in these days. Birds represent the evil one and his children, and here birds are said to find lodging in the wide spreading church. This is somewhat humorous, for every church has some strange birds in its branches. From sassy old crows to cuckoos. Proud peacocks and pretentious parrots and chattering cranes, etc. Every church has some!

Every woman in Jesus' audience understood the parable of the leaven. They used the unique characteristic of leaven to good advantage in their baking. Now Jesus said the kingdom is like leaven. The influence of the church would be like leaven, permeating and influencing the whole world. This is most certainly true in fact, for the gospel and its teaching have influenced laws and attitudes more than any other factor in the history of the world.

V Bought With a Price: While it is a valid truth that we ought to "sell all and follow" Jesus, as the rich young ruler was advised; that is not the truth which is emphasized in the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. Jesus underlines a different truth concerning the kingdom of God in these two parables. If we remember that the field is the world according to the Lord's interpretation, then this treasure is hidden in the world. The man again represents the Lord. Who can gainsay the assertion that God gave His all when He gave His Son a ransom to purchase redemption for humanity. It ought to encourage every believer to realize that God considers us a treasure worth purchasing at any cost. The parable of the pearl of great price has the same emphasis. The sea often represents humanity in the scriptures and so this pearl of great price, the church, is purchased by the very life of our Lord.

VI The Day of Separation: Though the church today still suffers from the infiltration of children of the wicked one, the day of separation is coming. The parable of the net emphasizes this aspect of the kingdom of God. The Gospel net has drawn all kinds of "fish" into the catch. Not all are good. There is a mixture. Like the birds in the Gospel tree and the tares in the midst of the wheat, there are bad fish caught in the

Gospel net along with the good fish. Just as the harvest at the end of the age will bring about the purging out and burning of the tares; so in this parable, the end of the Gospel age produces a sorting out and a casting away of the bad from among the good. "The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

VII Things New and Old: Every Christian will recognize in the interpretation of these parables' well known truths that have been understood and taught for many years. But as followers of Christ, we must also be ready for any new move of God which may develop. We must esteem highly the sound old doctrines of the church, and yet at the same time be open to new light which the Lord is sure to give. Let us expect great things from God.

NOTES: