



# **MATTHEW: CHAPTER BY CHAPTER**

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## INTRODUCTION

Matthew is the opening book of the New Testament, the first gospel written, and possibly the first New Testament book written (mid-40s AD). Academia in the 20th century saw a wide rejection that Matthew was the first gospel written, preferring to believe instead that Matthew borrowed heavily from Mark, Luke, and other (unknown) sources. However, the language and purpose of Matthew's account, along with his apostolic significance over Mark and Luke and his primarily Jewish audience, make that an unlikely scenario. Additionally, throughout the Early Church, Matthew was consistently placed first in the New Testament canon.

It seems obvious by looking at the flow of the Gospel that Matthew's primary goal in writing was to present Jesus as the Messiah, the "Anointed One" for whom the Jewish people had been waiting for 1,500 years. He was the promised King of the Jews. Beginning with Abraham, Matthew recounted much of Jewish history, quoted heavily from the Hebrew prophets, set the stage for the Church Age, and recorded detailed prophecy about the coming Tribulation and Messianic Kingdom. Matthew's gospel is the crucial bridge between the Old and New Testaments, probably the most important transition book in all of Scripture.

One significant point to note is that Matthew bookended the body of his Gospel with fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy. In the first three chapters, there are no fewer than six direct quotes or allusions to Messianic prophecies, and the last three chapters (concerning Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection) contain at least another half-dozen. No first-century Jew reading or hearing Matthew's work could escape his blatant declaration that Jesus was their long-awaited Deliverer.

## CHAPTER 1

Chapter one introduces Jesus from Joseph's perspective. The genealogy given in verses 1-17 traces Joseph's family tree from Abraham through David to show that Jesus was the rightful heir to the Messianic throne. However, Joseph was a descendant of Jeconiah, whom God had cursed so that he would never have an heir on the throne. Had Jesus been Joseph's biological son, he would have been unable to be the Messiah (Jeremiah 22:24-30). This created a tension in the story that only the Virgin Birth could resolve.

A point that is frequently brought up concerning this genealogy is the repeated mention of "**FOURTEEN GENERATIONS**" in verse 17. The significance is in the fact that the Hebrew letters, **דבד**, (*dvd*, "David"), represent the number "14."<sup>1</sup> By repeating this number, Matthew was blatantly invoking David by subtly insisting that Jesus was the promised heir of David's throne, though not through Joseph.

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<sup>1</sup> Each Hebrew letter also acts as a numeral, and these three letters together are 4+6+4 or 14.

Whereas Luke wrote Mary's story, Matthew recorded Joseph's experiences around Jesus' conception and birth. Although they both learned the truth by angelic messages, Joseph received specific commands in a series of dreams. He must have been upset and crushed when Mary returned to Nazareth approximately three months pregnant (Luke 1:42, 56), but he decided to grant her a private divorce (rather than having her executed, which was his right), since she apparently loved someone else (vs. 19). Instead, the angel commanded him to marry his pregnant fiancée immediately and raise Jesus as his own son. Curiously, Matthew never recorded a single word uttered by Joseph. This righteous man simply obeyed every command God gave him.

## CHAPTER 2

Chapter two opens with the first Gentile recognition of Jesus as Messiah. Somehow, using the stars as the language they would understand, God revealed to Eastern astrologers that a new Jewish king had been born. Since Daniel had Jeremiah's writings available to him in Persia (Daniel 9:2), it is possible that they had access to other Hebrew Scriptures as well, including Numbers 24:17: **"A STAR WILL MARCH FORTH OUT OF JACOB, AND A SCEPTER WILL RISE OUT OF ISRAEL."** If this newborn was to fulfill the ancient Hebrew prophecies of the coming Deliverer, they would naturally want to make a political ally by celebrating his birth with a grand procession. However, their reception was not what they expected (vs. 1-3). After pressing for further information from them, Herod attempted to kill Jesus, who was a threat to his own reign. Both the Magi and Joseph received direction by God in a series of dreams, instructing them how to save Jesus' life, and each time they obeyed him immediately.

Matthew was careful to note that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfilled an ancient prophecy, specifically Micah 5:2, which clearly points to his deity as the eternal God. In the rest of the chapter Matthew directly quoted or referred to Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. Matthew's not-always-literal application of Hebrew prophecy has caused trouble for many scholars, but Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum notes that Matthew followed the four-fold interpretation method of the rabbis of the day.<sup>2</sup> These are *Literal Prophecy Plus Literal Fulfillment* (vs. 5-6); *Literal Plus Typical* (vs. 15); *Literal Plus Application* (vs. 17-18); and *Summation* (vs. 23). Dr. Christopher Cone has also addressed the usage of Old Testament quotes in the New Testament by emphasizing the fact that fulfillment does not require a direct prophecy. In other words, a New Testament writer can interpret an Old Testament event or statement as foreshadowing a future situation without requiring it to be a

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "How the New Testament Quotes the Old Testament", <http://arielb.org/archives/794>.

formal Old Testament prophecy and without changing or ignoring the meaning of the original passage.<sup>3</sup>

The chapter ends with Jesus probably as a toddler or pre-school-aged child, back in Nazareth, where Luke wrote that he **“GREW AND BECAME STRONG, FILLED WITH WISDOM, AND THE FAVOR OF GOD WAS UPON HIM”** (Luke 2:40).

## CHAPTER 3

Chapter three skips approximately 28-30 years of Jesus' life, moving directly to the beginning of his ministry. The reason is that there was nothing in Jesus' early life that added value to Matthew's purpose of presenting Jesus as Messiah, including Jesus' first Temple visit as told by Luke. Matthew also did not find the need to introduce John the Baptist, since his readers would have likely still remembered him. However, to reinforce his point that Jesus was the anticipated Messiah, Matthew did identify John as the one Isaiah said would **“PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD”** (Isaiah 40:3). Matthew also used John's story to connect his writing to Malachi, the last of the ancient Hebrew prophets. Malachi ended with a promise that God would send his messenger before Messiah came (Malachi 3:1). This is further internal support that Matthew was the first New Testament book written and served as the bridge between the Old and New Testaments.

Strictly speaking, John the Baptist was the last of the Hebrew prophets, and in the fashion of his predecessors, he excoriated the religious leaders for being false shepherds who led the people away from God instead of toward him (vs. 7-12; see Ezekiel 34). He preached of the coming Messiah and his judgment, offering the nation a chance to repent. Water baptism was the method by which they publicly identified with John's message and displayed their heart change.

What John did not expect is that Jesus would ask to be baptized himself. After a brief discussion in which John nearly refused, he finally did baptize Jesus. At this moment John recalled that God the Father spoke his approval of Jesus (vs. 16-17). It seems this was audible only to Jesus and John (see John 1:32-34).

In these first three chapters, Matthew offered six witnesses to Jesus as Messiah: the Hebrew prophets, angels, Herod and his advisors, the Magi, John the Baptizer, and the full Trinity.

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<sup>3</sup> For further examples and explanation, see Christopher Cone, "Foreshadowing and Fulfillment: The New Testament Use of the Old Testament in John", <http://www.drcone.com/2016/09/16/foreshadowing-fulfillment-new-testament-use-old-testament-john>.

## CHAPTER 4

Chapter four introduces Matthew's final external witness to Jesus' true identity: Satan. Immediately after his baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tested and tempted by Satan (vs. 1). Although Matthew focuses on only three temptations, Luke noted that the temptation period lasted for the entire 40 days, concluded by the "big three" (Luke 4:1-2). The writer of Hebrews said that Jesus **"HAD TO BE MADE LIKE HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN EVERY RESPECT,"** including temptation, **"SO THAT HE COULD BECOME A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST"** (Hebrews 2:17-18). Successfully passing this 40-day, nothing-held-back barrage convincingly proved Jesus to be the sinless Son of God.

While Satan watched for a more opportune time to attack Jesus again (Luke 4:13), Jesus began to present himself and his kingdom to the public in Galilee, headquartering his ministry in Capernaum (vs. 13). His message was essentially the same as John's: **"REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NEAR"** (vs. 17), a general call for people to repent of their sins and follow him, recognizing him as their Messiah. The proof of his message and offer included the healings and miracles that Isaiah said Messiah would do in his Kingdom (Isaiah 61:1-3; see Luke 4:16-30).

This was neither the first nor the final call Jesus made to Peter, Andrew, James, and John (vs. 18-22), nor was it their commissioning as apostles. A comparison with the other gospels indicates that he called and they followed him temporarily multiple times before he commissioned them full-time to be his apostles.

## CHAPTER 5

Chapters five through seven contain the first of five major discourses or lengthy speeches that Matthew recorded. Jesus delivered this address, traditionally called "the Sermon on the Mount," to hundreds or thousands of early "disciples," people who had followed him to learn more about him and his Kingdom.

Chapter five focuses on the requirements necessary to gain entrance into the Kingdom and the Kingdom law-code. Jesus was clear that entry into his Kingdom was based solely on personal righteousness (5:3-12, 20). Simply put, the Kingdom will not be a place where sinners are comfortable, and those who choose to live in sin will suffer the consequences for it.

It is important to clarify that, although there are some principles that apply to the Church, this teaching was not directed to the Church but to Israel (specifically) and all Kingdom residents (generally). The Church will be glorified before entering the Kingdom to reign alongside Christ (Revelation 20:6), so we will not be subject to this law code.

In the rest of the chapter Jesus provided a series of examples of Kingdom law in practice. Because God's perfect standard cannot change, Kingdom law often sounds like the Mosaic Law. A major difference in the Kingdom, however, is that Jesus will judge based on a person's heart as well as on actions. Just as sinners will not enter the Kingdom, sin will not be tolerated in his Kingdom. Jesus summarized this section by saying, "Just be perfect like God" (5:48).

## **CHAPTER 6**

Chapter six, the second section of the Sermon on the Mount, focuses on the personal spiritual life of Kingdom citizens. Jesus addressed the proper heart attitude that he required to be behind giving alms to the poor, private prayer, and fasting (vs. 1-18). He taught that the wrong attitude toward wealth or money was the single greatest enemy of a person's allegiance to God (vs. 19-24). The antidote to relying on personal wealth in the face of need was to focus on God and his provision.

In one of the most important sections with application to the Church as well, Jesus used nature as his example to show that God is able and willing to take care of those who are his. Because of this we are to not worry about anything. Paul taught this frequently to Christians as well. The proper attitude in Jesus' kingdom is to prioritize the Kingdom (God's work is to be first) and let God take care of the details (vs. 25-34).

## **CHAPTER 7**

Chapter seven, part three of the Sermon on the Mount, focuses on Kingdom citizens' personal interaction and ministry. In verses 1-6, the infamous "judge not" passage, Jesus taught that one's judgment of another's personal righteousness is to be withheld in fear that God will judge as harshly. This is obviously not a Church-age truth, as God's judgment of believers is based solely on the cross. People frequently use the "measure" in Luke 6:38 to refer to financial reward for giving. The context there and in Matthew 7 proves this to be bad exegesis. It refers to giving and receiving judgment, not financial blessings.

Jesus again emphasized God's provision as a natural result of his goodness, kindness, and love for his people, as any good father does for his children (vs. 7-12). Verses 13-14 are often mistaken for a Church-age salvation message. However, the context is about one's personal righteousness, so they refer to entering the Kingdom rather than coming to the cross. In the Kingdom, there will still be false prophets; however, they will be immediately evident, not by their prophecies but by their lack of righteousness (vs. 15-20).

Lest his audience think, based on all of Jesus' teaching about personal righteousness, that they could be "good enough" on their own to enter the Kingdom, Jesus insisted that



good deeds were not the same as righteousness. Their righteousness would never exceed **“THAT OF THE EXPERTS IN THE LAW AND THE PHARISEES”** (5:20). Entrance into the Kingdom still requires personal knowledge of the Son (7:21-23), which will be evidenced by personal righteousness and good deeds. The Olivet Discourse reflects this same truth in more detail (Matthew 25:31-46).

## CHAPTER 8

Chapters eight and nine contain a series of examples of the many miracles and teachings to which Matthew had started to allude at the end of chapter four. Although Israel had seen two previous periods of miracles in their history (Moses/Joshua and Elijah/Elisha), what they experienced during Jesus’ early ministry was unprecedented. Both Matthew 12:15 and Luke 6:19 state that, regardless of how many people were there, Jesus **“HEALED THEM ALL.”** It is likely that a person could not walk anywhere in Galilee or Jerusalem without encountering a person who had been healed. There may not have been even one family which did not have a personal experience with Jesus’ power.

In chapter eight Jesus displayed his power over leprosy, demons, and the weather. Though Jesus was sent first to the Jews, his interaction with a humble Gentile army commander showed that Jesus was fulfilling the part of the Abrahamic Covenant that **“ALL OF THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH”** would be blessed, not just the Jews (Genesis 12:3). In verse 17, Matthew quoted Isaiah to show that Jesus’ healing miracles proved his Messiahship. The little bit of teaching that Matthew recorded in this chapter was that Jesus demanded total allegiance and true humility from those who wanted to follow him.

## CHAPTER 9

Chapter nine continues with more samples of Jesus’ miracles and his first minor run-in with the local Pharisees (vs. 1-8). It was one thing to cleanse a man from leprosy (8:3); it was a different matter to make a paralytic move. However, rather than healing him right away, Jesus forgave his sins, claiming the ability to do something that only God could do. As was true with all his miracles, the healing was done to prove his claim. It was at this point that the Pharisees began to realize that Jesus thought he was more than just another rabbi, and they began their opposition against him.

Throughout the chapter, Matthew also recorded Jesus’ ability to raise the dead, heal long-term internal diseases, restore the blind and mute, and exercise more authority over demons. The more he did, the more the opposition rose against him (vs. 11, 24, 34).

It was during this time that Jesus came to Matthew’s workplace to call Matthew to follow him (vs. 9). The chapter concludes with Jesus’ statement that he needed more workers to continue and expand his ministry, the main message of which was still **“THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM”** (vs. 35-38).

## CHAPTER 10

Chapter ten opens with Jesus' initial solution to the ministry needs he expressed at the end of chapter nine and is presented as the second of the five major discourses in Matthew. Out of his huge group of followers, Jesus chose only twelve to be his official **"APOSTLES,"** those authorized to speak and act on his behalf. To these Twelve he gave the temporary and limited ability to work some of the same miracles that Jesus did and commissioned them to preach the gospel of the Kingdom, including the command to repent and follow Jesus.

This chapter is often mistakenly applied to the Church, especially by those who believe in the continuation of signs and wonders (vs. 8) and by those who lean toward a social gospel (vs. 40-42).<sup>4</sup> However, there are three points they ignore that clarify the interpretation. First, Matthew was clear that these powers were granted only to the Twelve. The **"TWELVE"** are mentioned specifically three times in 10:1-5 and again in 11:1. Nowhere in the Church epistles are these powers given, commanded, or instructed. On the contrary, 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:3-4 more than imply that they were limited to the apostles, even after the beginning of the Church. Second, this temporary ministry was clearly limited to only the Jewish people (vs. 5-6), whereas the Church mission is to **"MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS"** (28:19). Third, the message they preached was the gospel of the Kingdom (vs. 7), not the gospel of salvation. Modern liberal theology (including the Covenant and Replacement forms) has resurrected the gospel of the Kingdom, making the cross simply a means to the end. Sadly, even evangelicals tend to preach a "gospel of heaven," making heaven, rather than Christ, the goal. Paul, on the other hand, preached only **"THE MESSAGE ABOUT THE CROSS...[AND] ABOUT A CRUCIFIED CHRIST...[TO] BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS"** (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24).

Thus, there are several passages throughout this chapter which cause contention between churches and denominations that could be eliminated with a proper understanding of the context. Some of these will have future fulfillment during the Tribulation, when the gospel of the kingdom is preached again (Matthew 24:14).

## CHAPTER 11

Chapter eleven records that John the Baptizer expressed surprise, concern, and possibly even doubt when he was imprisoned by Herod and sentenced to death (vs. 2-3). Naturally, he fully expected to see Jesus establish his Kingdom, but his question of Jesus' identity proved his misunderstanding of Jesus' whole ministry. Jesus' answer was neither scolding nor ridiculing. Instead, he told John to trust the promises God made in the

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<sup>4</sup> "Social gospel" is a term used to describe charitable ministry such as feeding the hungry, helping the poor, etc. that does not include a call to repentance for sin or the presentation of Jesus' death and resurrection for salvation. It is based in the assumption that our goal is to relieve needs rather than preach the gospel.

Scriptures. The prophets said that Messiah would do certain things which Jesus did (vs. 4-6).

Additionally, Jesus used the opportunity to tell the crowd his estimation of John, that he was the “Elijah” that Malachi foresaw (vs. 7-19; Malachi 3:1). By this, Jesus once again clearly identified himself as that Messiah whom “Elijah” would announce. This doubled as a denouncement of the religious leaders who rejected John and his message (vs. 16-19), further widening the gap between Jesus and the religious establishment.

At this time Jesus offered his first public condemnation of those who did not accept him. In verse 20 it is important to note that he **“BEGAN TO CRITICIZE OPENLY.”** Rather than being just a one-time statement to the immediate crowd, as he traveled throughout Galilee, Jesus began to couple his gospel of the kingdom with harsh condemnation toward his detractors. His comparison of unbelieving Israel to Tyre and Sidon (vs. 21), Hades (vs. 23), and Sodom (vs. 24) are the words of a fiery evangelist who recognized that the religious and political machine against him was just starting up. Yet, at the same time, he continued to offer his hand out to all who would humble themselves to receive it (vs. 28-30).

## CHAPTER 12

Chapter twelve is truly the climax of Matthew’s narrative, the showdown between rebellious Israel and her Messiah. In response to the Pharisees’ accusations that Jesus and his disciples had violated the Mosaic Law by “harvesting” on the Sabbath, Jesus asserted his deity again with four bold claims. First, Jesus is greater than the Temple. This necessarily includes the entire Mosaic Law code, sacrificial system, the priests, and the interpreters and enforcers of the Law (12:6). This means that he made the Law and cannot possibly break it. Second, Jesus is greater than the Sabbath, because he is the lord over it (12:8). This means that he has full rights to use the Sabbath however he wants. Third, Jesus is greater than the prophet Jonah (vs. 41). There was no question in their minds that Jonah was a true prophet. As with all the prophets, only God was greater than they were. Fourth, Jesus is greater than Israel’s greatest king, Solomon (12:42).<sup>5</sup> This means that he has full ruling rights over all of Israel. In Jewish estimation, nothing was greater than these things, yet Jesus claimed complete superiority over them all. Interestingly, one can see a shadow of Jesus’ three roles in these claims. He is Priest over the Temple; he is Prophet, speaking God’s truth about the Sabbath and the condemnation of the religious leaders; and he is the promised King of David’s dynasty. Indeed, Matthew explained, Jesus was the Chosen Servant of Jehovah prophesied by Isaiah (vs. 17-21; Isaiah 42:1-4) who would bring justice and victory to both Israel and the Gentiles.

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<sup>5</sup> Spiritually speaking, David was a much greater king than Solomon, but in the context, Jesus was referring to Solomon’s wealth and influence, including the fact that he was the one who built the Temple.

In response to his blatant claims of deity, the local Pharisees declared Jesus to be the pawn of Satan, acting under his power rather than that of the Holy Spirit (vs. 24). Jesus declared that they were not just being illogical or irrational (vs. 25-30), but rather they had committed a sin against the Holy Spirit that was unforgiveable (vs. 31-32). He noted that this attitude solidified their rejection of him as their Messiah, and they would be judged appropriately (vs. 33-37). Since Jesus had focused much of his ministry thus far in Galilee, this local rejection was representative of the rejection by the entire nation, which would come soon.

In the final dozen verses of the chapter Jesus made his first (although subtle) prophecy of his own death. Comparing himself to Jonah in the great fish, Jesus claimed that he would **"BE IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH"** (vs. 40). Some commentators have used this to prove that Jonah was dead while in the fish, although that is unlikely but debatable. In Jesus' condemnation on unbelieving Israel (vs. 43-45), he likened that generation to a person who was cleansed from demonic power, only to have the demon return even stronger. Finally, in verses 46-50, Jesus began to distance himself even from those in his family who would have quieted him. As he prepared to head toward Jerusalem, the demands of his followers increased as well.

## CHAPTER 13

Chapter thirteen contains the first of two drastic changes to Jesus' teaching ministry. First, quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 as his foundation (vs. 13-15, 34-35), following his rejection and for the remainder of his ministry, Jesus did all his public teaching only in parables. According to Isaiah and Jesus, these parables had two purposes. For unbelievers, they would hide new truths so as to not heap further judgment upon those who refused to believe, which was in reality a wonderful act of grace. For believers, the parables would reveal new truths about the Kingdom, including its postponement into the unspecified future.

Each of the parables in chapter 13 is related to the **"KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."** Although there is often confusion between "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God," the former was used only by Matthew, and it always referred to the Messianic Kingdom, Heaven's rule on earth. Those who attempt to apply these parables to the Church must deal with the explanation in vs. 36-43, where the end of the kingdom of heaven is described in terms vastly different than the Rapture of the Church.

The second change in Jesus' teaching was that, beginning in chapter thirteen, neither Jesus nor the apostles announced again that the kingdom was at hand. That offer was rescinded and replaced with the command to drop everything and follow Jesus. The rejection that began with the religious leadership in Capernaum (a central city in Galilee)

began to spread, overtaking public opinion even in the small villages like Nazareth, Jesus' hometown (vs. 53-58).

## **CHAPTER 14**

Chapter fourteen contains a wonderful demonstration of God's grace toward those who were still undecided about Jesus. As Jesus had grown in popularity, Herod began to take notice (vs. 1-2). Although Matthew had mentioned John's imprisonment in chapter 11, he had not mentioned the outcome until this point, when he gave the detail of how Herod's wife connived to have John murdered (vs. 3-12). Superstitiously, Herod thought that Jesus was John who had been resurrected and was haunting him. Not wanting a political run-in yet, Jesus moved away from Herod, toward the mountains, to focus on training his apostles. Still, people continued to follow him.

It is amazing that, even though the religious opinion had started to shift against him, many of the common people still wanted to hear and see more. (This is likely an indication of how weak the Pharisees' influence outside of the cities was). Jesus continued to show his compassion for the common people of Israel in his miracle of feeding a crowd of more than 10,000 people (vs. 13-21). Other than the resurrection itself, this is the only miracle Jesus did that was recorded in all four Gospels (Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13).

After this great miracle and the resulting attempt by the crowd to make him their king right then (see John 6:15), Jesus needed to spend time alone in prayer (vs. 23), so he sent the people and the apostles away. During the night, a storm came over the Sea of Galilee that even the experienced fishermen could not handle. Jesus used this as an opportunity to prove his power to the Twelve again by easily walking through the torrential storm on top of the lake. In a great statement of faith, Peter asked for the power to do the same thing, which Jesus granted (vs. 28-29). Only when he began to fear the sea rather than focus on the Savior did Peter begin to sink. Jesus rescued him, and, upon entering the boat, he calmed the storm immediately, without even saying a word (vs. 32).

## **CHAPTER 15**

Chapter fifteen records Jesus' first major run-in with Pharisees from Jerusalem. To this point, his opposition was primarily localized to the Pharisees from Galilee. However, he had apparently become infamous enough in their circles that the "big shots" from Jerusalem made their way to Galilee to investigate for themselves. Their first encounter with him was an argument over a ceremonial hand-washing ritual that was not part of the original law code (vs. 1-9). In his reply, Jesus accused them of twisting the law for their own purposes, disobeying the clear commands while holding others to things that God never said. This made them hypocrites, the very issue Isaiah, the great prophet they claimed to follow, had denounced 700 years earlier. Jesus used this interaction to teach

the crowd that the ceremonial rituals never made someone truly clean or unclean. Rather it was the person's heart that was defiled, something ritual could never correct (vs. 10-20).<sup>6</sup>

After this encounter, Jesus spent the rest of the chapter in Gentile territory (vs. 21). Not only did this put him outside of the jurisdiction of the Pharisees (since it was not yet his time to be arrested and killed), this also impressed on the apostles that Gentile ministry would continue to grow, even as Israel continued to reject him. First, he conversed with a Canaanite woman. This was scandalous because of her gender and ethnicity (see also John 4:9, 7). She had obviously heard of his miracles and healings and wanted a demon cast out of her daughter (vs. 22). Addressing him as "Son of David" revealed her belief that he was the promised Messiah, even though she was not even Jewish. After a short dialogue (probably for the sake of the apostles), Jesus commented on the woman's great faith and healed her daughter. Like the centurion of chapter eight, her humility showed that her faith was genuine.

The second part of this ministry outside of Israel included a great number of healings (vs. 29-31). Matthew's comment that "**THEY PRAISED THE GOD OF ISRAEL**" points to the fact that they were Gentiles. Similar to the event in chapter fourteen, the crowd would not leave him, and his compassion for them included their stomachs. As before, Jesus told the apostles to get food for the people (vs. 33). Did this not feel like *déjà vu*? Should they not have responded immediately by asking someone for a small lunch to bring to Jesus, instead of him having to repeat the whole scenario over again?

Occasionally it is suggested that this was just a repeat of the previous miracle when he fed 5,000. However, this simply cannot be the case as there are at least six differences recorded. First, the crowd and location were Gentile, not Jewish. Second, the number of men was 4,000 not 5,000. Third, the starting amount was "**SEVEN [LOAVES] AND A FEW SMALL FISH**" (vs. 34) not "**FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH**" (14:17). Fourth, the leftovers filled "**SEVEN BASKETS**" (vs. 37) not "**TWELVE BASKETS**" (14:20). Fifth, both Matthew and Mark used the exact same words for "**BASKET**" in their accounts, but the words describing the two accounts are different. Sixth, after the event, Jesus and the apostles all got into the boat and left at the same time, which did not happen after the previous miracle. If all that is not enough, Jesus himself referred to them as distinct events (16:9-10).

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to remember that, although Jesus often did not follow the Pharisees' traditions, he never violated the actual Law given by God, which would have been sin.

## CHAPTER 16

Chapter sixteen marks a significant shift in Matthew's writing. To this point, Matthew has been careful to support his presentation of Jesus as Messiah with a barrage of quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. However, for the next five chapters (chapters sixteen through twenty), there is not a Messianic quote to be found. Instead, we find Jesus preparing his apostles for the next phase of ministry that would come shortly. Significantly, the quotations start again in chapter 21, when Jesus presented himself to Jerusalem as her King, followed by his death and resurrection.

Returning to Jewish territory after feeding more than four thousand Gentiles, Jesus was once again accosted by the religious leaders. Although he had already said he would give no more signs until his resurrection (12:39-40), they continued to ask for a sign proving his authority from heaven (vs. 1). Jesus replied that they could make weather predictions based on the color of the sky but still refused to believe what he had already shown them. He then reiterated his policy of no signs for them (vs. 2-4).

In verses 5-12, Jesus used the examples of his feeding five and four thousand to show that he was unconcerned about physical food compared with spiritual malnourishment. He warned his disciples about the **"LEAVEN"** that the Pharisees and Sadducees laced in their teaching and questions. Their "leaven" was false teaching which led people away from the Messiah rather than toward him.

This interaction set up Jesus to ask the most important question of all time: *Who is Jesus?* When he posed this to the apostles, they responded first with the general response to Jesus. He was obviously a great prophet, maybe John the Baptist (like Herod thought), Elijah (who was promised to come), or Jeremiah (vs. 13-15). However, when he asked for their own understanding, Peter responded with the famous line: **"YOU ARE THE CHRIST [MESSIAH], THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD"** (vs. 16). Jesus noted that this realization cannot come without enlightenment from God himself (vs. 17). This continues to be the question that everything hinges on.

It was at this moment that Jesus made his first mention of the Church. In verse 18 Jesus gave five hints about this yet-unknown entity. First, it was still future (**"I WILL BUILD"**). This means that it could not be the same as Israel, which already existed. Second, it would be his (**"MY CHURCH"**). This is different than Israel being called Jehovah's people throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Third, it would be a congregation, the meaning of "church." This means that the Church is a group of people, distinct from those who are not included. Fourth, the Church would be built on Christ himself, the referent of **"THIS ROCK."** This is clarified by Peter in 1 Peter 2:8 and Paul in Ephesians 2:20. Fifth, the Church will never die. Although members of the Church would die throughout the centuries, **"THE GATES OF HADES"** (the grave) will never cause her to go extinct. Physical death does no harm to Jesus' congregation.

The chapter ends with Jesus' first major prophecy of his death and resurrection and the ramifications of what that means to someone who would choose to truly follow him. Although it was difficult for them to understand (vs. 22), the disciples would come to learn the true meaning of following Jesus, when he was no longer admired by the crowds. There would be similarities between following him and being despised by the world ("**TAKE UP HIS CROSS**"). Yet the benefits of following Jesus are far beyond what this world could ever offer (vs. 26-27).

## **CHAPTER 17**

Chapter seventeen records one of the greatest events that could happen to a person. In verses 1-8 Jesus allowed Peter, James, and John to see him in his full glory. They were, naturally, overwhelmed. Additionally, being able to see heroes they had only heard about, Moses and Elijah, must have been an unspeakable honor. In their writings, both Peter and John referred to the Transfiguration as an actual event that they witnessed (see 2 Peter 1:16-18 and John 1:14). It seems that this was to help solidify in their minds who Jesus was, since his teaching and ministry were about to change and as he began to talk about his death. These two would end up being the most influential of the Twelve once the Church began (Galatians 1:18; 2:9; Acts 4:1-22; 8:14-17; Revelation 1:9-11).

While those three were on the mountain, the other nine apostles attempted to cast a demon out of a man's son but were unable to do it (vs. 16). It seems that they had relied on their own ability to do this rather than God's power, which they had been given temporarily in chapter ten (vs. 20). Out of compassion for the man and son, Jesus cast out the demon immediately.

In verses 22-23, Matthew recorded a second prophecy of Jesus' death and resurrection. Likely, this was not only the second time Jesus said it, because 16:21 states that "**HE BEGAN**" to tell his disciples about it, indicating that this could have been a regular discussion topic.

The final verses (24-27) record another brief encounter between the religious leaders and Jesus; this time they used the unwitting Peter as their proxy. Jesus deftly told Peter that, although he was not subject to their laws by nature, he voluntarily subjected himself during his temporary earthly ministry. This is a great example of the balanced perspective Christians should have of our obligation to both God and the State.

## **CHAPTER 18**

Chapter eighteen divides naturally into two sections, each containing two parts. In the first section (vs. 1-14), Jesus gave another teaching on the kingdom of heaven. In response to the apostles' question, Jesus insisted that the kingdom would be



characterized by humility and innocence (vs. 3-5) rather than arrogance and sin (vs. 6-9). The thought of cutting off an arm or gouging out an eye was a hyperbolic way to show that anything that prohibits a person from being righteous should be eradicated from our lives. Because the gospel of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection was not yet preached at this point, this illustration should not be used as support to teach that our works will determine our destiny.

Verses 10-14 seem to be a shorter version of the full parable found in Luke 15, when Jesus told of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Since children were considered part of the Israelite covenant people of God (due to Old Testament circumcision and sacrifice), this was a warning again regarding the Pharisees and Sadducees whose teaching was leading people away from Jesus rather than toward him.

The second section (vs. 15-35) contains a teaching on forgiveness and relational restoration. In his second mention of the coming Church (vs. 15-22), Jesus taught that repentance, forgiveness, and restoration is to be the purpose of Christian discipline. Multiple chances are to be offered an erring brother, rather than the three that the rabbis required or even the seven that Peter "graciously" offered (vs. 21). Jesus assured the apostles that, whether the result was discipline or restoration, doing it God's way carried God's authority (vs. 18-20). The common teaching that these verses refer to prayer meetings and the like is wrong and has no foundation in the context.

Jesus applied his desire for grace and forgiveness to business and personal relationships outside the Church as well in verses 23-35. Although the slave was forgiven an enormous amount by his master (vs. 27; roughly \$3.5 billion at today's minimum wage), he refused to write off a \$6,000 debt owed him by a co-worker (vs. 30). Naturally, the master was enraged at the disparity and took back his pardon (vs. 34). Jesus' statement in verse 35 should not be taken as how God deals with Christians today. His Jewish audience had been granted much by God, but they were brutal toward each other. Jesus said that they could not expect God's favor when they withheld it themselves. Notice that Jesus called God "my heavenly Father" not "your heavenly Father."

## **CHAPTER 19**

Chapter nineteen contains two main parts, both of which are frequently misunderstood and misapplied. In the first section (vs. 1-12) Jesus gave a direct answer to a direct question about marriage and divorce. Since Paul added to this later (see 1 Corinthians 7), it is essential that we not think this to be the full biblical doctrine on the topic, as some often do. However, in his statement, Jesus did enforce at least three significant principles. First, God created gender (vs. 4). Second, God instituted marriage (vs. 5-6). Third, divorce is a concession, allowed by God on his terms, but not required or preferred (vs. 8-9). Fourth, marriage is to be done God's way or not at all (vs. 11-12).

The second major section is the account of Jesus' interaction with the rich young man and his subsequent teaching about it (vs. 16-30). The man approached Jesus wondering what he still had to do to enter the kingdom. When Jesus pressed him about his obedience to the law (the standard for God's blessing in the Old Testament and the Sermon on the Mount), he was confident in his personal righteousness, but he somehow knew he needed something more (vs. 20).

Jesus' response that he should sell his possessions and give them to the poor has been misconstrued by many who think this applies to Christians. They believe that we should not have many possessions and that not selling what we have and giving it away, or at least not making a habit of supporting the poor, puts us in jeopardy of discipline or even loss of salvation. Obviously, this could not be Jesus' meaning, as he was not talking with a Christian. It also misses the most important part of his command to the young man: **"FOLLOW ME"** (vs. 21). It was his heart, an unwillingness to follow Jesus at possible financial loss, not his money that was at issue.

Even the disciples missed this point. Picking up on the theme that allegiance to God and money is mutually exclusive (6:24), Jesus taught that wealth can keep a person from following him. Yet, again, wealth itself is not the culprit. Jesus and Paul both said that wealth can be used for eternal purposes (vs. 21) and earthly enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

## CHAPTER 20

Chapter twenty continues Jesus' teaching from chapter nineteen. It was common then, as it is now, to believe that wealth was proof of God's favor. Not only did Jesus refute that concept, in his parable of the vineyard workers, he insisted that God was free to reward his workers as he saw fit rather than according to a human concept of "fairness." This story is often taught to mean that no matter when a person believes in Christ, all believers will receive full salvation. While that is certainly true, given the context and audience, a better interpretation is that God **"WILL GIVE...WHATEVER IS RIGHT"** (vs. 4) to all his servants and that he alone has the right to make that determination (vs. 14-15). Inheritance in the kingdom is not necessarily based on time in the field.

As he made his final approach to Jerusalem, Jesus gave his apostles one more clear statement on his impending death and resurrection (vs. 17-19). That they still did not get it is clearly demonstrated by the argument that broke out in verses 20-28. Apparently, they were so enthralled with Jesus' promise that they would rule in the kingdom (19:28) that they were already making plans for that. It can be proven that James and John were probably Jesus' cousins, so it seems they hoped their familial connection would gain them a greater inheritance (vs. 20-21), specifically contradicting what Jesus had just

taught in the parable. Naturally, this upset the others, leading to Jesus' sternest warning to them yet, that his ministry was one of serving not being served (vs. 28).

In his final recorded act before entering Jerusalem, Matthew wrote that Jesus healed two blind men outside of Jericho (vs. 29-34). The significance of this event is less in the healing (he had healed many blind people before this) and more in their identification of Jesus as the **"SON OF DAVID,"** a clear reference to his Messiahship. The one who was about to be rejected by those who claimed to be enlightened was wholly accepted by those who were blind.

## CHAPTER 21

Chapter twenty-one introduces the final major section of Matthew. As noted in chapter sixteen, Messianic references in the Hebrew Scriptures return in full force as Jesus offered himself formally as Israel's Messiah and King.

A comparison of the four gospel accounts shows that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem took place on Monday. He spent Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday teaching in the Temple but spending the night outside of the jurisdiction of the religious leaders. Other than the entry itself, not much is recorded about what he did on Monday. Contrary to most common opinion, it was a small group of Jesus' followers, not the large Jerusalem and Temple crowds, who shouted, **"HOSANNA!"** (vs. 9).

On Tuesday morning, Jesus cursed a fig tree on his way into Jerusalem. Mark 11 notes that this occurred on the morning before Jesus cleansed the Temple, and the disciples noticed it the following morning (Wednesday) on the way back into Jerusalem. There is sometimes confusion regarding when Jesus cleansed the Temple. He actually did this twice – once at the beginning of his ministry, when he was still unknown (John 2:12-22), and once during Passion Week.

Like a lamb being offered as a sacrifice needed to be examined for purity, Jesus' official presentation of himself in Jerusalem was met with examination by the religious leaders. Multiple times Jesus' authority and teaching were questioned (vs. 23); each time he proved himself to be exactly who he claimed to be.

Jesus responded to this questioning with three parables. The first (vs. 28-32) told of two sons given a job by their father. One outright refused but later repented and obeyed; the other promised to obey but never did. Jesus condemned the religious leaders for saying that they obeyed God but did not, while he commended the **"SINNERS"** who had broken God's law but repented in response to Messiah.

The second parable (vs. 33-44) showed a landowner who leased his vineyard to some tenants then left. When he sent servants to collect his rent, the tenants beat and killed them. He finally sent his own son with the same result. The servants represented the Hebrew prophets who were killed for speaking God's truth; the Son, of course, was Jesus, who was killed for the same reason. Jesus' point was that the owner would certainly come in judgment upon the wicked tenants, including taking away their rights to the land, symbolizing the kingdom. The religious leaders clearly understood these parables and began looking for an opportunity to arrest Jesus (vs. 45-46).

## CHAPTER 22

Chapter twenty-two contains the third parable, the wedding banquet (vs. 1-14). Jesus compared the kingdom to a wedding banquet given by a king in honor of his son. However, the special guests the king invited refused the invitation due to their apathy (vs. 5). Like the tenants in the second parable (21:33-41), some of the invited guests even killed the king's servants. In this case, the king acted immediately, executing the ungrateful invitees and inviting every other person. Many who did not receive an initial invitation attended and enjoyed the banquet. In an interesting twist, Jesus included a guest who showed up without the proper attire, meaning he sneaked in rather than coming through the accepted entrance. This one was ejected from the banquet, representing all who try to come to God in ways other than through Jesus (John 14:6).

In response to these parables, the Pharisees (vs. 15-22, 34-40) and Sadducees (vs. 23-33) attempted to trick and trap Jesus in his own words (vs. 15) with three distinct attacks. First, the Pharisees used politics against him. If he supported paying the Roman tax, the masses would reject him as the Messiah sent to overthrow the Roman occupation. If he rejected the tax, Rome would certainly view him as inciting rebellion. He responded that they should keep things in proper priority, both to God and government.

Second, the Sadducees used a hypothetical situation against him. Due to a custom called "levirate marriage," a man could marry his widowed sister-in-law if she had not born the man's brother a son to continue his family name. In their hypothetical scenario, a woman did not bear a son for seven brothers, so in the resurrection, whose wife would she be? There are a lot of details we could get into with this, but Jesus cut to the center. They, he claimed, did not understand Scripture at all, so he simply told them that relationships in heaven will not match those in this life. Additionally, because they did not believe in the resurrection at all, Jesus proved from the Torah (the only part of the Bible they accepted) that God taught the resurrection by his use of the present tense verb when referring to dead people – "I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM," though he was long dead.

Third, the Pharisees used theological nuance against him. Because they believed in the sacredness of the whole law (613 commandments), they asked Jesus to pick the greatest

one, meaning that the others would be less important. Again, his response was brilliant, proving their nearsightedness and narrow-mindedness. "Love God with your entire being" and "love your neighbor as yourself" summarize everything else in the law and the prophets. Not only are these individual commandments (like they asked), they are summary commands as well.

Following this barrage against him, Jesus responded with a short "stumper" of his own. The religious leaders knew that Messiah was to be the son of David (vs. 42), but they missed that he would be more than that. Jesus asked how, then, the great King David could call Messiah his "Lord" if he were just his son. They had no answer, and that stopped the public examination of the Lamb of God (vs. 46).

## CHAPTER 23

Chapter twenty-three contains Jesus' final public statement, immediately following the debates of chapters 21 and 22. This statement came in three parts. The first was a warning directed to the crowds against the teachings of **"THE EXPERTS IN THE LAW AND THE PHARISEES"** (vs. 2). The crowd had just witnessed their examination of Jesus and his teaching and observed how he responded and shut down the religious leaders. Jesus warned them that these false shepherds loved their positions but led people away from God rather than toward him (vs. 2-12).

The second part of Jesus' statement was directed toward the religious leaders themselves, who had just heard Jesus tell people to not follow them. In this section Jesus pronounced seven **"WOES"** on these religious leaders<sup>7</sup>, because they had missed the Messiah and led people away from him. He excoriated them for keeping people out of the kingdom (vs. 13, 15) and twisting the Scriptures for their own gain (vs. 16-22), for focusing on the letter of the law but not the spirit (vs. 23-24) and putting on religious pretensions which were nothing but hypocrisy (vs. 25-28). Finally, he charged them with the murder of the saints and prophets (vs. 29-36). Even though they did not "pull the trigger" themselves, their attitudes and actions were the same as those who committed the murders. Additionally, Jesus foretold that they would indeed become murderers when they would slay his yet-to-come prophets (including the apostles).

The third part of his final public statement was both a cry and a prophecy (vs. 37-39). As Jesus wept over the holy city which had rejected him and would kill him in less than 48 hours, he prophesied that he would not return until Israel turned back to him and recognized him for who he truly is. This will finally happen at the end of the Tribulation, when Satan's plan to wipe out the Jewish nation will be proven impossible.

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<sup>7</sup> Most Greek manuscripts, including the most significant ones, do not include verse 14, which some Bibles include as an eighth "woe".

## CHAPTER 24

Chapters twenty-four and twenty-five contain the last of Jesus' major teachings, called the Olivet Discourse. As Jesus and the apostles left Jerusalem on Wednesday evening, the men were pointing out how nicely the Temple remodel was coming along. Almost in passing, Jesus mentioned that the entire structure would be destroyed (vs. 1-2). This, naturally, lead to the apostles' questions: *When will this happen and how will we know it's time?* (vs. 3) In chapter 24, Jesus ignored their first question, when, but gave some details on the signs of his return.

First, they must know that many things **"MUST HAPPEN"** that will cause alarm but are not necessarily signs of his coming. These include an increase in natural disasters, regional and world wars, and false Messiahs (vs. 5-8) – things every generation has noticed since then. There will also be an increase in persecution against those who follow Jesus (vs. 9-14). While we can see these things happening even today, this will grow much worse in the end times, and Jesus said that these are not yet the signs of his return.

However, Jesus then gave a series of specific signs people in that day can watch for. The first sign will be **"THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"** that Daniel had prophesied (vs. 15; Daniel 9:27).<sup>8</sup> Jesus warned the Jews to literally run for their lives when this happens (vs. 16-21), because this will set the stage for a series of persecutions and catastrophic events (vs. 22-28). The second major sign, occurring just before Jesus' return, will be the darkening of the celestial bodies (vs. 29), as prophesied by Isaiah and Joel. The third sign will be **"THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN"** (vs. 30). Whether this is a symbol or Jesus himself, the next thing the survivors will see will be **"THE SON OF MAN ARRIVING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN"** (vs. 30). His first act will be one of judging people on the earth (vs. 31-51).

There is much discussion regarding whether any or all the Olivet Discourse relates to the Church. Except for the generic events and persecutions Jesus mentioned in vs. 4-12 (which have happened in various degrees throughout the history of the Church), the clear detail and signs that Jesus gave are all related to the nation of Israel, not the Church. Some hold that the gatherings mentioned in verses 31 and 36-44 must refer to the Rapture of the Church. However, the clearest passage detailing the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) does not match up with the details Jesus gave here. In this case (as will be proved in chapter 25), the people gathered in this passage are taken away to

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<sup>8</sup> Those who believe that Daniel's prophecy was completely fulfilled by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. cannot explain why Jesus said it was still to come. Those who believe that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70 are the fulfillment cannot explain what the **"ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"** could refer to. A literal interpretation of Daniel 9 and 11 and Matthew 24 (along with Revelation) can lead only to the conclusion that this prophecy is still unfulfilled.

various judgments on this earth; they do not **“MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and return to heaven with him.

## CHAPTER 25

Chapter twenty-five continues the Olivet Discourse from chapter 24, specifically focusing on the judgments mentioned in 24:31, 36-51 that Jesus will commence following his return. To illustrate this, Jesus told the disciples two parables. The first was about ten virgins who were awaiting the return of the Bride and Groom (vs. 1-13). Those who insist on making this parable refer to the Rapture of the Church miss one crucial point. It is true that the Rapture will follow the pattern of a Jewish wedding ceremony, in that the groom would go to the bride's home to collect her and take her back to his home. This could happen at any moment, so the bride and her maidens were to always be watching for him to come. However, this arrival takes place in order for the groom to take his bride to the wedding. After the wedding, the couple would go away to consummate their union. The party could not happen until after their return. In the same parable, Luke 12:35-36 pointed out that they will be **“WAITING FOR THEIR MASTER TO COME BACK FROM THE WEDDING CELEBRATION”** not “come back for the wedding celebration.” These virgins, then, must represent Israel waiting for Messiah to return and establish his new home in the Kingdom.

The second parable, frequently applied to the Church and the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10), is one of reward and judgment for those who will or will not serve God during Jesus' absence (vs. 14-30). Two points must be noted. First, the reward for faithful service will be entrance into the kingdom (vs. 21, 23). Application to the Church would mean that serving God is the basis of salvation and entrance to heaven, a teaching completely foreign to the salvation by grace found in the Scriptures. Second, the punishment for unfaithful service will be judgment in **“THE OUTER DARKNESS”** (vs. 30). Application to the Church would mean that not serving God means damnation, with no regard to one's faith. Again, this is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture on salvation and condemnation.

Following the two parables, Jesus clarified when this judgment will take place, who will be judged, the basis for judgment, and the results of the judgment. It will take place **“WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY...[AND SITS] ON HIS GLORIOUS THRONE”** (vs. 31). This must be after the signs prophesied in 24:15-31. It will be **“ALL THE NATIONS”** (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *panta ta ethne*), a reference to Gentiles (not the Church), who will stand before him for judgment (vs. 32). They will be judged based on how they treated **“THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF MINE”** (vs. 40, 45), a reference to the Jewish people during the time of Tribulation, not poor people generally. Finally, those who will treat them well will **“INHERIT THE KINGDOM”** and **“ETERNAL**

**LIFE”** (vs. 34, 46), whereas those who do not treat them well will be sent **“INTO THE ETERNAL FIRE”** and **“ETERNAL PUNISHMENT”** (vs. 41, 46).

Those who apply this passage to the Church, insisting on a mission of social programs in the name of Jesus, badly miss the context and ignore the outcome of their interpretation. If this applied to the Church, salvation and damnation would be based solely on our social ministries, not the gospel. Under this interpretation, churches and Christians who boldly and clearly preach the gospel of Jesus are still condemned to eternal hell if they do not help the homeless, feed the hungry, and engage in prison ministry. While these things are good, they are not the primary mission of the Church and are certainly not the basis for salvation. They will, however, be the basis on which Gentiles who survive the Tribulation will or will not gain entrance to Jesus’ kingdom.

## **CHAPTER 26**

Chapter twenty-six sets the stage for the rest of the book, including the climax of Jesus’ ministry and mission. On Wednesday evening, following the Olivet Discourse, Jesus told his apostles again what was to come, this time with the actual timeline, even while the plans were taking place (vs. 1-5). That evening he had a meal with friends outside the Jerusalem city limits, when a woman poured expensive perfumed oil on his head. Though the apostles **“BECAME INDIGNANT”** about the perceived waste, Jesus saw it as the burial preparations he would not actually receive following his death (vs. 6-13; see Luke 23:56 – 24:1).

Between Jesus’ final teachings and prophecy of his death, Judas Iscariot finally had enough. The “Messiah” he had invested the past several years into was apparently not who Judas thought he would be, and he thought Jesus should be revealed for the charlatan Judas thought he was. Knowing the religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus, Judas knew he could find the perfect opportunity to make it happen (vs. 14-16).

On Thursday, Jesus had the apostles prepare for the Passover he would eat with them that evening. During the meal, Jesus revealed that it would be one of their own group who would betray him (vs. 17-25). Naturally, this disturbed the men, leading Peter at one point to claim his undying devotion to Jesus. Jesus responded with the famous prophecy of Peter’s three denials (vs. 31-35). It was during the Passover meal that Jesus once again prophesied his death, using the elements of the bread and wine to represent his body and blood which he would give for all the people. He also mentioned that his death was necessary to fulfill the new covenant promised through the prophet Jeremiah (vs. 26-30).

Taking the eleven apostles (minus Judas) to Gethsemane, Jesus spent several hours there in prayer, submitting himself to the Father and preparing himself for the **“CUP”** of anguish he was about to endure (vs. 36-46). Knowing that Judas would lead the others to



him there, Jesus willingly went to meet them (vs. 45-46). True to his word, Judas led Jesus' enemies directly to him, where they arrested him, as foretold by the prophets. Though some of the apostles tried to defend him, Jesus stopped them all and placed himself in the hands of those who would kill him. Shaken and terrified, every single one of his friends ran for their lives (vs. 47-56).

The final section of the chapter (vs. 57-68) briefly describes the mock trials Jesus suffered before the Sanhedrin, who used false testimony to find something against him. Finally, they condemned him to death for blasphemy, when he quoted from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 claiming to be the Son of Man, who is God himself (vs. 63-65). While this was happening, Peter was outside fulfilling Jesus' prophecy of his denials (vs. 69-75).

## CHAPTER 27

Chapter twenty-seven opens early Friday morning, with the Jewish leaders bringing Jesus to Pilate. While Rome allowed the Jews to rule themselves for the most part, they could execute someone only for profaning the temple grounds. Other than for that reason, only Rome could execute people. So, although they had found Jesus guilty and wanted the death penalty, they needed Pilate to allow it (vs. 1-2).

In an interesting plot twist, Matthew revealed that Judas never intended for it to go this far. He wanted Jesus exposed as a false Messiah, but he did not understand the depth of hatred the Jewish leaders had for him. When he confronted them about it, and they did not budge, he threw his "finder's fee" back at them and committed suicide in regret for his actions. The leaders ended up buying the field where Judas killed himself, under his name, to be used "**AS A BURIAL PLACE FOR FOREIGNERS**" (vs. 3-10).

Matthew did not include all the events that happened Friday; others can be seen in the other gospels. In his plan to present Jesus as the true Messiah, Matthew included only those interviews with Pilate that reflected Jesus' true identity and his absolute perfection in preparation for what was about to happen. Like Isaiah 53:7 promised, Jesus stood silent before his accusers (vs. 11-14) and was condemned in the place of rebels (vs. 15-23; Isaiah 53:12). Turned over to the Roman crucifixion squad, Jesus was beaten and tortured, both physically and verbally (vs. 24-31; Isaiah 53:5). Finally, he was crucified alongside two criminals while passersby mocked and derided him (vs. 32-44; Isaiah 53:3-4, 12).

Though Jesus hung on the cross for six hours (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.), three of them were in supernatural darkness, while God placed humanity's sin on him (vs. 45-50; Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-11). After a final few statements, Jesus breathed his last, giving up his life for us (vs. 50). At that moment, two things took place showing the significance of Jesus' death. First, the curtain in the Temple separating the people from the Most Holy Place of God's

presence was ripped, signifying that the way to God was now open (vs. 51). Second, graves were opened, showing that death no longer held power over mankind. Significantly, following Jesus' resurrection, **"MANY SAINTS WHO HAD DIED WERE RAISED"** (vs. 52-53).

Still fulfilling prophecy, Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb (vs. 57-61; Isaiah 53:9). To prevent Jesus' followers from stealing his body and claiming the resurrection he had prophesied so many times, on Saturday morning the Jewish leaders requested that Pilate seal and place a guard at the tomb. This, they were sure, would end the Jesus nonsense for good (vs. 62-66).

## CHAPTER 28

Chapter twenty-eight, of course, is the greatest chapter in Matthew's account. Early Sunday morning, when the women went to the tomb to finish the burial preparation on Jesus' body, they found the grave open and empty and an angel with the great news of his resurrection, just as he had promised them (vs. 1-7). As if that were not enough, on their way to tell the disciples of their finding, they saw Jesus himself, who gave instructions that they were to meet him in Galilee (vs. 9-10).

Only Matthew includes the short account of how the Jewish leaders reacted to the resurrection (vs. 11-15), proving that they tried to cover up the true story, because they continued to reject Jesus as Messiah.

The final verses contain what has come to be known as the Great Commission, some of Jesus' final commands to the apostles (vs. 16-20). Because of his death and resurrection, **"ALL AUTHORITY"** has been granted to Jesus to build his Church, so he commissioned the apostles to **"MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS."** They were to do this by **"BAPTIZING THEM"** and **"TEACHING THEM TO OBEY"** Jesus' teachings. Knowing that hard times would come, he left them with the promise of his continued presence (via the Holy Spirit, John 14-16) throughout the entire coming age.

## PASSION WEEK

In A.D. 33, Passover was Saturday, April 4, making it a “high Sabbath” (John 19:31).

Jesus died on Friday, April 3, the “day of preparation” when the Passover lambs were sacrificed (Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31).

Therefore, the Last Supper, betrayal, and arrest were on Thursday evening, April 2.

Jewish days are calculated from 6:00pm to 6:00pm. Thus, Passover (and Sabbath) began Friday at 6:00pm.

### **Sunday**

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
Healing of blind men in Jericho	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Meal with Zacchaeus in Jericho			19:1-10	
Parable of 10 minas			19:11-27	
Dinner in Bethany, anointed by Mary		14:3-9		12:1-11
Spent the night in Bethany/Mount of Olives			21:37	

### **Monday**

Triumphal Entry	21:1-11	11:1-10	19:28-40	12:12-19
Went to the Temple to look and teach		11:11	21:37	
Spent the night in Bethany/Mount of Olives		11:11	21:37	

### **Tuesday**

Cursed the fig tree	21:18-22	11:12-14		
Cleansed the Temple	21:12-13	11:15-18	19:45-45	
Teaching and healing	21:14-16		19:47; 21:37	
Spent the night in Bethany/Mount of Olives	21:17			

### **Wednesday**

Jesus' authority challenged (priests, scribes, elders)	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	
Parables about authority (Jesus)	21:28 – 22:14	12:1-12	20:9-19	
Challenge: taxes (Pharisees)	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
Challenge: marriage, resurrection (Sadducees)	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-40	
Challenge: greatest commandment (Pharisees)	22:34-40	12:28-34		
Challenge: Messiah's identity (Jesus)	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
Woes and Warnings (Jesus)	23:1-36	12:38-40	20:45-47	
Widow's offering (Jesus)		12:41-44	21:1-4	
Olivet Discourse (Jesus)	24-25	13	21:5-36	
Judas' 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting with chief priests	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:1-6	
Spent the night in Bethany/Mount of Olives			21:37	

### **Thursday**

Preparation for the meal	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
Meal (includes foot washing)	26:20-25	14:17-21	22:14-16	13:1-30
New Covenant announced	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:14-20	
Upper Room & Garden Discourse	26:31-35	14:27-31	22:21-38	13:31 – 16:33
Garden prayer	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	17:1 – 18:3

### **Late Th/Early Fri**

Betrayal & Arrest (Thurs evening)	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:4-11
Trials before High Priest & Sanhedrin (overnight)	26:57-75	14:53-72	22:54-71	18:12-27
Judas' 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting with chief priests and suicide	27:3-10			
1 <sup>st</sup> appearance before Pilate	27:1-2	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-32

**Friday, 6:00am-6:00pm**

Appearance before Herod, 1 <sup>st</sup> beating and mocking			23:6-12	
2 <sup>nd</sup> appearance before Pilate; Barabbas released	27:11-23	15:6-15	23:13-25	19:4-16
Scourging	27:24-31	15:16-20		
Crucifixion (9:00a-3:00p); death at 3:00p	27:32-56	15:21-41	23:26-49	19:16-37
Burial (3:00p-6:00p)	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42

**Saturday**

Tomb sealed and guarded	27:62-66			
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**Sunday**

Resurrection (pre-dawn)	28:1-10	16:1-8	24:1-12	20:1-9
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## **THANK YOU**

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