

The Gospel of Matthew

Lesson 8

God's Kingdom Program and God's New Program

Matthew Chapters 16-20

Outline of these Four Chapters:

- 1A. The Sign of Jonah (Matthew 16:1-5).
- 2A. The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:6-12)
- 3A. Who is Jesus Christ? (Matthew 16:13-17)
- 4A. Jesus Predicts the Future Building of the Church (Matthew 16:18-20).
- 5A. Jesus Predicts His Death and Second Coming (Matthew 16:21-28).
- 6A. The Transfiguration—A Preview of the Kingdom (Matthew 17:1-13)
- 7A. The Powerless Disciples; the Mighty Christ (Matthew 17:14-21)
- 8A. Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection (Matthew 17:22-23).
- 9A. The Miracle of the Tribute Money (Matthew 17:24-27)
- 10A. Childlike Faith Required; the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:1-14)
- 11A. Procedure for Church Discipline (Matthew 18:15-20)
- 12A. Lessons of Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35)
- 13A. Instruction on Marriage and Divorce (Matthew 19:1-12)
- 14A. Jesus Blesses Little Children (Matthew 19:13-15).
- 15A. The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-26)
- 16A. Benefits of Following Christ (Matthew 19:27-30)
- 17A. Parable of the Laborers (Matthew 20:1-16)
- 18A. Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection (Matthew 20:17-19).

19A. The Secret of Greatness (Matthew 20:20-28)

Note: Since this lesson covers a lot of material (five chapters), the teacher may want to focus especially on one section in particular. The section which examines the account of "The Rich Young Ruler" (Matthew 19:16-26) may prove very profitable since it deals with basic salvation truths.

The Sign of Jonah (Matthew 16:1-5)

The Jewish leaders came to Jesus seeking to put Him to the test (verse 1) and asking Him **to show them a sign** (verse 1). Had not the Lord **already** shown them **many** signs? Had they not already seen many miracles? The Lord Jesus refused to give them any signs except one--the sign of the prophet Jonah (see Matthew 12:39-40). As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so also the Lord would be in the heart (center) of the earth (Sheol/Hades/Paradise) for three days and three nights. This sign clearly pointed to His death and resurrection.

For Christ to be in the heart of the earth (in Hades, where the souls of the dead went--see Acts 2:31) necessitated death; for Christ to be there **only** three days necessitated resurrection. This would be the great sign! The Messiah, Israel's King, would die and rise again.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:6-12)

The disciples misunderstood what the Lord meant when He referred to "leaven" (verses 6-8). They somehow thought that Jesus was referring to literal bread (verses 7,9-11). They finally understood, with the Lord's patient help, that Jesus was referring to the **doctrine or teaching** of these Jewish leaders.

Ordinary leaven consisted of a lump of old dough in a high state of fermentation, which was inserted into the mass of dough prepared for baking. The danger was that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). False doctrine can infect and corrupt the minds of God's people unless they are properly warned and grounded in the truth of God's Word.

The teaching (leaven) of the Pharisees is **legalism** and it leads men into a mere show of holiness based on man's own efforts. This legalism involves a self-righteousness which comes as a result of man's works rather than God's perfect righteousness, which comes to man through faith.

The teaching (leaven) of the Sadducees appeals to natural reason and leads men into empty rationalism and disbelief, and thus into loose living. The Sadducees did not believe in the supernatural--they rejected the reality of angels; they rejected the truth that all men will someday be raised from the dead; they rejected the

facts about heaven and hell, etc.

These false teachings act like leaven which silently penetrates the heart and mind (if not properly recognized and expelled). The result of leaven can be the ruin of the soul.

For the students: What we eat is important, is it not? Think of all the containers which have warning labels on them. We are very careful not to consume that which is poisonous and deadly to our bodies. Should we not then also be careful about what we feed on spiritually? If we are concerned about poisoning the body, should we not be concerned also about poisoning the soul and the mind? False teaching is very dangerous. (The inconsistency of the unsaved is seen in certain convenience stores. They are very careful about the milk and other food products which they sell. They do not wish to sell any food products which would harm the body. Yet in the same store they freely sell pornography and other trash which harms and poisons the minds of people. They are very careful in one area and totally careless in another area.)

Who Is Jesus? "Whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:13-17)

Nothing is more important than having a right concept and understanding of who Jesus really is. In fact, one's eternal destiny depends upon it: "If ye believe not that I AM HE, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

The Lord first asked the disciples, "Whom do (other) men say that I the Son of man am?" (verse 13) Their different answers are interesting (verse 14). The popular opinions concerning His identity all require a belief in the resurrection of the dead. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the other prophets, etc.—all these men had died, and if Jesus had been one of these men, then there must have been a resurrection from the dead. Belief in the resurrection must have been quite popular among the people, though denied by the Sadducees.

Ask the students: Today, whom do people today say that Jesus Christ is? (a good teacher, a moral example, a wise prophet, a "superstar", etc.)

The Lord then makes the question very personal: "But whom say **ye** that I am?" What others believe is interesting, but the most important thing is **what do you believe?** How do you view the Lord? Peter gave an answer that was right on target (verse 16). He is the Messiah (Christ, God's anointed King), the Son of the living God (pointing to His full deity and equality with God the Father). The source of Peter's understanding is given in verse 17. It was not Peter's intelligence or brilliance that gave him this answer. It was God the Father who revealed it to Him. A true understanding of Christ does not come from man ("flesh and blood") but it comes from God Himself (compare Matt. 11:27).

The Building of the Church is Predicted (Matthew 16:18-20)

Matthew 16:18 is very significant. It is the first time that the Church (God's called-out assembly) is mentioned in Matthew's gospel. Jesus predicts that He will build the Church. When Jesus said these words the building of the Church was yet future (He did not say, "I have built the Church" or "I am building the Church", but He used the future, "I will build"). The building of the Church would begin in Acts chapter 2, the Day of Pentecost.

"Upon this rock" (verse 18)--This phrase has been abused by the Catholic Church which makes Peter the Rock, the first Pope, etc. Throughout the Bible the Lord Himself is called **THE ROCK**. Even in this context the great emphasis is upon the Lord Jesus and **Who He is**; see especially verse 16. Peter had just confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and this is the rock solid truth upon which the Church is built. Jesus Christ is clearly the one and only foundation of the Church (1 Cor. 3:11). If the Church were built upon Peter we would be in trouble! For a more detailed discussion of this, see our set of studies entitled, *Lessons in Church History*, chapter 1.

Something must happen before the Church can exist. Ephesians 5:25 tells us that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. There can be no Church apart from the death of Christ, because it was the Son of God who purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Thus, in predicting the Church the Lord was also predicting His coming death.

The sign of Jonah (verse 4) indicates that Christ must die. The building of the church indicates that Christ must die (verse 18), and thus we are not surprised to find the Lord's prediction about His coming death given in verse 21.

The First Prediction of His Death and Second Coming (Matthew 16:21-28)

Notice the word "began" in verse 21. This was the first time Jesus told the disciples about His coming death and resurrection (though certainly not the last time--see Matt. 17:22-23; 20:17-19; etc.).

Peter rebuked the Lord for saying that He must die (verse 22). Jesus said that He must die! Peter answered, "This shall not be unto Thee!" He directly contradicted what Jesus had just said. He saw no need or necessity for the death of Christ. The man who had said just the right thing moments before (verse 16) now said just the thing he should not say (verse 22). When Peter confessed Christ as the Son of God it was the Father who was the source of that statement (verse 18). When Peter contradicted the Word of Christ it was Satan himself who was the source and inspiration of that statement (verse 23).

We acknowledge that Peter was very wrong to contradict the Word of Christ. Let's try to step into Peter's shoes and see what was behind his thinking. In Matthew 16:16 Peter confessed the Messiahship of Jesus and was in effect saying, "I believe you are the Christ, the Messiah, Israel's promised King, the Son of God." Soon after this the Lord told them that He must suffer and die. This posed a great problem in Peter's mind—a problem that was shared by the Jews of his day. In John 12:32-33, the Lord told the people that He would be lifted up to die. These Jews knew that Christ the King must live and reign forever and ever (read John 12:34 and compare Daniel 7:14,27 and Isaiah 9:7). They thus faced what seemed to be an impossible problem: **"How can a dead Messiah reign forever and ever?"** Peter was greatly puzzled: How could He be Israel's King if He must die?

Actually Peter should have paid more attention to what Jesus said in verse 21. It is as though he only heard the "killed" part and he completely missed the "raised again" part. The resurrection is the key that helps us understand how a dead Messiah can reign forever and ever!

Peter did not understand (and failed to hear) God's solution which involved resurrection, so Peter thought up his own solution: The Messiah should avoid death, and avoid the cross and march directly to the throne. But this was not God's way at all (verse 23).

Peter was greatly disturbed by the thought of Christ's death and certainly the other disciples were as well. What would happen to the King? If the King died, would there still be a kingdom?

In verses 24-26 the Lord Jesus explains what it really means to follow Him. It involves saying "NO" to self and saying "YES" to the Saviour. It involves a cross which was an instrument of death.

A person can gain everything but lose the one thing that is most important of all (verse 26). Riches and fame and popularity and entertainment and friends will do a person no good in an eternal lake of fire.

In Matthew 16:27 **a mysterious prediction** is made by the Lord. The Lord Jesus for the first time (though it is hinted at in Matt. 10:23 and some of the parables in Matthew 13) predicts that the Son of man **will come a second time**. This was a new truth to the disciples. They knew nothing of **two comings**. When the Jews read the Scriptures they could really only see one coming of the Messiah (examples of this can be seen in Isaiah 9:6-7; Zechariah 9:9-10; Luke 1:31-33). These verses obviously refer to both the first and second comings. From our perspective this is easy to see. But to the Jews, as they read these verses, the two comings were blended together in these passages and they could not distinguish two separate comings. Today we are living in the period between the two comings of Christ, during which time the Lord has been building His Church—Matthew 16:18. As we read our Bibles today we have the advantage of being able to see two distinct comings of Christ--one is now history and one is still future (has not

happened yet).

At this point it was very important for the disciples to understand that the Messiah would be coming **again**. This would help explain how He could die and yet His death would not put an end to the kingdom. He would rise again and in the future He would come again to establish His kingdom (verse 28). His first coming was primarily for the purpose of dying. His second coming will primarily be for the purpose of establishing His kingdom (verse 28).

In verse 28 a **mysterious prediction** is made. The disciples were the ones standing around (verse 24) and Jesus said that some of them would not taste of death (would not die) until they would see the Son of man coming in His kingdom. Today it is nearly 2000 years since Jesus spoke these puzzling words. Christ has not yet returned to earth to establish His kingdom. All of the disciples have long since died. Did the Lord's prediction fail? Did some really see the King in His kingdom?

The answer to this mystery is found in the next chapter (Matthew chapter 17).

The Transfiguration--a Preview of the Kingdom (Matthew 17:1-13).

After Jesus made this remarkable prediction in Matthew 16:28, the next recorded event was the transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5). In 2 Peter 1:16-18 Peter reminds his readers that he was an eyewitness (verse 16) and earwitness (verse 18) of a remarkable event, namely the transfiguration. He calls this event the "**power and coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, Peter was saying, "We saw the Lord **coming in power** when we were with Him in the holy mountain." Thus the puzzle is solved. The "some standing here" (Matt. 16:28) can now be identified as Peter, James and John (Matt. 17:1).

At a time when the disciples were disturbed over the announcement of His coming death, Jesus did a wonderful thing. He took three of His disciples and gave them **a foretaste and a preview** of the coming kingdom. "If the King dies, will there still be a kingdom?" Peter, James and John were beginning to understand the answer!

The resplendent glory of God's Son was veiled during most of His incarnate life and ministry (His first coming). The transfiguration was one of those rare times when His glory was allowed to shine forth (compare also John 11:4,40-44; 18:4-6; 1 Cor. 2:8). At the second coming, this inner glory will be outwardly displayed, even as it was on the holy mount (Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25 :31; Luke 9 :26; Daniel 7:13-14). At His second coming, Jesus will come **in power and great glory**. The three disciples caught a preview of that glorious future event!

The kingdom will surely come. Christ has already given a preview. As we live between the Lord's two comings, may we **hear and heed** all that the King says

to us (Matt. 17:5--**"Hear ye Him"**), even if we don't understand everything He says. Peter did not **hear the Lord** very well in Matthew 16:22-21!

Application: What does the first coming of Christ mean to you? What was accomplished on your behalf? Why was the first coming so important? What is God doing in this time period between the two comings of Christ? What is your part and place in light of what God is doing today? What does the second coming of Christ mean to you? Do most people today really believe in the second coming of Christ? Why? Why not? What will the second coming of Christ mean to you? What events will take place?

At the end of Matthew chapter 17 the Lord makes another prediction concerning His death and resurrection (verses 22-23). The disciples heard the death part but completely missed the resurrection part, because they were exceedingly sorry (verse 23).

The next two chapters give us some lessons concerning how to enter the kingdom.

To Enter the Kingdom a Person Must be Like a Little Child (Matthew Chapter 18)

Not everyone can enter God's kingdom. Some will be excluded. There are certain spiritual requirements that must be met, even as we have already seen in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:20 and 7:21).

One such requirement is found in Matthew 18:3--"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." In verse 4 we see that the Lord was speaking especially of the need to be humble. There are people who are "too big" to enter the kingdom. They think too highly of themselves. Being saved is a very humbling experience and those who do not humble themselves can never be saved (see Luke 18:14). I need to see God's bigness and God's greatness and I need to see my own littleness, smallness, insignificance and unimportance. God wants us to come to Him with simple childlike faith: "nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." We need to be small so we can know the greatness of God.

To Enter the Kingdom a Person Must Trust the Saviour Alone For Salvation (Matthew Chapter 19)

The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-26)

Introduction

In this familiar passage we are introduced to a self-righteous man who thought

that he had kept the commandments (Matthew 19:20), but knew that he did not have eternal life (verse 16). He knew that he lacked something very important in his life (verse 20). The Lord Jesus dealt with him in a very skillful way, showing him his great sin and unbelief. This passage gives a wonderful illustration of what the law can do and what the law cannot do.

This man was not ready for salvation. His first need was to see himself as a guilty, condemned, lost sinner. As someone has said, "Before you get saved, you need to get lost!" The Lord Jesus accomplished this by using the law, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

This passage is often misunderstood by "Lordship salvation" teachers, and they use it in trying to show that the requirement for salvation is much more than simple faith in Jesus Christ. They say that salvation requires fulfilling the demands of discipleship, giving up one's possessions, giving money to the poor, forsaking all to follow Christ, etc. We will deal with these issues in this study.

This passage about the rich young ruler is also found in Mark 10:17-27 and Luke 18:18-27. Our main focus will be upon Matthew's account, but we will refer to Mark and Luke as needed.

Matthew 19:16

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

This man who came to Jesus is known as "the rich young ruler." Matthew 19:22 tells us he was rich, "for he had great possessions." This same verse describes him as a "young man" (see also verse 20). Luke 18:18 describes him as "a certain ruler."

In what way was he young? He was not an old man, but neither was he a teenager. In verse 20 he said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," indicating that there was a good distance between his present age and the days of his youth. The word "young" (Matthew 19:20,22) indicates an age "from about the 24th to the 40th year" (Arndt & Gingrich Greek Lexicon). This rich ruler was in the prime of his life. He was not "over the hill." He was still ascending the hill, as it were.

He was a "ruler" (Luke 18:18), a man in authority over others. We are not told what position he held. Many commentators surmise that he was a ruling official in the local synagogue. He had position, wealth and was in the prime of life. Everything seemed to be going his way. However, he realized he was missing something (compare Matthew 19:20). He also recognized that he did not have eternal life (verse 16).

He addressed Jesus as "Good Master" (Luke 18:18; Mark 10:17). The word

"Master" means teacher. I grew up in a liberal Congregational Church where Jesus was regarded as a good teacher, even the best teacher that ever lived. However, we were never taught that He was God (John 1:1) or that He was the Creator of all things (John 1:3). It is crucial that the sinner understands who Jesus Christ really is. "If ye believe not that I AM HE, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

We learn from this man's question that he held to the common but erroneous notion that eternal life must be earned by doing some good thing. He thought that a man must perform in a certain way in order to qualify for eternal life, and that good works are necessary for salvation. This is the great error embraced by religious people. They think that by doing some good thing they can gain eternal life. How contrary this is to the gospel of grace. See our papers, *Do or Done?* and *The Difference Between Christianity and Religion*. This man needed to learn that there is no hope and no help in SELF. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5; see Ephesians 2:8-9).

Matthew 19:17

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

The rich young ruler had two great needs. 1) He needed to understand who Jesus was. He thought He was a good Teacher. The Lord Jesus was far more than that. 2) He needed to understand who he himself was. He thought he was a righteous man (Matthew 19:20). He was actually a self-righteous lawbreaker headed for hell. Thus, he needed to repent or change his mind concerning Christ and concerning himself. The Lord Jesus would help him in both of these areas.

"Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." The Lord Jesus was not denying that He was good, nor was He denying that He was God. He was setting forth the truth that there is only One who can truly be called "good."

Psalm 34:8: O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Psalm 100:5: For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Psalm 135:3: Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

Nahum 1:7: The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

Any goodness that man has is derived from God. In and of himself, man has no goodness at all.

Psalm 14:1: The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Psalm 14:3: They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Psalm 53:1: The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.

Psalm 53:3: Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Ecclesiastes 7:20: For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Romans 3:10-12: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Jesus was saying something like this: "You called me a good Teacher, but since only God is good, are you prepared to recognize that I am God?" The rich young ruler needed to recognize who Jesus really was. "You think you are a good man, but there is no man who is good." He needed to recognize his own lack of goodness, his own bankruptcy.

In the last half of verse 17 the Lord Jesus makes a startling statement, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Literally, "If you desire to enter into life, keep the commandments." The life He is speaking of is eternal life (see verse 16).

Suppose you were asked the question, "What must a person do in order to enter into eternal life?" How would you answer this? Those who know the true gospel message would answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will have eternal life." Such an answer is based on many passages, such as: John 3:15-16; John 5:24; John 6:35; John 6:47; John 11:25-26; John 20:31; Acts 16:31.

Certainly the Lord Jesus knew the gospel better than any of us. Why didn't He say something like this: "If you desire to enter into life, then you must believe on Me"?

Before a person is saved, and before a person is ready to hear the true gospel, he must recognize his own sinfulness. He must recognize the plague of his own heart.

The rich young ruler thought he was a righteous man who had kept the law (Matthew 19:20). He did not see himself as a guilty law breaker. At this point, the Lord was not seeking to show him the way of salvation; He was seeking to show him his desperate need of salvation. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20); the Lord Jesus was skillfully using the law to show him his sin. The Lord's purpose was to show this man that he was a guilty law breaker. To accomplish this purpose, the Lord gave him the "gospel" according to the law: "To enter into life, all you need to do is keep the commandments!"

What Jesus told him was a true statement. If a man keeps the commandments, he will enter into life. He will qualify for eternal life. The Lord Jesus taught the same thing in Luke 10:25-28. However, what is involved in keeping the commandments? You must keep the commandments, but you must be sure to keep all the commandments. If you keep the whole law and yet break just one little commandment, then you are a guilty lawbreaker (see James 2:10). Think of breaking a rubber band in only one place: you still have a broken rubber band. Not only must you keep all the commandments, but you must keep them all the time, from the time you are born until the time you die. You can't have even one day or even one moment in your entire life where you mess up (where you fail to measure up to God's righteous demands). Your obedience needs to be perfect. Blessed is the person who continues in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. However, if you do not continue to perfectly obey every law of God, then you are under God's curse: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

It is true that if you keep the commandments you will enter into life. But can any sinful man on earth ever accomplish such a feat? Can we ever get through even one day perfectly obeying God? It is totally impossible for sinful man to keep God's holy law. This is why the law can never save us; it can only condemn us. Instead of being a way of life, it is a "ministration of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7) and a "ministration of condemnation" (2 Corinthians 3:9). The rich young ruler needed to know that he stood condemned before a holy God as a hopeless, helpless sinner. Note: Even saying that a person must keep the law perfectly from the time he is born until the time he dies proves that man is under sin. Fallen man is already under the curse of death. Legal obedience offers him no hope; apart from God's Saviour he is doomed.

There are two ways to obtain eternal life--the legal way and the grace way:

1) A person may obtain eternal life by keeping God's commandments (by obeying God's law perfectly every day of his or her life).

This is the legal way of getting saved.

Problem:

Do you think that there has ever been a person (apart from the Lord Jesus Christ) who has done this? Is it possible for sinful men to perfectly keep God's holy law?

2) A person may obtain eternal life by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving Him as Saviour.

This is the grace way of getting saved.

Solution: Even though God's holy law condemns the best men, God's grace is able to save the worst men if they believe on Jesus.

In other words, there are two ways to get to heaven. One way is to live a perfect life (obeying all of God's laws perfectly). The other way is to trust the Saviour who came to save wicked sinners.

Jesus knew that this rich young ruler would never be saved by trying to keep the law. Jesus' purpose was to show this man how sinful he really was. This young ruler was a religious and moral man. He was good enough to deceive himself and bad enough to damn himself. His "goodness" prevented him from knowing his badness.

Before a person is ready to be saved, he first must become lost. That is, he must recognize the lost condition of his soul (Romans 3:10-23). Before a man is ready for a cure, he must recognize how desperately sick he really is (Luke 5:30-32). The rich young ruler needed to understand the plague of his own heart (1 Kings 8:38).

Matthew 19:18-19

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Jesus had just told him to, "Keep the commandments" (verse 17), and now the rich young ruler asks, "Which commandments should I keep?" The Lord cites five of the Ten Commandments (#6, #7, #8, #9, #5) and He also cites the second greatest commandment (see Matthew 22:36-40). These manward commandments regulate one's conduct toward his neighbor. Our primary duty towards our fellow man is to love our neighbor. The other commandments are included in this one commandment of love. If I truly loved my neighbor, then certainly I would not murder him, nor would I steal from him, nor would I take his wife from him, nor would I lie against him in court. Love is the fulfillment of the law (Galatians 5:14). For a fuller discussion of this, see our study entitled, *Love or Lust?*, in our series of studies on Proverbs.

Notice that the correct translation of the sixth commandment is "Thou shalt not

murder." The translation, "Thou shalt not kill" can be misleading. God does not forbid all killing, as for example, in the case of capital punishment (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:15,16,17; etc.). See our study, *The Sixth Commandment--"Thou shalt not kill."* *Does This Command Forbid All Killing?*

As we proceed through this passage we will see how the Lord Jesus will prove that this man is a law breaker, one who does not love his neighbor. In fact, the rich young ruler will be found guilty of breaking the two greatest commandments!

Matthew 19:20

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

For a person to claim to have kept the Ten Commandments is an amazing thing. Not only is such a person self-righteous, but also totally deluded and deceived as to his true condition before God.

The rich young ruler probably thought something like this: "I have never murdered anyone. I've never committed adultery. I've never been charged with the crime of stealing. I have never lied under oath. I've been a good son and have respected my parents." And to his credit, he probably was a very upright person morally, a "law abiding citizen." He was probably a model Jew in many ways.

If a person is truly honest before God, then the Ten Commandments will reveal how sinful he really is, "for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Let us now consider some of the Ten Commandments (found in Exodus chapter 20). We will only consider six of them. Test yourself by checking either TRUE or FALSE:

Read the First Commandment (found in Exodus 20:3).

I have always put the Lord first and I have always given the Lord first place in my life. I have never let anything or anyone else take the place that God should have in my life.

TRUE
 FALSE

Read the Third Commandment (found in Exodus 20:7).

I have never taken the Lord's Name in vain or used God's Name in a careless or thoughtless way. I have always treated God's Name with utmost reverence and respect.

TRUE
 FALSE

Read the Fifth Commandment (found in Exodus 20:12).

I have always honored my parents and have given them the highest respect. I have never disobeyed my parents and when I was younger I never needed or deserved a spanking.

TRUE
 FALSE

Read the Eighth Commandment (found in Exodus 20:15).

I have never stolen anything from anyone. I have never taken anything that did not belong to me. I have always respected the property and possessions of others.

TRUE
 FALSE

Read the Ninth Commandment (found in Exodus 20:16).

I have never given a false witness against anyone. I have never said something about another person which I knew was not true. I have never lied; I have always been honest about everything. I only speak what is true.

TRUE
 FALSE

Read the Tenth Commandment (found in Exodus 20:17).

I have never coveted or desired something that someone else had. I have never had a strong desire for my neighbor's house or swimming pool or boat or automobile or wife or husband or anything else belonging to my neighbor. I have always been totally content and satisfied with what God has given to me.

TRUE
 FALSE

How did you do? If you answered TRUE, this means you have obeyed the command. If you answered FALSE, this means you are guilty of breaking the command. How many times did you check TRUE? _____ How many times did you check FALSE? _____ Are you a guilty breaker of the law or are you an innocent keeper of the law? _____

Suppose that you checked TRUE four times and checked FALSE only once. This means that you kept all of the commandments except one. Are you a keeper of the law or a breaker of the law? The answer is found in James 2:10--"For whosoever shall keep the _____, _____, and yet offend in _____ point, he is _____ of all."

What does James 2:10 really mean? Suppose you could find a person who kept every single commandment of the law except for one. He obeyed the law perfectly except for one commandment which he broke. James 2:10 says, "He is guilty of all!" Even though he only broke one commandment, he is still a guilty lawbreaker! The rich young ruler's self righteousness blinded him to his own sin and his own failure to keep God's holy law. In the following verses we will see that the Lord

Jesus will expose his sin and demonstrate to him that he is guilty of breaking the two greatest commandments. He was guilty of not loving God with all his heart and he was guilty of not loving his neighbor.

In spite of the young man's deluded self-righteousness in thinking he had kept the commandments, he still, in his innermost being, recognized that he was lacking something: "What lack I yet?" (verse 20). The law can never satisfy the sinner's lack. The law can only magnify sin and cause it to abound (Romans 5:20). Only the grace of God can provide what the sinner lacks. "Run, John, run, the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands; far grander news the gospel brings; it bids me fly and gives me wings!" (attributed to John Bunyan) Only the grace of God can supply that perfect righteousness that the sinner lacks (2 Corinthians 5:21). Mt. Sinai can never bring peace to a sin-burdened soul. Only Mt. Calvary can do that.

Matthew 19:21-22

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

The last commandment which Jesus had mentioned, and which the rich young ruler had claimed to have kept from his youth, was "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Lord was now going to put this to the test. Did he really love his neighbor? Would he be willing to give his riches to his poor neighbors? Before this man was ready to be saved, he needed to see himself as a guilty lawbreaker. Only then would he be ready for the good news, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save guilty lawbreakers (compare 1 Timothy 1:15).

All of the Ten Commandments are summed up in two commandments, which have been called the two greatest commandments: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

The rich young ruler claimed to have kept the commandments from his youth up. The plan of the Lord Jesus was to clearly demonstrate to this man that he was guilty of breaking the two greatest commandments. 1) He did not love God with all his heart because he refused to believe Him (as we shall see in the next paragraph) and refused to follow Him (verses 21-22). 2) He did not love his neighbor as himself because he was unwilling to give to his poor neighbors (verses 21-22). Conclusion: This man was a wicked lawbreaker who was guilty of breaking the two greatest commandments. His only hope was to fall upon the mercy of a gracious Saviour.

The rich young ruler had a wicked heart of unbelief. God had given him an amazing promise: If he would sell what he had and give to the poor and follow Christ, he would have treasure in heaven (verse 21). Certainly treasure in heaven would be far better than any earthly treasures this man could ever accumulate. However, this man did not believe God. He did not believe the promise. Not only was he a lawbreaker, but he had a major problem of unbelief. And "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

As a result he clung to his possessions and refused to follow Christ. "He went away sorrowful." He abandoned the one Person who could truly help him. He turned his back on Jesus Christ. He walked away from God's only Saviour.

Calvinistic Confusion

In Mark 10:21 we are told one added detail about this account which is of great importance: "Then Jesus, beholding him (the rich young ruler), loved him." Jesus loved this man.

This presents a great problem for extreme Calvinists because they believe that God only loves His elect (those who will come to faith in Christ). They do not believe that God loves those who will go to hell. However, in the case of the rich young ruler, the Bible clearly states that Jesus loved this man, even though he walked away and refused to follow Him. So the extreme Calvinist must reason this way: "Since Jesus loved this man, he must have been one of God's elect. And if he was one of God's elect, then he must have been saved at some later time." Extreme Calvinists have great difficulty understanding how God could love someone and not save that person. However, in the Scriptures, there is no indication that the rich young ruler ever got saved.

A.W. Pink illustrates this way of thinking. He said, "We fully believe that he (the rich young ruler) was one of God's elect, and was saved sometime after his interview with the Lord" [*The Sovereignty of God*, p. 125, footnote]. This is Pink's theory, but the Scripture provides no support for this view. It is a view based on Pink's theology, not based on Pink's Bible.

Lordship Salvation

Is Selling What You Have and Giving to the Poor a Condition for Salvation?

Those who teach "Lordship salvation" tend to believe that Jesus was presenting to the rich young ruler a plan of salvation, which consisted of selling his possessions, giving to the poor and following Christ. However, the Scripture makes it very clear that we are not saved by works of righteousness which we have done (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Our Lord's main purpose was to show the rich young ruler his lost condition, not to reveal to him God's plan of salvation. As was shared previously, "You need to

get lost before you can get saved." That is, no one is ready for salvation until he realizes his guilt before a holy God. The Lord Jesus skillfully demonstrated to this man that he was a guilty lawbreaker. Suppose the rich young ruler had not walked away, but instead had fallen at Jesus' feet and said, "Lord, I admit that I have broken God's laws. I have not loved my neighbor. I have not loved God with all my heart. My heart is wicked and corrupt, and I come before You as a guilty law breaker. Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Lord, what must I do to be saved?" God is ever ready to receive sinful men! God has a gospel for those who recognize how lost they are.

Selling one's possession and giving to the poor is not a condition for receiving eternal life. When the jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer was not, "Sell what you have and give to the poor, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). The Gospel of John was written so that people might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through His Name (John 20:31). Over and over again in the Gospel of John we find that the one condition necessary to have eternal life is to believe in Jesus Christ (John 1:12; 3:16; 3:18; 3:36; 5:24; 6:35; 11:25; 20:31; etc.). Never in the Gospel of John are the unsaved told that they must sell what they have and give to the poor in order to gain eternal life. The book of Romans was written to set forth "the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1), and it does so in a most comprehensive way. Repeatedly Paul teaches in Romans (and elsewhere) that faith in Christ, and faith alone, is the sole condition for salvation. Nowhere in Romans are we told that a person must sell his possessions and give to the poor in order to be saved (see Romans 10:9-10). In Ephesians 2:8-9, a key salvation passage, we are told exactly how a person is saved. He is saved "by grace through faith" and not by any works which he has done.

Salvation is not based on something that we do; it is based on what Christ has done (His finished work). We do not contribute to our own salvation; Christ paid it all. Salvation is not working; it is resting on the work of Another, even the Lord Jesus Christ: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Religion is man trying to bring himself to God by human effort, by good works, by ritualism, by traditionalism, by sacraments, etc. Salvation is Christ bringing us to God on the basis of what He did for us on the cross: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

God's holiness utterly condemns the best man ("As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one"--Romans 3:10). God's grace freely justifies the worst man. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"--Romans 3:23-24.

The gospel message brings to man not a work to do, but a word to believe about

a work done: "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

We are saved, not because of what we have done, but because of the mercy of God based upon what Christ has done on the cross: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). A person can never be saved by his own good works: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Good works done by sinful man can never please a holy God. The greatest good work is God's work accomplished by Jesus Christ who offered Himself on the cross as the sinner's Substitute. Thus we are not saved by good works, but we are saved unto good works: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Are you resting fully in the finished work of Christ? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ, **Who He is, what He has done for you, and what He has said in His Word?** "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

Matthew 19:23-24

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

The word "hardly" means "with difficulty." It is extremely difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom (which is synonymous with being saved; see verse 25). Why is it so difficult? To be saved a person must trust Christ; rich people normally trust their own riches. As long as they continue to trust their own riches instead of Christ, they cannot be saved. Paul did not teach that a believer cannot have riches, but he did teach wealthy believers not to trust in their riches. Rather, they were to trust in God: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). Notice that in 1 Timothy chapter 6, where Paul gave prolonged instruction to believers who are rich, he never told them to sell all their possessions and give everything to the poor. He did instruct them to share their wealth with those in need (1 Timothy 6:18).

How difficult is it for a rich person to be saved? The camel illustration shows that it is impossible. The "eye of a needle" refers to a literal sewing needle. It would be impossible for such a huge mammal to fit through such a tiny opening. See

verse 26 which makes it clear that the Lord's point was that it was impossible!

Vine's comment:

The idea of applying "the needle's eye" to small gates seems to be a modern one; there is no ancient trace of it. The Lord's object in the statement is to express human impossibility and there is no need to endeavour to soften the difficulty by taking the needle to mean anything more than the ordinary instrument (a sewing needle). Mackie points out (*Hastings Bible Dictionary*) that "an attempt is sometimes made to explain the words as a reference to the small door, a little over 2 feet square, in the large heavy gate of a walled city. This mars the figure without materially altering the meaning, and receives no justification from the language and traditions of Palestine." [*Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words*, under "Needle"]

Matthew 19:25-26

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

The disciples, who were not rich men, understood the Lord's words as even applying to themselves, and they were concerned about their own salvation, "Who then can be saved?" They understood the Lord to be saying that it is impossible for any man to be saved, not just rich men.

How can a sinful man enter God's holy heaven? How can a sinner become a saint? How can one who is filthy become clean? It is impossible! There is no remedy. In Jeremiah 17:9 we learn that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "Desperately wicked" means "incurably sick." There is no cure, no remedy! With men this is impossible! And certainly selling one's possessions and giving to the poor and even following Jesus is not going to remedy the problem of the heart.

Thanks be to God that Calvary's cross has made the impossible possible! What the law could never do and what the flesh could never do, God accomplished by the death of His Son (see Romans 8:3). With God all things are possible. The salvation of every single soul is nothing short of a miracle of God! May we never minimize the miraculous nature of our so great salvation! To God be the glory, both now and forever!

Conclusion and Summary

So we have seen in Matthew chapters 16-20 that God's kingdom program was postponed because of Israel's unbelief. Of course, all of this did not take God by surprise but was known by Him from the beginning. He knew that Israel would reject Christ as their Messiah King.

The Lord Jesus thus announced a key event, **His coming death**. This was announced in two ways, by the sign of Jonah and by the Lord's direct prediction. The announcement of His death greatly troubled and disturbed the disciples who could not understand how there could be a kingdom if the King were to die. This problem is solved when we understand that Messiah's death would be followed by resurrection and that there would be a **second coming** at which time Messiah would establish His kingdom on earth. A special **preview** of this second coming in power and glory was given to three of the disciples.

What would take place during the time between the two comings of Christ? During this time the Lord Jesus would be **building His church** (Matthew 16:18). Today people enter the kingdom by believing on the Lord Jesus and becoming members of the church, God's called out assembly. Matthew 18 and 19 give us instruction as to how we can enter that kingdom (by becoming as little children and by trusting Christ and Him alone, not our riches or anything or anyone else).

Matthew chapter 20 tells us how a citizen of Christ's kingdom can become great. The secret of greatness is to be a humble servant!

Notes for Further Study

Matthew 16:17. To be saved a person must understand who Jesus Christ really is. Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). In Matthew 16:17 we learn that God must open our eyes, as He did with Peter, and reveal to us who Jesus Christ really is. It is not something we can figure out on our own. Compare Acts 16:14 ("whose heart the Lord opened"). We need to remember this in witnessing to others. We should be very prayerful and dependent upon God, looking to Him to do what only He can do in the hearts of sin-blinded people.

Matthew 16:18. When did the church begin? The key is to understand Spirit baptism. The key passage on Spirit baptism is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13—"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The "one body" spoken of in this verse refers to the Church (see 1 Cor. 12:27-28; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:30-32; Col. 1:18), and Christ is the Head of this body. Spirit baptism is defined in 1 Corinthians 12:13 as that work of God whereby believers are baptized (immersed, placed) into Christ's body, the Church. How then does a believer become a member of the body of Christ? It is by Spirit baptism.

The key to when the Church began is this: If we can determine when Spirit baptism first began, then we will know when the church began. When did God first baptize believers into His body? When were believers first placed into the body of Christ? To answer this is to determine the day on which the church began.

Spirit baptism was first predicted by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11 (and in the parallel passages: Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33):

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost (Spirit), and with fire" (Matt. 3:11).

John's baptism was a water baptism ("I baptize you with water"); Christ's baptism would be a spiritual baptism ("He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit"). The "fire baptism" is for the unsaved and this is yet future (see Matthew 3:12). Notice the phrase, "He shall baptize you with (Greek-**en**) the Holy Spirit." The verb "shall baptize" is in the future tense, indicating that Spirit baptism had not yet taken place when John the Baptist spoke these words. John was predicting that it would happen in the future, but he did not predict exactly when it would happen. Notice also that Christ is the Baptizer. He is the One who would place believers into the body of Christ. He is the One who would build His Church.

In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, "I will build My Church." The future tense of the verb indicates that the building of the Church had not yet begun when Jesus said these words. He did not say, "I have built My Church." He did not say, "I am building My Church." No, the building project had not yet begun and thus the Church was yet future. At the time Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 16:18 the Church had not yet begun.

Today Christ is building His church. He is adding to the Church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47). But the question is, when did this building program first begin?

In Acts 1:5 the Lord Jesus predicted that Spirit baptism was still future: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). According to our Lord's prediction, Spirit baptism had not yet taken place, though it would soon take place. No one had yet been immersed into the body of Christ. Thus, the Church could not have begun prior to Acts 1:5. When Jesus spoke the words of Acts 1:5 His death and His resurrection had already taken place, and yet Spirit baptism had not yet taken place and the church had not yet been formed. But the announcement of Acts 1:5 was very significant because Jesus said that Spirit baptism would take place "not many days hence" (not many days from then). This means that it would happen soon, in a matter of days. Indeed, as we shall learn, it happened just ten days later on the Day of Pentecost.

The Day of Pentecost and the unique events that took place on that day are described in Acts chapter 2. In this chapter Spirit baptism is not specifically mentioned. It is not until Acts chapter 11 that we are specifically told that Spirit baptism took place on the Day of Pentecost: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning [on the Day of Pentecost]. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:15-16). Based on the clear statement of this passage we know that Spirit baptism first took place on

the Day of Pentecost. It was then that believers were first placed into the body of Christ. It was then that the Church began.

Matthew 16:19. Concerning the "keys of the kingdom" in Matthew 16:19, Peter was given the responsibility of opening the door of faith for the various groups of people who would enter the kingdom of heaven (in its mystery form--Matthew 13) at the beginning of the Church age. In the book of Acts, chapters 1-12, Peter is the central figure. The book of Acts makes it clear that Peter opened the door to the Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans who were half-Jews and half-Gentiles (Acts 8) and the Gentiles (Acts 10). Each group gained entrance into the Church as evidenced by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter used these three keys to open the door of faith on these three occasions as the gospel went forth first to the Jews, next to the Samaritans and finally to the Gentiles.

Matthew 16:24. What does it mean for a believer to "take up his cross"? Remember, it was the custom for the condemned criminal to carry his cross to the place of execution. The Lord Jesus did this, and a man named Simon was compelled to help Him (Matt. 27:32).

When the criminal was carrying his cross, he knew that he was about to die. He was going to the place of execution. His time on earth was about to terminate. With this in mind, what did the condemned man think of the world and what did the world think of the condemned man?

First, what does the condemned man think of the world? Use your sanctified imagination. Suppose the condemned man passes his favorite restaurant. Obviously it would mean nothing to him now. He's about to die. Suppose he passes his best friends. This brings little comfort. His relationship with them is about to terminate. Suppose he passes his bank where he has a million dollars deposited. This money means nothing to him now. If he were to pass by places of entertainment, these would no longer charm him. With the cross on his shoulders, death is imminent. He's about to say farewell to the world. We sing the song, "The world behind me; the cross before me."

Second, what did world think of the condemned man? They despised him. They mocked him. They had rejected him. They wanted nothing to do with him. He was a hated person. They were very thankful that he was about to die. They were glad to be rid of him. They considered him the scum of the earth. He was a reject of society. He was despised, hated, mocked, scorned, and after he was crucified, they did not even respect his dead body. The custom was to throw the body of the dead criminal into Gehenna, the city dump, where the fires seemed to burn continually.

These truths are reflected in Galatians 6:14—"But God forbid that I should glory (boast), save (except) in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." As a believer in Christ, as far as I'm concerned, the world died; and as far as the world is concerned, I died. I have no

use for the world; the world has no use for me. I want nothing to do with the world; the world wants nothing to do with me. I want everything to do with Jesus Christ. He wants everything to do with me.

I am no longer attracted to the world; I am no longer admired by the world. I don't want the world and the world does not want me. Jesus said, "If you do not carry your cross, you cannot be my disciple." What is your attitude toward the world? Have you bid farewell to it? If you can't have the world, then what can you have? You can have a glorious relationship with the risen Christ. You can be a new creature in Christ. You can be a citizen of heaven. You can seek those things which are above. You can trust in a great Saviour who is sufficient for every situation.

Someone has said, "Don't go to God and tell him how big your problem is; instead go to your problem and tell your problem what a big God you have!"

Matthew 16:28. This mysterious verse refers to the three disciples who witnessed the transfiguration and who witnessed a preview of the coming millennial kingdom. However, preterists (those who believe that the Lord's second coming took place in 70 A.D.) teach that Matthew 16:28 was fulfilled in 70 A.D.

This teaching is easily countered by the following points:

We would certainly agree that the Lord came in judgment in 70 A.D. (***although not visibly***), but He did not come "in His kingdom." No kingdom was established in 70 A.D. When Christ comes in His kingdom there are at least ten things that must take place at or around that time. Consider the following:

1. When Christ comes in His kingdom, He will return to earth and be seen by every eye (Matthew 24:25-30 and Revelation 1:7).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. In 70 A.D. Christ was not seen by anyone.

2. When Christ comes in His kingdom, the Jewish people will be regathered from every country on earth and brought into their promised land (Matthew 24:31; Jeremiah 16:14-15; Isaiah 43:5-7; Jeremiah 23:7-8; Jeremiah 31:7-10; Ezekiel 11:14-18; Ezekiel 36:24).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. Instead of being regathered, the Jews were killed and scattered.

3. When Christ comes in His kingdom, there will be no wars on earth (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3; Psalm 46:9; Zech. 9:10).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. We know that 70 A.D. was a time of fierce warfare carried out by the powerful Roman army.

4. When Christ comes in His kingdom, the kingdom will be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6) and the Messiah will sit on the throne of David which will be located in Jerusalem (Isaiah 9:7; Jeremiah 17:25; 23:5-6; 33:15; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-15; Luke 1:32-33).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was destroyed and no King from the line of David was reigning on the throne!

5. When Christ comes in His kingdom it will be a time of great deliverance and great blessing for the Jewish people (Jeremiah 30:7-9; Ezekiel 34:25-31).

This did not take place in 70 A.D., which was a time of great judgment upon the Jewish people who decades earlier had rejected and crucified their Messiah (although some Jews did believe on Him).

6. When Christ comes in His kingdom, God's sanctuary (His temple) will be in the midst of His people (Ezekiel 37:26-28; Ezekiel 40:5-43:27).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. because it was then that the Jewish temple was destroyed, resulting in the Jews having no temple at all.

7. When Christ comes in His kingdom, there will be a priesthood operating in the temple and animal sacrifices will be offered (Ezekiel 44:1-46:24).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. When the Romans destroyed the temple they put an end to a functioning priesthood and they put an end to animal sacrifices.

8. When Christ comes in His kingdom, "the Jews will possess and settle in all of the promised land, and it will again be subdivided into the twelve tribal divisions. But these tribal divisions will be different than those described in the book of Joshua" (Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Footprints of the Messiah*, p. 328). The description of the location of all of the 12 tribes during the kingdom is described in Ezekiel 47:13-48:29. Seven tribes will be situated to the north of the temple (Ezekiel 48:1-7) and five tribes will be situated to the south of the temple (Ezekiel 48:23-29).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. After the Roman destruction of Jerusalem the surviving Jews were scattered throughout the world. In the 20th century a small remnant returned to the land of Israel and a Jewish state was established.

9. When Christ comes in His kingdom, there will be a message of good news that will be declared to Jerusalem (Isaiah 52:7-10). This message will consist of the following elements: 1) The good news of peace; 2) The good news that Messiah will reign in Zion; 3) The good news that God has comforted His people; 4) The good news that God has redeemed Jerusalem.

This did not take place in 70 A.D. In 70 A.D. there was only bad news for the

Jewish people. It was the bad news of judgment and destruction and ruin and death, not the good news of comfort and peace.

10. When Christ comes in His kingdom there will be joy and gladness (Isaiah chapter 35). This joy and gladness will result from the following conditions: 1) the desert will become fertile (verses 1-2,6-7); 2) Messiah will come to deliver Israel (verses 3-4); 3) Those who are lame or blind or deaf will be healed (verses 5-6); 4) Wild vicious animals will no longer be a problem (v. 9); 5) It will be a time of great rejoicing (v. 10).

This did not take place in 70 A.D. In 70 A.D. the Jews who were fortunate enough to survive the Roman invasion did not have joy and gladness, but rather sorrow and sighing (compare Isaiah 35:10).

Matthew 17:27. What amazing control the Lord Jesus, the Creator, had over the animal kingdom. It was certainly rare for a fish to have a coin inside its mouth, but that unique fish was commanded by the Lord Jesus to go straight for Peter's hook! As a fisherman, I use some of the best lures made by men, and still have problems!

Matthew 18:6. This verse is a proof text for hell. What could be worse than having a huge weight tied around your neck and then being thrown into the ocean to drown? But Jesus said it would be better for that man! This implies a punishment that is worse than an agonizing physical death (see verse 8).

Matthew 18:35. This verse is basically teaching forgiveness based on law and penalties: if you do not forgive your brother, then you will be punished. Ephesians 4:32 is teaching forgiveness based on grace. Since God has graciously forgiven you, in the same way you are to forgive others.

Matthew 19:4-5. Is the Genesis record really true? In these verses the Lord Jesus authenticated the first two chapters of Genesis. Compare verse 4 with Genesis 1:27; compare verse 5 with Genesis 2:24. The Lord Jesus understood the early chapters of Genesis in their plain, normal, literal sense. Also in verse 4 there is an implication that the earth is young (not millions or billions of years old). The creation of man (which took place on Day 6) took place "at the beginning." "In the beginning" God created the earth (Gen. 1:1). If there were millions or billions of years between the time when the earth was formed and when man first appeared on earth, then how could Jesus speak of man being made "at the beginning"? But if man was created only five days after the earth was made, then it is obvious that man was on this earth "at the beginning." The Lord Jesus was a young earth creationist. Indeed, He was the Creator.

Matthew 19:9. Fornication is the Greek word "porneia" from which we get our English word "pornography." It is a general word for sexual immorality and includes any form of illicit sexual intercourse. It would include such things as homosexual behavior. In the context of a marriage, fornication most often takes

the form of extramarital sex or adultery. Fornication, by its very definition, is destructive to the marriage union. A believing partner may have Biblical grounds for a divorce, but this does not mean that a divorce must take place. The ideal situation following an act of unfaithfulness is for the adulterer to repent, forsake the sin and to repair his relationship with Christ. The believing partner can then practice Biblical forgiveness. In such a case, the marriage union, though it received a serious wound, can be healed. In cases where there is continuous adultery, recovery and healing are very difficult and in some cases impossible. Divorce, or perhaps a legal separation, may be a necessary, though undesirable, option.