

The Gospel of Matthew

Lesson 4

Spiritual Requirements for the Kingdom of Heaven (Multiple Miracles!)

Matthew Chapters 8-10

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Introduction

What right did Jesus have to claim to be the Messiah, Israel's promised King? Did He have any credentials to back up this claim? He was merely a carpenter from an insignificant town called Nazareth, which did not have a good reputation (John 1:46). He was not of noble birth. His parents were not wealthy, nor did His father hold any high position in town (although both His parents were descended from the line of David). Jesus was never trained at the great religious schools of His day (where the rabbis were educated). What right did a common, ordinary carpenter from Nazareth have to claim that He was the promised King of the Jews? How could He back up such a claim?

In Isaiah 35:5-6 the prophet Isaiah wrote about the Messiah who would someday come (compare verse 4). This prophecy was given about 700 years before Christ came. In these important verses in Isaiah, notice some of the remarkable things that the Messiah would do: open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, cause the lame to leap as a deer, cause the tongue of the dumb to sing, etc.

The Jewish people should have been very familiar with Isaiah chapter 35. They should have known that when the Messiah-King came He would perform amazing miracles (including healing miracles and miracles in the realm of nature). God expected His people to recognize His Messiahship based on the miracles which He would perform. In Matthew 11:1-3 John the Baptist, in a difficult time in his life, questioned whether Jesus was really the Messiah. Notice the answer that Jesus gave him in Matthew 11:4-5 (especially verse 5). These spectacular miracles served as proof that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah that He claimed to be.

People despise illness and disease and paralysis and the inability to see and hear and speak. These are the terrible results of a sin-cursed world. Christ demonstrated His power over these despised afflictions. He had the power to instantly heal these serious physical problems in a spectacular and undeniable way. The same God who can perform healing miracles is the same God who can forgive sins and cure man's sin burdened heart.

The Miracle of a Leper Being Cleansed (Matthew 8:1-4)

This leper had faith. He believed that Jesus was able to cleanse him of his leprosy, as long as He was willing to do so (Matt. 8:2). Jesus responded by saying, "I will," that is, "I desire" (to do it). Not only was Jesus able, but He was willing (Matt. 8:3). The miracle took place immediately (Matt. 8:3), and the Lord instructed him what to do next (Matt. 8:4), in accordance with the law of Moses.

So also, the Lord is able to cleanse the guilty sinner of his filth, and is willing, ready, and eager to do so (read Isaiah 1:18). The moment a repentant sinner

believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is instantly cleansed and washed from all sins (Acts 10:43; 1 Cor. 6:11).

The Miracle of the Healing of the Centurion's Servant (Matthew 8:5-13)

The centurion was a Roman military leader, a captain over 100 men. He was a Gentile, not a Jew (Matt. 8:5).

"Sick of the palsy" means that this man had paralysis or the inability to move certain parts of the body (Matt. 8:6). For this man it also involved intense pain because he was "grievously tormented" (Matt. 8:6).

The faith of the centurion is seen in verses 8-9. He recognized Christ's greatness and his own unworthiness. He did not believe that he was worthy to even have Christ come into his house, but he believed that Jesus could heal his servant from a distance. [Most people who claim to be healers today believe it is necessary to be in touching distance of the sick person in order for them to perform the healing.] The centurion believed that the Lord Jesus had such power to heal that all He needed to do was to speak the word (from a distance) and his servant would be healed (verse 8).

This centurion knew that he was a man of authority and he merely had to speak to his servants and utter a command, and it would be done. He recognized in Jesus One who had far greater authority. He believed Jesus could merely speak the word and a supernatural healing would take place (verse 9). Was the Lord impressed by this man's faith (verse 10)? _____

In Matthew 8:11-12 Jesus made the point that there will be Gentile participation in the future kingdom and there will be Jewish exclusion in the future kingdom. Many Jews who should be there will not be there, and many Gentiles who might not be expected to be there will not only be there, but will participate fully. The "children of the kingdom" are Jews, those who by every right and privilege should be the participants of the kingdom. It was promised to them. But being a Jew, by itself, does not qualify a person for the kingdom. There must be personal faith in Christ. Also, being a Gentile does not disqualify a person. If the Gentile has faith, he too may enter the kingdom.

But here the unbelieving sons of the kingdom, who are the Jews and the natural heirs, are prophesied as being cast out, while believing Gentiles take part in it. The Lord indicates that as a result of their faith Gentiles will have a definite part in the coming kingdom. Entrance into the kingdom for Jew and Gentile is contingent upon the spiritual basis of faith in Jesus the Messiah. -- Stanley D. Toussaint (*Behold the King: A Study of Matthew*, p. 124)

Faith such as this Gentile had demonstrated would be duplicated many

times by other Gentiles, for Christ added, "Many will come from the east and west, and will take their places at the feast" (v. 11). By this He was referring to Gentiles who would join with "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." But apart from faith in Christ none of Abraham's physical descendants could have a part in the kingdom. Those who heard the kingdom offer and then rejected the person of the King thereby excluded themselves from the kingdom. They will be consigned to darkness forever (v. 12). --J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p. 191

This expression "children of the kingdom" (v.12) is not speaking of saved individuals, who actually enter the earthly Kingdom, but to unsaved Jews who boldly claimed to be patriarchal descendants of Abraham and therefore eligible for entrance into the Kingdom. In other words, they saw themselves as God's children, since they were given the covenant promise of the Kingdom; therefore, they actually believed they would automatically enter the earthly theocracy. These Jews thought of themselves as "children of the kingdom" only in the sense that they had Jewish ancestry and were given the kingdom promise; however, this does not mean that they can enter the kingdom without faith in the Messiah and the new birth. The expression "children of the kingdom" was a boastful statement and is a reference to those Jews who claimed to be subjects or children of the earthly kingdom because of their Jewish heritage and natural decent (John 8:33). These people will discover that they cannot enter the kingdom based upon Jewish ancestry (Matt. 7:21). They must be born again (John 3:3-5), regardless of their Jewish background (John 1:13), and become a Jew that is inwardly changed or born again (Rom. 2:28-29). This is because only the regenerate or saved will enter the earthly kingdom (Matt. 13:43). In short, those who make the bold claim that they will someday enter the earthly kingdom by Jewish ancestry will discover that they will not get in! [Pastor Kelly Sensenig, in an e-mail communication]

The centurion believed Jesus could heal his servant from a distance, and the Lord honored his faith, and it was done (verse 13). So too, we need to recognize our Lord's absolute authority in every area of life, and believe that He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh _____" (Eph. 3:20).

The Miracle of the Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law (Matthew 8:14-16)

Peter had a mother-in-law and this means that Peter must have had a wife, although the Bible tells very little about Peter's wife (compare 1 Cor. 9:5 where "Cephas" is another name for "Peter").

Peter's mother-in-law was "sick of a fever." A high fever can be very dangerous. For an adult, any temperature reading of over 103 F. can indicate a serious underlying condition. The Lord healed her in the simplest of ways: He merely "touched her _____" (Matt. 8:15). All she needed was the touch of the Master's hand. She did not need time to recuperate or regain her strength. Right away she arose and served Jesus (verse 15).

May we follow the example of Peter's mother-in-law. When Jesus saves my soul and makes me whole, I need to respond to Him with thanksgiving by serving Him with all my heart.

I do not work my soul to save,
That my Lord hath done.
But I would work like any slave,
For love of God's dear Son!

The Miracle of Casting Out Demons (Matthew 8:16)

Accounts of demon possession are very rare in the Bible, as a whole, but we do find numerous examples of this in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts. Some have theorized that there was an increase of demon activity when Christ Himself appeared on the earth and in the early days of the propagation of the gospel. Today we do not normally see examples of demon possession of the same kind as described in the Gospel records. This is not to say that it never happens in our world today. Believers need to be very careful not to mislabel something as demon possession when it is really something else.

Unbelievers dismiss demon possession altogether. They might argue in this way: "In the first century people did not understand sickness and illnesses, so they attributed these things to demon possession." However, notice that in Matthew 8:17 a clear distinction is made between casting out demons (spirits) and healing the sick. Ordinary sickness was distinguished from demon possession. However, we must also remember that the Bible teaches that in the same person there could be demon possession as well as physical problems such as being blind and dumb (Matt. 12:22); perhaps the physical problems may have even been caused by the demon. The Lord had absolute authority over demons and He was able to cast them out (throw them out, expel them).

The Miracle of Healing Various Sicknesses (Matthew 8:16-17)

Notice it says that "He healed _____ that were sick" (verse 16). There were times when Jesus performed a healing in response to a person's faith, but there were other times when Jesus performed mass healings and healed everyone whether they had faith or not. See also Matthew 9:35. Today's faith healers explain their failures to heal by blaming the sick person for his lack of faith. If these faith

healers really had the same gift Jesus had, they would be able to go into a modern hospital and empty it!

In verse 17 we have a quote from Isaiah 53: 4. In Isaiah 53 we have the amazing prophecy about God's suffering Servant (the Messiah) dying for the sins of His people. Since Matthew quotes this verse in connection with our Lord's healing miracles, it raises this question: "Is physical healing in the atonement?"

Ultimately Christ's atonement on the cross will completely take care of every illness. In heaven, there will be no more sickness, no more pain (Rev. 21:4). However, prior to heaven, it is not always God's will that a person should be free from sickness. In fact, apart from some accidental death or death from other causes, every saint of God in this age is going to at some point expire and die, most often as the result of some illness.

Consider four New Testament examples of people who were sick:

1) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Paul was afflicted with a painful ("thorn") bodily ("in the flesh") ailment. Paul prayed three times that God would remove this thorn in the flesh from him, but God did not do this. God did something better. He taught Paul the sufficiency of His grace, that God's grace was enough even to enable him to endure such a physical affliction. Sometimes God allows sickness or pain in order to teach us of His all-sufficient grace.

2) Philippians 2:25-30

Epaphroditus was seriously sick, to the point where he was near death. It is interesting to note that Paul did not heal this faithful brother. God had mercy on him and raised him up.

3) 1 Timothy 5:23

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." Timothy had a stomach problem and he was often sick and ailing and infirmed. Paul did not tell him to see a healer, nor did Paul tell him that his physical problems were due to sin or a lack of faith. Paul merely gave Timothy a common sense prescription.

4) 2 Timothy 4:20

"Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." There is no indication that Trophimus had a spiritual problem (sin, lack of faith), but he did have a physical problem and Paul did not heal him. It is sometimes the will of God for His children to be sick in this life, but never in the next life (Rev. 22:4).

Consider godly people of the past who were sick or who suffered with serious bodily ailments. For example: John Calvin was afflicted with rheumatism, intense headaches and a weak body. Fanny Crosby was blind. Robert McCheyne was very sickly and died at age 30. George Muller certainly did not have a lack of faith, but he had a lifelong struggle against bodily infirmity and ills including head troubles and an operation at the hands of a skillful surgeon. Read almost any biography of godly saints of the past and you will in most cases read of certain physical afflictions which God allowed them to endure. [For an excellent discussion on the subject of sickness, see *Practical Religion* by J. C. Ryle, the chapter on "Sickness." It is well done and would be a great encouragement to any saint suffering through a time of sickness.]

There are some Charismatic people who think that if you are sick you are out of the will of God. For example, Kenneth Hagan Jr. wrote: "My belief is that it is indeed God's will that His children walk in complete health.... It is always God's will to heal His children." [Personal letter from Kenneth Hagan Jr. to me dated 7/16/87] To such people we must ask these questions: Do any of you wear glasses (Kenneth Hagan Jr. wore glasses)? Do any of you ever catch the common cold or the flu? Do any of you ever take aspirin or other pain medicines? And most significantly, do any of you ever die?

Take, for example, the case of renowned faith-healer Oral Roberts. He once bypassed his own multimillion-dollar City of Faith medical complex to have eye surgery in California. But why didn't he go to a faith-healer or why didn't he heal himself? Also if faith healing is really effective, why do you need a multimillion dollar medical complex? The Lord Jesus and the apostles healed hundreds of people without any such facilities.

When we think of the atonement and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we need to remember that His main work was to pay the penalty for sin, not to die for our sicknesses. Illnesses are the result of man's fall into sin, but we must never forget that the fall of man is the root cause of sickness and of all the problems that mankind faces. Calvary's cross got at the heart of the problem, and attacked it at its very root. The results of sin (including sickness) will be taken care of in God's time and in God's way.

The Miracle of Jesus Causing the Winds and Waves to be Still (Matthew 8:23-27)

The Sea of Galilee is a large lake which was subject to violent storms which could arise quite suddenly. Why is this so?

The Sea of Galilee lies 680 feet below sea level. It is bounded by hills, especially on the east side where they reach 2000 feet high. These heights are a source of cool, dry air. In contrast, directly around the sea, the climate is semi-tropical with warm, moist air. The large difference in height between surrounding land and the sea causes large temperature and pressure changes. This results in strong winds

dropping to the sea, funneling through the hills.

The Sea of Galilee is small, and these winds may descend directly to the center of the lake with violent results. When the contrasting air masses meet, a storm can arise quickly and without warning. Small boats caught out on the sea are in immediate danger.

The Sea of Galilee is relatively shallow, just 200 feet at its greatest depth. A shallow lake is "whipped up" by wind more rapidly than deep water, where energy is more readily absorbed. --Dr. Donald B. DeYoung

Notice the contrast between Jesus and the disciples. The disciples were fearful and frantic, thinking they were about to perish in the sea. Jesus was peacefully asleep even though they were in the midst of a violent storm. The Lord was not worried, nor was He afraid. In the middle of life's storms, we need to trust fully in the Lord Jesus, that He might calm our hearts and give us His peace, even in the midst of great turmoil and trouble (John 16:33; 14:27).

What was the main problem that the disciples had (Matt. 8:26)? _____
_____ Even the forces of nature are totally under the Lord's control. This miracle was remarkable. Storms do not suddenly stop; instead the winds gradually lessen and the waves gradually calm down. Jesus stilled the storm instantly.

The Miracle of Casting Out a Legion of Demons (Matthew 8:28-34)

This is probably the most remarkable account of demon possession found in the New Testament. For more details see Mark 5:1-21 and Luke 8:26-40. In contrast to these other accounts, Matthew reveals that there were two men possessed by these demons. This is not a contradiction, just added information. If Mark and Luke had said that there was only one man, then this would have been a contradiction. What Mark and Luke reported was absolutely true, and the man they described probably was prominent and notable, but Matthew added additional information that there was another man involved.

Note: The translation of "devils" (verses 28,31,33-KJV) should be "demons." There is only one devil, but many demons (evil spirits, fallen angels).

These men were very fierce and had what seemed to be superhuman strength (Mark 5:3). In verse 29, the demons were speaking through these two men. The demons knew exactly who Jesus was. He was the Son of God, their Creator. The demons knew that they were awaiting a future torment at an appointed time (verse 29). The demons did not want to go "into the deep" (Luke 8:31). The word "deep" means "abyss, pit, bottomless pit (KJV)." See the usage of this word in Revelation 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3. The devil will be sent to the abyss to be confined for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1,3). Since they did not want to go into

the abyss, the demons requested that they be sent into a herd of swine (Matt. 8:31). This was done, and the herd stampeded into the sea and perished (verse 32). Were the people of the city pleased with what Jesus had done (verses 33-34)? _____ The good news is that the Lord Jesus did a great work in the heart of at least one of these two men (Luke 8:35,39). Like this man, we ought to be glad to tell others what great things God has done for us!

The Miracle of the Healing of a Paralyzed Man (Matthew 9:1-8)

In Matthew 9:1-8 we find the account of the miraculous healing of the paralytic man. In these verses; the Lord Jesus tells us exactly why He healed this man. In Matthew 9:2 Jesus made the amazing claim that He could forgive this man's _____. Did the Jews believe that Jesus was able to do this (Mark 2:6-7)? _____ They thought it was blasphemy for Jesus to claim to be able to forgive sins (Matt. 9:3), because they believed that only _____ could forgive sins (Mark 2:7). Could these Jews look into the man's heart and see whether or not his sins had really been forgiven? _____

Jesus then asked a puzzling question (see Matt. 9:5): Which is easier--to say "Your sins are forgiven!" or to say "Arise, take up your bed and walk!"? Was it easier to forgive his sins or heal his body?

How would you have answered the Lord's question (circle the correct answer)?

- a. It is easier to forgive his sins.
- b. It is easier to heal his body.
- c. It is impossible for man to do either! It would require the power of God to forgive his sins and it would require the power of God to heal his body.

The following chart may be of help:

The Miracle of Healing	The Miracle of Forgiveness
This miracle required God's working and God's power.	This miracle required God's working and God's power.
This miracle took place in the physical realm.	This miracle took place in the spiritual realm.
This was God working in the man's body.	This was God working in the man's heart.
This was a miracle that was clearly seen (Matt. 9:8).	This was a miracle that could not be seen by men.

This was a miracle that could not be denied.

This was a miracle that could be denied by unbelieving men (Mark 2:5-7).

Did Christ really have the power and authority to forgive sins? How could He prove this? How could He demonstrate His authority in the invisible/spiritual realm?

In Mark 2:10 the Lord Jesus tells us the primary reason why He healed this man (circle the correct answer):

- a. that you might know how much I wanted to help this man
- b. that you might know how compassionate I am towards those who have physical needs
- c. that you might know that I have the power and authority to forgive sins

Thus, the Lord proved that He had authority in the invisible-spiritual realm by performing a fantastic miracle in the visible-physical realm which no one could deny. If Christ had the power to perform the miracle of healing, then this would prove that He also had the power to perform the miracle of forgiveness!

What about you? How can you prove to others that your sins are forgiven? How can you prove to others that Christ lives in you (Gal. 2:20)? How can you show your friends that you really belong to God? Compare 2 Timothy 2:19. Cattle are often branded with a visible seal (a brand) or a mark of ownership; believers are "branded" with an invisible seal which only God can see, namely God the Holy Spirit. How can others know that the Spirit dwells in you? The answer is found in the illustration our Lord gave in John 3:8. How can you know that the wind is really there? Remember, the wind cannot be seen, but the effects of the wind can be seen! [Give examples of this.] God wants people to know about the miracle that He performs in the invisible-spiritual realm (Matt. 9:6). Has the Saviour done a miracle in your heart? Do others know about it?

The Miracle of the Raising From the Dead of a Ruler's Daughter (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26)

The faith of this ruler was great. What did he believe Jesus could do (Matt. 9:18)?
_____ On His way to the ruler's house, Jesus performed another miracle which we will consider later.

The people who were gathered at the ruler's house (verse 23) were professional mourners. This grieving ritual usually included people playing flutes and women wailing ("the people making noise").

In verse 24 the Lord made a shocking statement: "The maid is not _____, but

(she) _____." What did the people do when they heard this statement (verse 24)? _____

Some have asked, "Did Jesus tell a lie in Matthew 9:24 when He said, 'She is not dead'? Obviously, in light of 1 Peter 2:22, He did not lie. We know that the Lord Jesus never committed any sin, including the sin of lying. It is true that the girl was dead. The Lord knew this and everyone else knew this. The Lord did not lie because He was not deliberately trying to deceive anyone. Instead, He made a shocking statement so that those present would pay attention to what He was about to do. And indeed, she was sleeping in a sense, because the Lord went in and woke her up (by raising her from the dead)! When you say that someone is asleep this implies that they are going to wake up, and this is exactly what happened, by the power of Jesus.

There are three occasions that are recorded for us (there may have been more) when Jesus raised a person from the dead: 1) The ruler's daughter in Matthew 9; 2) The widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:11-15); 3) Lazarus (John chapter 11). Can God also give spiritual life to someone who is dead in sins (Eph. 2:1-9; John 5:24; John 11:25-26)? _____

The Miracle of the Healing of a Woman With an Issue of Blood (Matthew 9:20-22)

This needy woman had a bleeding problem (a flow of blood) which she had been suffering with for twelve years (verse 20). She had seen many physicians, had spent all her money; yet, sadly, she had only gotten worse (Mark 5:26). This woman believed that the Great Physician could help her if she could but touch His garment (Matt. 9:20-21). Even though surrounded by a crowd of people, many of whom were touching Him, Jesus knew that healing power had gone out of Him, and He said, "Who touched My clothes?" (Mark 5:30). The disciples could not understand the question because there were so many in the crowd who had come in contact with Jesus (Mark 5:31). The woman then identified herself (Mark 5:32). The Lord comforted her and said, "Thy Faith hath made thee whole (well)" (Matt. 9:22). She was never plagued by this bleeding problem again.

In this case there was no human help at all. Skilled doctors had failed to help this woman. She had no one to turn to except the Lord, and Jesus never fails! No case is too difficult for Him.

*Shipwrecked on God! Of all else forsaken!
All hope of help from every source has fled.
'Tis then, and only then, we find the Rock beneath us
That wrecked our keel and stranded us on God.*

The Miracle of the Healing of Two Blind Men (Matthew 9:27-31)

"Son of David" (Matt. 9:27) was a Messianic title. The Jews knew that their Messiah would be from the line of David. These blind men were acknowledging that Jesus was the promised Messiah and Isaiah 35:5 said that the Messiah would open the eyes of the blind! These men did not believe that they deserved to be healed as some kind of right, but rather they pleaded for mercy (verse 27). The Lord asked them to express their faith in His ability to perform this miracle, and then according to their profession of faith, He opened their eyes (verses 28-30).

Why did Jesus tell them not to tell others about this amazing miracle? "He did not want to foment a premature movement to enthrone Him as King. The people were as yet unrepentant; He could not reign over them until they were born again. Also, a revolutionary uprising in favor of Jesus would bring terrible reprisals from the Roman government on the Jews. Besides all this, the Lord Jesus had to go to the cross before He could reign as King; anything that blocked His pathway to Calvary was at variance with the predetermined plan of God" (William MacDonald, *The Believer's Bible Commentary*, pages 1236-1237).

Did these men obey the Lord (Matt. 9:31)? _____ "Not even gratitude is a valid excuse for disobedience" (MacDonald, p. 1237).

The Miracle of the Casting out of a Demon in a Dumb Man (Matthew 9:32-35)

This man was dumb; he could not speak. When the demon was cast out, the man's physical problem was solved (Matt. 9:32-33). The New Testament distinguishes between disease/sickness and demon possession. In this case, however, it appears that the demon caused the man to be dumb. We know from Job 2:7 that the devil (and demons who work for him) can cause people to have physical problems, as in the case of Job.

Notice the different reaction to this miracle by the multitudes (verse 33) and by the Pharisees (verse 34). The Lord performed His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit, but the Pharisees blasphemously asserted that Jesus performed these miracles by the power of Satan (verse 35). This is the unpardonable sin which we will study in the next lesson.

Summary of the healing miracles: By healing the paralyzed man, Jesus proved that He had the power to forgive sins. By cleansing a leper, Jesus proved that He could cleanse the sinful hearts of men. By giving sight to the blind, Jesus proved that He had the authority to open the eyes of those who are spiritually blind (2 Cor. 4:4; Acts 26:18). By healing the sick, Jesus proved that He is the Great Physician who is able to heal those who are sick with sin (see Matthew 9:9-13). By

casting out demons, Jesus proved that He has the power to deliver a person from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). By raising up a dead girl, Jesus proved that He is able to quicken (make alive) those who are dead in sins (Eph. 2:1,5).

The Twelve Disciples are Sent Forth Matthew Chapter 10

We have seen the spectacular miracles performed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 8-9. In Matthew 10:1, the Lord gave His twelve disciples authority to do likewise. They were given power or authority to cast out demons and to heal every kind of sickness and every kind of disease (verse 1). These miracles were needed to authenticate the message of these men. They were common, ordinary and for the most part uneducated men. Many were fishermen. Why would anyone believe a message carried by them? However, if the crowd were to see a blind man given sight and a lame man leaping for joy, they would be much more likely to believe the message that these men carried.

The inclusion of the name of Judas in verse 4 is of special interest. How amazing to realize that Judas also was given authority to do these miracles, even though he was an unsaved man (John 13:10-11). We have no record that the disciples ever returned to Jesus and said, "Lord, we cast out demons and healed the sick, but something is wrong with Judas. He was unable to heal anybody, nor was he able to cast out demons." No, as far as we can tell, Judas carried out these miracles as did the other disciples. He was given a gift even though his heart was not right with God. [Note: The Corinthians were given certain gifts even though they had spiritual problems such as carnality, etc. Paul had to write to them to correct the misuse and abuse of these gifts.]

The Lord sent His disciples only to the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles and not even to the Samaritans who were half Jews and half Gentiles (Matt. 10:5-6). The kingdom was promised to Israel and Israel must repent before the kingdom can be established, and thus the message was sent only to the Jews. This is in sharp contrast with the Great Commission of Matthew 28 where the gospel message is to go to all nations (verse 19). Also when the gospel of the kingdom is preached just prior to the Lord's return, the message will go "in all the W_____ for a witness unto all _____" (Matt. 24:14).

What message were the disciples to deliver? They were to preach that "the kingdom of heaven is _____" (Matt. 10:7). The King was present and the kingdom was near. However, there was something that the nation needed to do in order for the kingdom to be established. What was it (Matt. 3:2 and 4:17)?
R_____

The nation Israel had a wonderful opportunity before them. The long-promised

Messiah King had arrived on the scene and the kingdom was announced as being at hand or near. But the people were also told that they needed to repent. Although a minority of Jews did repent and turn to Christ, the great majority did not. The rejection of Christ by the nation Israel and by Israel's leaders is clearly seen in Matthew chapters 11-12, as we will study in the next lesson. This rejection is tersely summarized in John 1:11 ---"He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

The Lord Jesus Christ came to His own people (Matthew 1:21; 2:6) but the nation Israel did not receive Him as their Messiah, King, and Saviour (John 1:11). They wanted a King who could feed and heal their bodies (John 6:26), but cared not for a Saviour who could feed and heal their souls (John 6:58-66). Christ, through His miracles and mighty works, gave unmistakable and undeniable evidence that He was indeed the Messiah, the Son of the living God; yet the Jews in their unbelief still asked for a sign (John 2:18; Matthew 12:38-40; 13:58; Luke 4:23; 1 Corinthians 1:22).

Hundreds of years earlier Isaiah had predicted that the Messiah would perform such miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6; compare what Jesus said to John's disciples in Matthew 11:2-6). But even though the Jews saw His works (Matthew 12:13,22) and had clear proof that He was the Messiah (Matthew 12:23), they still refused to acknowledge who He was. In their wicked unbelief and blasphemy they dared to accuse Christ of performing His miracles by the power of Satan rather than by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:24-37). Such rejection could only bring the judgment of God (Matthew 12:41-45).

The climactic rejection of the Messiah took place when the Jews said to Pilate, "Let Him be crucified" (Matthew 27:21-23). Even worse, they took full responsibility for their actions: "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). God indeed held them responsible for what they had done: "[Him] ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

The Lord, because of His forbearance and long-suffering, did not judge the nation immediately. In fact, God graciously made known the gospel to the Jew first (Romans 1:16; Acts 2:5; 3:26). The Jews should have been the last to hear! In fact, they did not deserve to hear at all. But God in His matchless grace reached out to the nation which had crucified His Son!

When Paul entered a city he normally went to the synagogue first, often encountering great resistance to the gospel (Acts 13:44-50; 18:4-6; 28:23-28; cf., Romans 11:28). Yet God patiently waited and gave the nation an opportunity to repent. When Paul finally appeared in Jerusalem (Acts 21-22) the Jews once again rejected God's message and God's messenger. They even tried to kill him, crying, "Away with him" (Acts 21:36; 22:22), even as they had done to the Saviour years before (John 19:15).

The day of God's long-suffering must come to an end. Years before, the Lord Jesus

had predicted that a terrible judgment of God would come upon Jerusalem because of the Jews' unbelief (Matthew 23:38; 24:2; Luke 21:5-6). About forty years after the crucifixion of Christ this prediction was literally fulfilled. In 70 A.D. the Roman General Titus captured and completely destroyed Jerusalem with a great slaughter. Since this time the nation Israel has been without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without a priesthood, and without a temple (Hosea 3:4). In the past 2000 years the Jewish people have been scattered and persecuted throughout the world. Instead of enjoying God's blessings, they have been under God's curses (see Deuteronomy 28).

In the 20th century a remarkable event took place in Jewish history. A nation was reborn! The Hebrew language was revived! Hundreds of thousands of Jews have been returning to their homeland. God has providentially been setting the stage for the events which must shortly come to pass. Even though many Israelites now occupy the land, they are there, for the most part, in unbelief. Though a small Christ-rejecting remnant has returned, the vast majority of Jews are still dispersed throughout the nations of the world. During the Second World War, about one third of all the Jews in the world (six million) perished under German persecution and ruthless slaughter. There is coming another day in which two thirds will die (Zechariah 13:9). Certainly Israel is still under the terrible curse of God (see Deuteronomy 28:15 and the verses which follow). But a brighter day is coming in which the nation Israel will be delivered, forgiven, and purified (Jeremiah 30:7-9; Romans 11:26-27). At this time the nation will begin to enjoy the millennial blessings of God (Isaiah 33:17-24) which had been promised to them by the mouth of all the prophets.

When Christ came the first time, Israel, as a nation, did not repent and the kingdom was postponed. When Christ comes the second time Israel will repent and will receive their Messiah, even as Jesus predicted in Matthew 23:39 (and compare Zechariah 12:10-14). Study also Romans chapter 11 which speaks of Israel's wonderful future (see our study notes on Romans chapter 11).

Many non-dispensationalists object to the idea of a kingdom being postponed. Often the reason for this is that they want to steal away the kingdom that was promised to Israel and claim it for themselves. They teach that the kingdom is here and now. Instead of the kingdom being postponed, they claim that the church is now enjoying the kingdom and God's promises made to Israel. They believe the church has replaced Israel in God's program and the church has claimed Israel's kingdom. The technical name for this erroneous view is Replacement Theology.

The gospel of the kingdom (see Matthew 9:35) is the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand (near)" (Matt. 10:10). This was the message of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), Jesus (Matt. 4:17), the twelve (Matt. 10:7) and the seventy (Luke 10:9). Because of Israel's rejection of the King (see the next lesson), the kingdom was postponed until the Messiah returns to earth the second time. Prior to that return, the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed once again (Matt.

24:14).

The Lord Jesus told His disciples to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8). He gave them amazing authority to perform these miracles. The Gospel records do not give us a report that they actually did these miracles after they returned from their mission (however, compare Luke 10:17), but we assume that they did. They were given the authority (verse 1) and the command (verse 8), so we assume they followed through.

The Lord Jesus would provide fully for their mission (verses 9-10). They did not need to bring money or extra supplies. Our God shall supply all our need (Phil. 4:19).

The disciples would find both reception and rejection as they carried the message of the coming kingdom. The Lord instructed them how to handle both responses (verses 11-14).

The principle of verse 15 is that God’s judgment is more severe for people who have the greater light. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty and were judged severely, but they did not have nearly the amount of light as did the cities that rejected the Lord’s disciples. These cities had the Lord’s own personal representatives presenting His message and performing miracles in His Name. To whom much is given, much is required.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is Preached Prior to the Lord’s Coming

In verses 16-23 we have an amazing time shift, a shift into the future. The previous verses were about the Lord’s disciples preaching the gospel of the kingdom in the first century. In verses 16-23 it is like the reader is suddenly transported in a time machine to a future time just before the Lord’s second coming. This is seen most clearly in verse 23 where the Lord says that He will come (return to this earth) before they are finished preaching in every city of Israel.

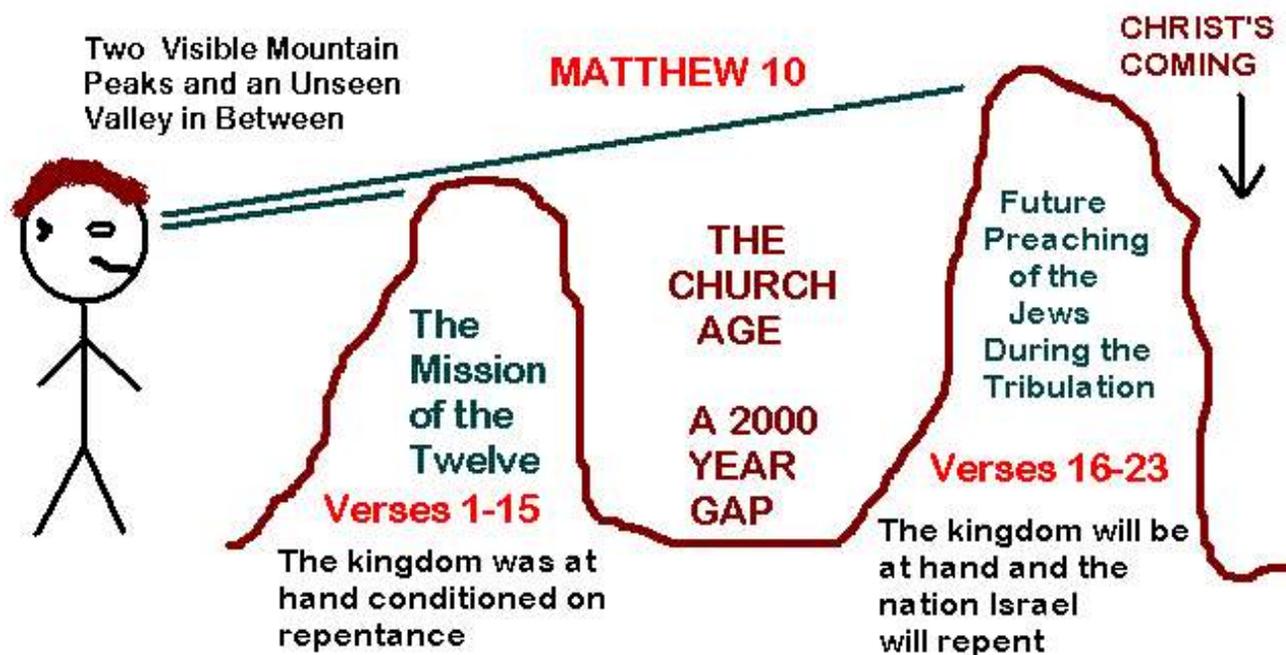
Notice the following four indicators that a temporal change or shift into the future has taken place:

1. Change of Time

Verses 1-15 pertain to the twelve disciples; their mission took place in approximately 30 A.D.

In verses 16-23 the time has shifted to “the end” (verse 22), to the coming of the Son of Man (verse 23). This is a time shift of approximately 2000 years. Compare

Matthew 10:21-22 with Matthew 24:9-13 and notice the similarities. Keep in mind that the context of Matthew 24 is the tribulation period just prior to the Lord's second coming.



Note: Those who hold to the “preterist” view (the view that prophecy has already been fulfilled) would say that the Lord’s coming mentioned in verse 23 is the Lord’s coming in judgment in 70 A.D. While the Lord did judge His people in 70 A.D., He did not “come” to the earth at that time in any kind of visible way, and certainly not “in power and great glory” such as is described in Matthew 24. The erroneous teaching of preterism is covered in more detail in Lesson 8 (see the notes at the end of Lesson 8 under Matthew 16:28, where the phrase “coming in His kingdom” is explained).

2. Change of Subjects

In verses 1-15 the subjects are the twelve disciples, but in verses 16-23 those described cannot be the twelve disciples. For example, read verses 17-18. The twelve disciples were told to go only to Israel (verses 5-6), but those preachers described in verses 17-18 seem to be preaching to a wider audience which even includes Gentile rulers and kings. Also verse 23 cannot be referring to the original twelve disciples because they all died before the Lord’s second coming.

3. Change of Tense

In verses 1-14 no future tenses are used. The Lord in these verses is giving instructions to the twelve as He sends them forth.

In verses 16-23 there are numerous future tenses that are used, pointing to a future time.

4. Ethnic Shift

In verses 5-6 the twelve disciples were sent only to the house of Israel.

In verse 18 we read about preachers who will be brought before governors and kings and Gentiles.

Summary:

Therefore, in Matthew 10 we have two occasions where men were sent forth with the gospel of the kingdom, the good news that the kingdom was at hand. The first occasion took place in the first century, when the King Himself was present on earth. This offer of the kingdom was clearly rejected (as we shall see in the next lesson) and the kingdom was postponed to a later time when the nation would embrace their Messiah (see Matt. 23:39). The kingdom which was postponed at our Lord's first coming (His rejection) will be established at His second coming. Prior to that second coming there will again be God's preachers announcing that the kingdom is at hand; however, their commission will involve a world-wide scope that will extend not just to Israel (Matt. 10:23), but to all nations (Matt. 24:14).

Verse 23 tells us of an unfinished testimony. "For verily I say unto you. Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come." The Coming of the Son of Man is His second Coming. Before He comes again the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached once more both in Israel's land and also among all nations (see Matt. 24:14). The heralds in the future will again be a company of believing Jewish disciples. The predictions concerning persecution and tribulation will then all be finally fulfilled in that period of time, which is called in the Word of God "the great tribulation" (chap. 24:21). The true church will then be no longer on earth. Before that time of trouble comes, preceding the second visible Coming of Christ, the church will be gathered home to be with Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

—A.C. Gaebelien, *Editor of "Our Hope,"* 1913; **THE ANNOTATED BIBLE, THE NEW TESTAMENT**, Vol. 1, The Gospels and the Book of Acts, pp. 28-30.

Precious Instructions to the Disciples (Matthew 10:24-42)

We will consider the Lord's teaching regarding sparrows (verses 29-31). Some of the other verses in this section will be discussed in the "Notes for Further Study" found at the end of this lesson.

His Eye is On the Sparrow!

There are four passages in the Bible that speak of sparrows. Two are in the Old Testament and two are in the New Testament.

According to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, the sparrows mentioned in the New

Testament are small birds, probably house sparrows with a black throat, white cheeks, and a chestnut nape. Their coloration is very ordinary. They like to be around vineyards and orchards and bushes and gardens. They live on seeds, small green buds and tiny insects and worms. They are plentiful and abundant.

I enjoy feeding the birds that come to my yard, and although I enjoy all of God's winged creatures, the sparrows don't overly excite me. I would rather see a goldfinch or a flicker or a yellow bellied woodpecker or a hairy woodpecker or a brightly colored cardinal. A bluebird would be a treat to see, but sparrows are very common and ordinary.

Sparrows probably eat more of my bird seed than any other birds, and I see them so often and get so used to them that they are not that special. Here's something my wife has never heard me say, "You won't believe what I saw today. I looked out into the back yard *and I saw a sparrow!*" No, the sparrow is a very common bird. If you had a diamond, a piece of gold, other brightly colored gems and several ordinary pebbles, the sparrows could be compared to the pebbles.

In Psalm 102 the Psalmist is overwhelmed by trouble (read verses 1-6). "I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top" (Psalm 102:7). Some have suggested that this bird could not have been a sparrow because sparrows by nature are not lonely. Sparrows enjoy the company of other sparrows, and when one is on a housetop, normally you find half a dozen other sparrows gathered nearby. Sparrows of a feather flock together.

A sparrow alone is an unusual sight, possibly indicating that something is very wrong. A lone sparrow indicates that the bird's mate may have been killed or its nest and young may have been destroyed. This most cheerful of birds sitting alone and dejected made a deep impression on the Psalmist who, when his hour of trouble came, said he was like the mourning sparrow, alone on the housetop.

This Psalm reminds us that God is a very present help in trouble, and when we find ourselves in the midst of the deepest affliction, and we are overwhelmed by troubles and problems, and it is then that we can pour out our hearts to a God who cares. Trouble Him with that which troubles you. Bother Him with the things that bother you. Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psalm 102:16)

In Psalm 84:3 we have a sparrow that is happier than the lonely sparrow we just learned about. "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God" (Psalm 84:3).

Here it seems that the sparrow built a nest on the temple. God's temple was the most special place on earth, the place where God's presence and glory was manifested in a special way. Somewhere on this temple structure was the nest of this most common bird. The Holy One of that temple cared about that little bird, and that little bird was of value to Him. A happy little sparrow, a very common bird, was found nesting at a very uncommon temple.

So we also, as common sinners, can be found in God's special place: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psalm 84:2). We who are ordinary, common, frail, and sinful are able to confidently and boldly come into the very presence of God, to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and to snuggle up next to a great and awesome God who cares for us far more than He cares for the sparrow.

Matthew 10:29-31

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matthew 10:29).

Why would someone want to buy a sparrow? This is a reference to the common custom in the East of catching small birds, and selling them to be skinned, roasted and sold as tidbits—a delicious mouthful. These were considered delicacies, and still are today in some countries. In other words, if there had been a McDonald's in Bible times, instead of having Chicken McNuggets you might have Sparrow McNuggets, and they could be purchased for a very reasonable price.

A farthing was 1/16 of a denarius. Since today we do not have coins that are called farthings, just think of a dollar. Two sparrows were sold for a dollar. These were common birds; they didn't cost a lot, but they were tasty.

Not one sparrow can fall to the ground or drop dead without God's knowledge and consent. Not only does He know when one of His creatures dies, but it cannot even happen unless He gives His permission and consent. A little sparrow cannot die without God's permission. God knows about the sparrow, cares about it and governs its existence. He does all that for a little common, ordinary bird (see Matthew 6:26).

The Robin and the Sparrow

Said the robin to the sparrow,

"I should really like to know,
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin,
"Friend I think that it must be,
That they have no Heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me."

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10: 30).

This precious verse tells us at least two things:

1) God is intimately involved with every detail of our lives, even down to the very minutest details. And if He's involved with the little things, you can be sure He's involved with the big things.

2) God cares more about me than I care about myself. I frankly do not care very much about how many hairs I have on my head (140,000 for the average person; redheads have only about 90,000). If I lose 20 hairs during the day, I don't really care, but God does. He keeps an accurate running count. God cares more about my hairs than I do. He cares about every little detail of my life. He's mindful of things that I'm not even mindful of. How can I not entrust myself to a God who cares that much about me!

How foolish for a believer to say, "I'm not going to bother God with my little problems," when God has already chosen to bother Himself with all kinds of details about the believer's life which he doesn't know anything about. God's thoughts toward us are more than we can number.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" (Luke 12:6). In Matthew 10:29, two sparrows were sold for one farthing, but in Luke 12:6 five sparrows were sold for two farthings.

Using our dollars: For one dollar, you get two birds; for two dollars you get five birds. The following was written by Arthur T. Pierson:

If few men have ever been permitted so to trace in the smallest matters God's care over His children, it is partly because few have so

completely abandoned themselves to that care. We must dare to trust Him, with whom the hairs of our head are all numbered, and who touchingly reminds us that He cares for what has been quaintly called "the odd sparrow." Matthew records (10:29) how two sparrows are sold for a farthing, and Luke (12:6) how five sparrows are sold for two farthings; and so it would appear that, when two farthings were offered, an odd sparrow was thrown in, as of so little value that it could be given away with the other four. And yet even for that one sparrow, not worth taking into account in the bargain, God cares. Not one sparrow is forgotten before God, or falls to the ground without His knowledge and consent.

If God cares that much for a common, ordinary sparrow, so much so that He feeds it, watches over it, provides for it, protects it...If God does all that for a bird so worthless that when four are purchased, one extra is thrown in free...If God does all that for a bird, how much more does He care for you?

If you feel like you are a lonely sparrow on a roof (Psalm 102:7), overwhelmed with troubles, fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. You are not alone. There's a God who cares. There's a God who knows all about every detail of your life. And because He cares for you that much, you can cast all your cares and worries upon Him.

He Knows

He knows it all—the winding path,
The sky o'ercast and grey,
The steepness of the mountainside,
The roughness of the way.

He knows it all—the haunting fear,
The doubtings that distress.
The wond'rings and perplexities,
And all the strain and stress.

He knows it all—each troubled thought,
Each anxious wave of care,
And every burden, every grief,
Or cross that thou dost bear.

He knows it all—thy weight of woe,
Thine often tear-dimmed eye,
The stabbing pain, the slow, dull ache,
And sorrow's broken cry.

He knows it all—but His to choose,
and thine to take His choice!
He knows it all! He planned it so!
Then trust Him, and rejoice!

—E. Margaret Clarkson

Notes for Further Study

Matthew 8:18-22. The call to discipleship was urgent: *FOLLOW ME!* However, the people failed to follow Him fully. They had their excuses. They had other things which they felt were as important or more important than following Christ. The Lord Jesus demands our wholehearted allegiance, commitment and devotion.

Matthew 9:9. Matthew (also named Levi) was a tax collector and the writer of this Gospel. He was also one of the twelve disciples. As a tax-collector, he was pro-Rome. Another disciple, Simon the Zealot, was strongly anti-Rome. It is amazing that these two men who held such opposite positions on Rome could get along as disciples of Christ. The Lord can make possible the union of opposites!

Matthew 9:16. What the Lord Jesus brings is something brand new and new cloth cannot be fastened to an outworn garment as a mere patch. To preserve the old by attaching a little of the new is worse than useless. Discard the old entirely and accept the new completely: not a new patch but a new robe!

Matthew 9:17. This illustration advances the thought. The old cannot be kept by adding a little of the new, nor by combining all of the new with it. The new wine cannot be conserved by pouring it into old wineskins: both the new wine and the old wineskins would be lost. A wineskin was a goatskin that was removed from the animal without slitting it; the openings at the feet and tail were bound up, leaving the neck as the mouth of the wineskin. These wineskins are still used by water carriers today in Palestine. When it is new, the skin stretches to a certain degree; but when it is old, it becomes stiff and splits under pressure. People therefore never put new wine into old and dried-out skins. The result would be disastrous,

for the skins would burst and both skins and wine would be lost. The Lord is not going to try to combine the old Pharisaic ways with the new glorious doctrine of grace and faith. We must take the new ways of life which fit the new doctrine. "He had not come to add something to the legal dispensation but to supersede it with that which was entirely new. . . The new wine of grace was not to be poured into the skin-bottles of legality" (Ironsides).

Matthew 10:28. Most people today embrace the philosophy of materialism, which includes the idea that man is nothing more than a body made up of blood, bones, cells, chemicals, etc. They claim that there is no such things as an immaterial part of man (soul/spirit). This erroneous and dangerous philosophy is answered in this one verse where the Lord Jesus makes a clear distinction between the body and the immaterial part of man (which is the soul). There is a difference between the body and the person that lives in the body. An enemy could even burn the body or blow the body up with an explosive device, but this does not destroy the soul. Evil men can harm the body but they cannot harm the real you (your soul/spirit).

Matthew 10:32-33. A denial of Jesus Christ is very serious. To confess Christ before men is to publicly own Him: "I want you to know that Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Saviour. He died for me. I belong to Him. Jesus Christ is mine!" The promise is that this person will be confessed before the Father by Jesus Christ. Jesus will say to the Father, "I want You to know that this person has trusted Me as his personal Saviour. He belongs to Me. He is saved and he is Mine!"

The one who denies Christ (verse 33) says, "I reject Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I refuse to claim Him as my own. I do not belong to Him." So also Jesus will deny this person before the Father: "Father, this person has rejected Me. He refuses to believe in Me. He does not belong to Me. He is not Mine." How tragic!

The case of Peter deserves mention. Peter's three denials were very serious, and his sin must not be minimized. However, as you look at Peter's life as a whole, you see that Peter was one who confessed Christ boldly and proudly (as on the Day of Pentecost when he confessed Christ before thousands). If you took a snapshot of his life on the night before Jesus went to the cross, you would see Peter as one who denied Christ. But if you took a video of his entire life, you would see a man who loved Christ and who repeatedly confessed him before men, even though it cost him his life. Christ will someday confess Peter before the Father.

Matthew 10:34. The Lord came not to send peace, but a sword (Matt. 10:34). Christ is the great divider of men. There is a hostility that exists between those who know Christ and those who do not; those who belong to Christ and those who do not. There is war between the children of God and the children of the devil (cf. Gen. 3:15—a great hostility between the seeds). The gospel often breaks up

families and divides families because those who are unsaved react very strongly and negatively toward those in the family who declare their faith in Christ and who start submitting to the principles of the Word of God. Such divisions are very difficult but necessary.

Matthew 10:37. The Lord Jesus must be our first love. We must love Him supremely. Our tie to Him must be stronger than any human tie. Do you love your parents? Your husband? Your wife? Your children? Your brother? Your sister? Your love for Christ must be greater than your love for any of these persons. Think of your closest human friend or lover or relative. Did this person die on the cross for your sins? Did this person save you from eternal judgment? Did this person give you the free gift of eternal life? No one can take the place of the Lord Jesus. When I give Him first place, then I will be most able to help those people who are closest to me. If you neglect the Lord Jesus and refuse to honor Him as the most important Person in your life, then you are in no place to help anyone else.

Matthew 10:38. What does it mean for a believer to take up his cross? See the discussion in Lesson 8, under Matthew 16:24.

Matthew 10:40-42. Principle: How people treat Christ's servants is how they treat Christ Himself. Christ is very concerned and involved with His people, and those who treat God's people well will be rewarded by Christ. A great blessing is upon the person who receives God's messenger and God's message. As we will see in the next lesson (Matthew chapters 11-12), the Jewish people rejected the Messiah and rejected the message that He brought. Because of this tragic rejection, the Kingdom must await a fulfillment at a later time (at the second coming of Christ).